



IEP Survival Kit

— FOR PARENTS —



@JulieSCole1



@IEP504advocate



@JulieSCole



Hello, and thank you for purchasing this kit. I'm excited for you to put it to use to save you time and energy, but most importantly, for it to aid you in being the best advocate you can be for your child with an IEP.

I have compiled this information based on my own 6+ years of IEP experience with my children as well as hundreds of hours spent gathering and summarizing resources available online. When you purchased this kit, it was for use by your family. I would sure appreciate it if you did not share or duplicate this material for others outside your immediate family.

These pages are designed to be printed out and placed in a view front binder. Each page has a clear explanation of how to use it, where it goes, and how to make these pages personalized for your child (where applicable).

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me should you need any assistance. You can email me at julie@juliescole.com. I will be sure to get back to you within 24 hours.

Happy organizing!

Julie

Binder Cover

It is vital the IEP team see you as confident and prepared from the moment you walk in. I always recommend using a current school photo prominently displayed on the front.

YOUR CHILD IS NOT A NUMBER.

They are a unique human being.
Seeing a picture sends a subliminal message of just that.





Place 5 x 7 school photo here

— IEP BINDER —

Binder Table of Contents

Here you can keep track of what goes where.
There is SO much paper involved in the IEP process.

KEEPING IT ALL IN ONE PLACE AND ORGANIZED IS KEY

to the process running smoothly and to you achieving
desired outcomes for your child.



Table of Contents

BEHAVIOR

- Include any intervention plans, notices from school, and / or observations from home.

CORRESPONDENCE

- Any time there is a meeting, conference, phone call, email or note home (not behavior related) file it here.

ASSESSMENTS

- Consent for testing, school evaluations, and any private testing results should all be placed here.

IEP

- The most current document, parents' rights, goal tracking & any meeting notices should be placed here.

REPORT CARDS

- A year's worth of formal reports & standardized testing results, if taken should be filed here.

SAMPLE WORK

- When things come home that concern you or items where you see progress, file them here for reference.

TEAM MEMBERS

- Here you have information for all the members of your child's team at your fingertips.

MISC.

- A "just in case" place for things you may want to have, but don't fit into the above categories. Possibilities could be if you are tracking food, sleep, or homework habits.

Divider Tabs

The divider tabs on the following page
are designed to be used with

Avery Index Dividers, 8-Tab, Product Number 11411.

To help you stay organized and better navigate
your IEP Survival Kit, print the label strips and
apply them to your divider tabs.



BEHAVIOR

CORRESPONDENCE

ASSESSMENTS

IEP

REPORT CARDS

SAMPLE WORK

TEAM MEMBERS

MISC.

Team Member Contact Info

Homeroom / Classroom Teacher:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:
Principal:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:
Vice-Principal:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:
Guidance Counselor:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:
Social Worker:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:
Case Manager/Carrier:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:
School Nurse:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:
District Nurse:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:
School Psych./ Behavioral Specialist:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:
District Curriculum Coordinator:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:
District Head of Special Education:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:
Athletic/Activities Director:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:
Afterschool Program Supervisor:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:
Physical Therapist:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:
Occupational Therapist:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:
Speech Pathologist:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:
Adaptive PE Teacher:		
Email:	Phone:	Location:

Communication Log

Date:	Type:	<input type="checkbox"/> Phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Email	<input type="checkbox"/> Letter	<input type="checkbox"/> In Person	<input type="checkbox"/> App
Who initiated the communication?						
What prompted the communication?						
What was addressed?						
What was decided?						
Who participated, received or attended?						
What follow up is needed?						
Who is responsible for the follow up?						
When is the follow up action to be completed by?						

Date:	Type:	<input type="checkbox"/> Phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Email	<input type="checkbox"/> Letter	<input type="checkbox"/> In Person	<input type="checkbox"/> App
Who initiated the communication?						
What prompted the communication?						
What was addressed?						
What was decided?						
Who participated, received or attended?						
What follow up is needed?						
Who is responsible for the follow up?						
When is the follow up action to be completed by?						

Goal Tracking Chart

Goal:
Present Level of Performance:
Benchmarks Needed / Met:
My Observations / Notes:
My Questions for the Team:

Goal:
Present Level of Performance:
Benchmarks Needed / Met:
My Observations / Notes:
My Questions for the Team:

Preparations Before the IEP

Preparation is key to being an effective, confident advocate at your child's IEP meeting. When you walk in with your binder in hand, prepared and poised, you will demand the respect of the team, and they will know you mean business.

DRESS PROFESSIONALLY.

No matter what frustrations have occurred during the year - leave them at the door and enter ready to work on solutions.



GATHER



INVITE



INFORM



FINALIZE



REFLECT



Gather

Check to be sure all your copies of current documents, including your child's current IEP, recent, progress reports and report cards are filed in your binder. Gather current samples of your child's homework, assessments, and any correspondence from the teacher or other team members. All these things should be in your binder ready to go, but always check **beginning 1 month prior to the date of th IEP** to give yourself plenty of time to update the binder if needed. Life happens. You may only get to update it once a year before your annual IEP, so give yourself time to do it right.

Gather your own notes and observations. Review what you have and look for topics and patterns in behavior / performance that require attention. Where is your child making progress or struggling? What supports and services are (or are not) helpful? Are there any new challenges to share with the team?



Invite

If you think you'll want support at the meeting, invite others to join you. Maybe a friend or family member, a professional who works with your child, or an advocate. Explain to them how you think they can help. Ask to meet with them before the meeting to discuss your concerns, get their input and plan your approach. If your child will be at an IEP meeting, take time to prepare them for what is going to be discussed and who will be there. Ask for their input too. What is working for them and what is not? If your child is on the younger side, use caution when asking questions and soliciting input.

Inform

Always let the team know in advance who will be attending the meeting. Provide their names and explain their relationship to you and your child. Your team can get caught off guard or immediately be put on the defensive if they are surprised by extra attendees. If anyone attending the meeting will need special arrangements, (video conferencing, translator, etc.) let the team leader know in advance and always offer to help in the set up if possible.



Finalize

Draft a simple list of the points you plan to make during the IEP meeting. Summarize using bullet points for concerns, questions and suggestions. You can refer to this list during the meeting if needed. **Place this list in your IEP Binder at the front of the Sample Work Section.** Gather work samples that back up your concerns and add them here as well.



Reflect

Once you have everything ready for the meeting, try and just focus on your child's current strengths, interests, progress made and challenges. Listen to what your child is saying about school and learning in general. **Remember that you know and understand your child better than anyone else on the IEP team does.** You are your child's best advocate. That mindset will allow you to approach the IEP meeting with clarity, courage, and confidence.

Questions to Ask Before the IEP Meeting

- What is the goal of this IEP meeting?
(This should be listed on the meeting notice, but it doesn't hurt to inquire about the purpose or get clarification on what is listed on the notice document.)
- May I have a copy of the meeting agenda?
- Can you please provide me with prior access to copies of the notes/reports that we'll be going over?
(Having things like draft goals to review prior to the meeting can save a lot of time and give you an idea of what lies ahead.)
 - Getting copies of the formal assessments before any tri-annual IEP is crucial. Spend time reading and highlighting. Use post it notes to make notes and notate questions. This saves a ton of time in the meeting. When you come prepared with your questions, things proceed quicker and are much more efficient.
 - Check your state laws for the timeline on your right to have documents prior to the meeting. Most are 48 hours. NOT the night before or the morning of the meeting.
- Who will be present at the meeting that is qualified to interpret and explain the results of my child's various assessments - formal and informal - and answer my questions about the reports?

Meeting Day Checklist

Anything with an (*) after it will have more detailed information on the following page.

Binder

- The current IEP
- Current work samples that illustrate progress/concerns
- A list of current questions*
- Evaluation reports from your child's most recent school or private evaluations*
- An up-to-date IEP goal tracker
- Parent-School communication log that is up-to-date
- Proposed accommodations & suggested goals *
- School contact sheet to update with new provider info*

Extras

- A notepad & pen to take notes
- An audio recorder or smartphone recording app*
- Your partner, advocate or a friend to take notes & support you
- A letter of parent concerns*
- A folder to keep documents received during the meeting*
- Tissues*
- A bottle of water*
- A collaborative mindset*



A List of Current Questions. You will want to compile a list of current questions you want to address & notes about strategies that do or don't seem to be working at home.

Evaluation Reports. Gather evaluation reports from your child's most recent school evaluations such as report cards, progress reports and / or standardized testing results.

Proposed Accommodations. Create a list of proposed accommodations & suggested goals (wait to present these until after they present their goals; sometimes they will cover things you want & you can cross them off the list as they present).

School Contact Sheet. Bring a copy of your school contact sheet to update with new provider information (either print a blank one for members to fill in or make updates to the current one from your binder).

An Audio Recorder. Bring an audio recorder or smartphone recording app if you'll be recording the meeting. (Check with the Parent Training & Information Center in your state about laws & policies about recording meetings. Most states require advance notice if the meeting is going to be recorded.)

A Letter of Parent Concerns. Bring a letter of parent concerns addressed to the team as a whole to attach to the IEP that lists your child's strengths, areas that are challenging, how they are doing in and feeling about school, & other things you'd like noted. They will most likely ask you this verbally but being prepared with a written copy keeps things on track & assures your words are recorded properly on the document.

Folder. Have a folder with you to keep documents received during the meeting- be sure to request a copy of any documents you sign during the meeting and DO NOT LEAVE without them.

Tissues. IEP meetings can get emotional - it's very common and nothing to be ashamed of - both victories and challenges can bring tears.

Water. Nerves and talking can make you thirsty, so it's a good idea to have a bottle of water at your side.

A Collaborative Mindset. You are a member of the TEAM. Your input is invaluable. So is theirs. Everyone on the team was chosen for the expertise they can bring to the table. Listen. Take notes. Ask questions. NEVER sign anything other than that you were there that day.

Questions to ask DURING the IEP

These are just suggestions.
Pick and choose what you feel is necessary for your child.

BY NO MEANS DO YOU NEED TO ASK THEM ALL.

Much of this should be covered in the meeting without
you even asking.



Questions to ask DURING the IEP

- How does everyone at the meeting know or work with my child?
- Could you tell me about my child's day so I can understand what it looks like?
- Can you explain how what you're seeing from my child is different from other kids in the classroom?
- Could we walk through the current program and IEP plan piece by piece?
- How is my child doing in making progress toward his/her IEP goals?
- What changes in goals would the team recommend?
Is this a SMART goal?
*SMART goals are: **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented and Timely***
How is this goal measured and my child's progress monitored?
- How will my child be assessed according to grade level?
- Who will work on that goal with my child? How? When? Where and how often?
What training does the staff have in this specific intervention?
- What does that accommodation/instructional intervention look like in the classroom?
- What support will the classroom teacher have in putting these accommodations/interventions into place?
- What can I do at home to support the IEP goals?
- I'd like to see the final IEP before agreeing to any changes suggested at this meeting. When can I see a copy?
- When will the changes to his/her program begin?
- How will we let my child know about any program changes?
- Can we plan for keeping in touch about how everything is going?
- May I have a copy of the notes referenced during this meeting?
- If I have questions about the information I've been given about my child's rights, who's the person to talk to for answers?
- Who's the person to contact if I want to call another meeting?

Tips

Being a member of the IEP team requires confidence, collaboration and a commitment to your child. Here are five things to remember while you are in the meeting:



MAKE IT PERSONAL



KEEP AN OPEN MIND



SEEK CLARIFICATION



STAY FOCUSED



ADVOCATE



Make it Personal

No one on the IEP team knows your child the way you do. The other team members may be experts in their field, but you're an expert about your child. Share your perspective on your child's personality, interests, struggles and success both at home and at school. Describe behaviors when doing homework, playing on sports teams and doing extracurriculars. This will give the team insights into your child's abilities and interests. It also will enable the team to formulate the IEP using his/her own individual traits.

Keep an Open Mind

Everyone on the IEP team brings something to the table. You bring key insights and information about your child. Other team members offer experience and understanding of your child's needs and strengths at school. If there is an issue or solution presented that you're not sure of, hear it out. Issues may come up in school that you don't see at home. School is a different environment, with different rules, people, and expectations. By working together, you can address your child's needs more completely. Remember, you can call another meeting anytime, so if something you try ends up not being a good fit, you can change it. Ultimately, you are in the driver's seat.

Seek Clarification

Special education laws and programs are complex. Even if you're well prepared, you may hear new terms and references during the IEP meeting. IEPs are a breeding ground for acronyms! Always ask for explanations. You have the right to understand every detail and decision. Most times notes are being taken and recorded as you go. Always get a copy of those notes to make sure they accurately reflect the discussion. This is an example of where it is helpful to have someone with you. They can take notes to compare to the team's notes. We are all human, and things can get missed. Having a safeguard in place is always a good thing.

Stay Focused

Be aware of the goals you have for your child, and make sure the team understands your expectations. Working together to create a plan to help your child achieve those goals is the whole purpose of an IEP. Together the team can figure out the most appropriate resources and effective instructional approaches. Be sure to ask questions about what the team proposes and even suggest changes. Your *Mommy Gut* is a critical piece to this. If something is not sitting right, speak up. Explain your side and find a solution that is acceptable. It is their job to find an agreeable plan for your child. It's ok to make them work for it.

Advocate

Don't allow anyone to skim over IEP details that involve your rights. For instance, if you're told that the district won't cover a service, ask to see the section of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that supports that. If you're unsure about the IEP drafted in the meeting, **don't feel pressured into signing it. (Signing the attendance page doesn't mean you agree with the IEP; it simply means you attended.) Exercise your right to take the IEP draft home and think it over.** Be polite, but firm. Ideally the other team members will respect you for standing your ground. I don't care if it's the best IEP you've ever had--- **DON'T SIGN IT.** At least sleep on it. Mull it over. Give it time for your *Mommy Gut* to digest it. They cannot pressure you. Make no mistake, they are working a timeline to stay in compliance with the state and the district, but that is no reason to sign something you are not OK with. I'm not saying sit on it for months. I am saying if you want more testing to be done or want to observe the class / service they are recommending, then take the time to do those things. You can sign with contingencies if you want other services to begin or placement to change based on the IEP. In most states, your current signed document will stand until you sign another. They absolutely cannot make a change (or start a program / service) without your approval.

What to do After the IEP



EMAIL



THANK



SIGN



UPDATE



ORGANIZE





Email

Email the case manager and CC all those that were in attendance.

- Thank them for their time and dedication to your child's program.
- Summarize what decisions and questions came out of the meeting, highlighting any follow up items needed.
- Did the school agree to set up another meeting?
- Do you plan to request a mediation session?

By placing these items in writing, you make sure everyone is on the same page and get those next steps on their calendars.



Thank

A short and sincere thank you note goes to anyone who attended the meeting with you. Email is fine. Let them know specifically how their presence was beneficial. If this person is a professional who works with your child - and there is follow-up work to do - make it convenient. You might offer to pick up records or reports the school has requested when delivering the note.



Sign

The IEP you and your child's IEP team discuss and develop in the meeting is a work in progress. The school or district will finalize the IEP after the meeting and will send you a copy to sign. AFTER going over it with a fine-tooth comb and verifying it is exactly what you want, sign and return to the case manager. They will want the original sign page, so scanning and sending is not usually OK. (Be sure to keep a copy for yourself.) Be mindful of their deadline if they give you one, but don't be pressured by it.)

If you don't feel the IEP is ready to be signed, you'll need to email your case manager with the issues. List the page number of the IEP and what the exact issue is. Putting it in writing is always best. If the case manager is unable to address your concerns, you may need to proceed to mediation options. Most districts do not want it to go that far and will work with you. You can give partial consent so that your child receives the services you do agree to. In most cases, adjustments can be made and the document signed. NOTE: Each time they have made adjustments, you need to review the document again in its entirety. Keep past copies to reference so that you can be sure the correct changes were made and nothing else was changed.



Update

If your child didn't attend the IEP meeting, share how it went. Be sure to mention the positive things people said along with the challenges. Consider your child's age and maturity as you explain any changes. Describe the new supports and services in concrete terms. If your child joined you at the meeting, ask about how they are feeling. Praise them for things done well. Start planting the seeds of self-advocacy. Modeling standing up for oneself will go a long way in this process.



Organize

Documents that result from the IEP meeting, including a copy of the new, signed IEP, need to be added to your binder in the proper sections. Remove any outdated correspondence, assessments or work samples. Add new progress report and benchmark dates to your calendar. Fill in new goal tracking sheets. Update team member contact information and communications log. You will be very happy when things are ready for when you need them.

Safeguards to Signing the IEP

At the end of an IEP meeting, the team may want you to sign your child's IEP. In some states, this serves as informed consent to provide services. That means you're giving the school permission to implement the IEP **as it's been written**. It's important to make sure everything is in order and accurate **before you sign**. If you take anything at all away from this packet, please- let it be,

DO NOT SIGN your IEP at the end of the meeting.

Please. Just don't do it. Take the time to really look it over as a complete document. When in the IEP each provider speaks to their section. Your job is to look at it as a whole.



Basics

- Does it give the date the new IEP will go in effect?
- Is your child's name, age, student ID number and grade level correct?
- Is all your contact information correct?
- Is the parent and guardian information correct?
- Does it give the name of your child's IEP case manager?

Clarity

- Are the annual goals SMART? (*Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented and Timely*)
- Are supports and services clearly stated with enough detail and with correct start and end dates?
 - Does it list who will be providing the support / service?
- Are accommodations (such as the use of assistive technology, extra time for testing, or classroom seating needs) clearly stated?
- Does it state how and when the school will measure and report your child's progress toward annual IEP goals? (*Usually in the form of benchmarks tied to progress report dates.*)
- Is the statement of your child's present level of performance based on information from you and your child's teachers?
 - Was that information obtained from data taken over a period of time?

Accuracy

- Does it include everything you agreed to in the meeting, including accommodations, special education services and SMART annual goals?
- Are there any boxes checked that need to be or ones that are checked that should not be?
(*Check especially that your desires for standardized testing are correct as well as any accommodations for test taking are noted.*)
- If the team agreed to changes to the IEP at the meeting, do they appear in the final document?
- Are your parental concerns and commentary accurately represented?
- Is there anything in the IEP that you did not discuss or agree to in the meeting?

Goal Formulation & Review

Goals are the main part of the IEP. Students may have 1, or 20 or more, or anything in between. It's vital each goal is formulated to challenge your child to achieve but not set them up for failure.

As your child's annual IEP goals are developed, there are several things to consider. Goals should always be **SMART**:

Specific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**esults-oriented & **T**imely.

That means they shouldn't be vague or general. On the next page you will find some questions to ask yourself when looking at proposed goals or when composing some of your own to present to the team.



Questions for Goal Setting

- Are the goals clearly written? Do they avoid undefined acronyms?
- Are the goals positively oriented?
(Focus on what will be accomplished not what won't be.)
- Do the goals reference and align with your child's present level of performance?
- Do the goals address your total child?
(Academic, Social, Emotional, Physical.)
- Are the goals standards-based?
(Is the desired outcome to reach grade-level academic standards?)
- Do the goals address how your child will gain skills? Do they identify instructional strategies?
- Can the goals be accomplished within the time frame of the IEP?
- Do the goals list ways to measure progress?
(Standardized tests, curriculum-based measurements, screening, observations, etc.)
- Is it clear what your child will be able to do when the goals are met?
- Do the goals set ambitious, but realistic, expectations for your child?
- Are the goals strengths-based?
(Do they utilize your child's strengths to address a particular need?)
- Did your child have a chance to give input on goals and share information about strengths?
- If your child is in thier last year of elementary, middle or high school, do the goals include transition planning?