



Promoting productive student-centered Special Education meetings conducted in a respectful and collaborative manner

Facilitated Meetings

What is facilitation?

Special Education Facilitation is an option for using an impartial third party to promote effective communication and assist a student's Special Education team in coming to consensus on issues related to the student's educational needs. State-sponsored facilitation is a voluntary process; both the parent and the district need to agree to facilitation.

What is the cost?

State-sponsored facilitation is a free service provided by the Colorado Department of Education Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU). However, the ESSU will not pay for any attorney or advocate fees or any other costs to the parties associated with the facilitated meeting (e.g. mileage, meals, wage loss, etc.).

How Long Does A Facilitated Special Education Meeting Take?

We recommend that a facilitated meeting be scheduled for 90 minutes to 2 hours, but that is flexible depending on the scope of the agenda.

Facilitated Special Education Meetings

All team members participating in the facilitated meeting can expect that:

- All parties have agreed to be receptive and respectful of the facilitated meeting process;
- Norms that provide structure and focus for the meeting will be established;
- The meeting will be collaborative and solution-focused with all presented ideas carefully considered;
- The facilitator treats all parties fairly and with respect, and helps the parties do the same;
- There is a focus on listening for the purpose of understanding by all parties; and
- The primary goal is to develop an IEP that meets the student's needs, or come to consensus for other special education meetings.

Who attends a facilitated IEP meeting?

- All required IEP team members must be present to complete the IEP process, including the parent, and when appropriate, the student; and
- It may also include other relevant parties who have knowledge of the student.

"I am grateful for finding out about this service. I plan to use this service in the future, as it was incredibly helpful. Thank you so very much!"
- parent meeting participant

Rights and Responsibilities

Special Education facilitation does not relieve the district of the responsibility to meet regulatory obligations, including timelines.

If an agreement is reached on the IEP, the school district is required to complete the IEP document and provide a copy to the parent or adult student, as well as send notice regarding the components of the IEP.

The only record kept of the facilitated session includes the date, time and location of the session, surveys, and the result. Neither the ESSU nor the facilitator will keep the IEP document.

Is a facilitated IEP confidential?

The IEP parameters of confidentiality apply to all IEP meetings, including facilitated IEP meetings.

Dispute Resolution

Special Education Facilitation does not prevent a parent or district from exercising the right to resolve disagreements through additional meetings or formal dispute resolution processes. The formal options for dispute resolution are outlined on the DR webpage: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/spedlaw>.

Special Education Facilitators

The facilitator keeps the focus of the meeting on a productive student-centered IEP process conducted in a respectful and collaborative manner, as well as on developing an effective and appropriate IEP in a timely manner. The facilitator will also support Special Education meetings other than IEP meetings.

Does the facilitator make the decisions about the outcome?

No. The facilitator is not an IEP team member and his or her role is to focus on the special education meeting process and to facilitate discussion, which supports the team in developing the plan of support.

Who are the facilitators?

The state-sponsored facilitator is a neutral third party specifically trained to promote effective listening and discussion between all meeting participants. The facilitator focuses on collaborative efforts, is not an employee of the district, has no role in advocating for any of the involved parties, and does not participate in decision-making.

Requesting a facilitated meeting

State-sponsored facilitation is a voluntary service offered at no cost to districts and parents of students with disabilities. A parent or school district representative may make the request for a state-sponsored facilitator. Both the parent and school district need to agree to facilitation.

How soon can a facilitated meeting be scheduled?

The school schedules the IEP meeting (or other Special Education meeting) and sends out the notice to the parent. If the district and/or parent is interested in facilitation, the request for a facilitated meeting should be made as soon as possible to allow enough time for CDE assign a facilitator, if one is available, and reach out to both the family and the district.

"I have never worked with a CDE facilitator before and I found the experience to be nothing but absolutely positive!" - school district meeting participant

For more information or to request a facilitation, please visit the CDE website or contact the Alternative Dispute Resolution Specialist directly at the number listed below:

Colorado Dept. of Education
Exceptional Student Services Unit
1560 Broadway, Ste. 1100
Denver, CO 80202

www.cde.state.co.us/spedlaw/adr
rains_k@cde.state.co.us
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