To help special education planning teams reach agreements, MO DESE provides the option of facilitated Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings.

Skilled and capable facilitators assist the team in crafting IEPs that lead to educational programs with beneficial outcomes for students with disabilities.

IEP facilitation is being offered as a statewide program in all school districts during the 2016-2017 school year.

**To request a facilitator and for more information, contact the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**Special Education Compliance**
**P. O. Box 480**
**205 Jefferson Street**
**Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480**
**573-751-0602**

Missouri DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION™

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# Facilitated IEP Process

***Encouraging collaborative relationships between families and schools***

# What is a Facilitated IEP (FIEP)?

FIEP is a means for parents and school personnel to reach agreement in the educational decision making process for students needing or suspected of needing special education services.

When the relationship between parents and school personnel becomes strained or better yet, before the relationship has the opportunity to fray, parents and school personnel are finding that using independent facilitators can assist the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team process.

The facilitator is a neutral person who helps guide the student-centered focus of the meeting.

## Who attends the facilitated IEP?

The required members of the IEP team attend the meeting, in addition to the facilitator. As with non-facilitated IEP meetings, parents and adult students have the option to invite an advocate or other people who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the student.

## When will FIEP facilitators be available?

FIEP facilitators will be in place at the start of the 2016-2017 school year. Formal requests should allow for at least a 10-day lead time for facilitator preparation.

## Who can request a FIEP?

Either the educational decision-maker or the LEA can ask for a facilitated IEP. If both agree, the LEA calls DESE to request a facilitator and submits a completed FIEP Request Form signed by both the educational decision-maker and the LEA.

## How far in advance should a facilitator be requested?

An important component of the IEP facilitation process is the preparation work done by the facilitator in conversations with the parent and school personnel and the development of a formal agenda. In general, a request should be made at least 10 days in advance of a meeting, so an independent facilitator can be assigned to complete the preparation work.

## Who serves as the neutral facilitator?

The neutral facilitator is a trained professional who has completed a three-day training in IEP Team Meeting Facilitation. The facilitator is not a member of the IEP team and does not have a relationship with the school or the parents, other than to assist in the meeting. While remaining neutral, the facilitator focuses on the process while the team makes the decisions.

## How does facilitation differ from mediation under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?

The neutral facilitator helps conduct the IEP meeting where the team members develop an IEP. The law requires that an IEP be developed each year. The facilitator focuses on the process. A mediator helps the parties come to an agreement about a specific dispute involving the education of a child with a disability. The mediation can involve more issues than just the IEP. There is no obligation to come to an agreement in mediation. The mediator focuses on the results.

## How is the confidentiality of the student and family maintained?

The parent must provide consent to allow the school to share confidential information about the student with the independent facilitator. This is required under the Family Education Rights Privacy Act. The facilitator is obligated to maintain the confidentiality of all information shared at the meeting.

## Who pays for the independent facilitator?

DESE pays the fee and expenses of the facilitator.