

## TIP SHEET FOR RELATIVES AS PARENTS

### ♪ A-B-C ... I-E-P ... M-O-U-S-E ♪

Are you a grandparent, aunt or uncle raising a child with special education needs? Are you confused by all those initials that your child's school uses when talking to you about the Special Education Laws in Maine? These terms can be confusing at times. Especially when you're trying very hard to do what is best for your child as far as school is concerned. Here is some information that you might find helpful when working with your child's school.

So what's an IEP? It stands for Individualized Education Program. (You might hear it called by its former name, a Pupil Evaluation Team or a PET). We have IEPs because of the IDEA (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act); this is a national law that provides services (including special education) to children with disabilities. Children with hearing, vision, or speech problems; learning disabilities; mental retardation; autism; traumatic brain injury; emotional issues; or other health impairments are eligible for these services. Remember, you can request an IEP meeting, and it's best to send this request to the school in writing.

Here is what you can expect when you request an IEP:

1. There must be a meeting of teachers and school staff, and you will be invited to participate as well
2. There must be a yearly review and evaluation of the IEP, and changes can be made if things aren't working for your child.
3. The IEP must be written and include the following details:
  - Current academic status of the student (your child)
  - Goals and objectives to meet your child's educational needs
  - Services and supports identified and provided to meet those goals (examples: 1 on 1 aide in regular classroom, speech therapy, transportation to and from school, etc.)
  - The individual strengths of the child
4. There are many ways to prepare yourself for the IEP meeting. Some of these may include:
  - Be familiar with everything in the written plan.
  - Keep in regular contact with your child's teacher.
  - Bring any written evaluations which could be helpful in developing a new plan.
  - Consider bringing a support person with you. They can be an extra set of ears and eyes to help you remember what was said and decided.
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  - It would be helpful to take notes during the meeting about decisions that are being made.

Remember, don't be afraid to suggest something that you think will be good for your child, like a special reading program and other possible incentives to motivate your child.

To learn more about Special Education Rights, consider attending one of the workshops being offered around the state. (*See Back Page*)

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