

**MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services**

**IMPLEMENTATION BEST PRACTICES & CONSIDERATIONS**

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**TIPs to Facilitate Virtual IEP Team Meetings**

Virtual IEP meetings have become much more common since the COVID-19 pandemic. Although schools have returned to face-to-face instruction, many families still prefer and value a virtual option for participation in IEP meetings. The benefits of offering virtual options for these meetings include:

* Saving money on fuel and/or transportation costs;
* Saving time by eliminating the need for travel;
* Reducing the amount of time required of parents to take-off work;
* Reducing the need to provide childcare for other siblings; and
* Providing the opportunity for participation from others who would otherwise not be available to attend in person (e.g., relatives, physicians, additional caregiver, school staff, etc.).
* Virtual meetings may be more accessible for some family members.

Below are some tips for school staff involved in preparing and conducting virtual IEP meetings to ensure their success. Please keep in mind that this is not a comprehensive list and additional conversation and planning may be required to meet each family’s unique needs.

1. **At Least Two Weeks Before the Meeting**

* Confirm family’s contact information - email and telephone
* Ask for family’s preferred format for the IEP meeting
* Confirm the family’s ability to use the platform and conduct a test session
* Plan for confidentiality - discuss location with the family and the school team members
* Answer any questions the family has - everything is the same except the location!
* Send invitations with the meeting link to all participants
* Arrange for an interpreter if needed
* Arrange for any other accommodations needed (e.g., closed captioning)
* Arrange for technology staff to be on call the day of the meeting
* Schedule the meeting for at least an additional 30 minutes if an interpreter is being used

1. **At Least One Week Before the Meeting**

* Send the family any documents, reports, assessments, data, or draft IEPs, in the most secure formal available, that will be discussed at the meeting
* Touch base with the interpreter (if applicable) to confirm attendance and ensure their ability to access the virtual platform
* Resend the meeting link to all team members

1. **At Least 2 Days Before the Meeting**

* Confirm the family’s attendance and receipt of documents to be discussed at meeting
* Confirm interpreter’s participation
* Confirm participation and arrival time of all team participants
* Collect alternate contact information from all participants in case anyone is disconnected during the meeting so they can be reached by phone if needed
* Provide the family with a backup phone number if there is a problem with the technology
* Verify that technology staff will be on call the day of the meeting
* Ensure all devices/equipment are charged and in working order
* Ensure that closed captioning is available and working on the devices to be used (if applicable)

1. **On the Day of the Meeting**

* Dress professionally
* Ensure all school participants log on to the meeting at least 10 minutes prior to the start time to test the technology. If they do not, resend the link at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled time for the meeting
* Ensure that school-based participants have a meeting location that is free from background noise/distractions and ensures the confidentiality for the student and family
* Ensure all team members are facing the family/camera (consider using a 360-degree automatic smart camera, e.g., Owl, KanDao, etc.)
* Ensure each participant identifies their name and role on their screen if they are participating on a separate device or uses a name card if they are in the same room
* Ensure each participant identifies who is speaking and their role at the meeting each time they speak if the school-based members of the team are in a room together
* Refrain from sidebar conversations
* Refrain from engaging in other work and silence personal devices during the meeting
* If any member of the team needs to step away from the meeting, put a note in the chat box stating they will be leaving
* When sharing a team member’s screen, turn off all other notifications and close any open windows
* Turn microphone to mute when not speaking to avoid extraneous noise and/or echo
* Display documents via screenshare when appropriate
* Turn off computer notifications if sharing your screen to avoid distractions and/or a breach of confidentiality
* Refer to the page number of the document you are discussing if unable to share your screen
* Ensure all team members are providing sufficient time for the interpreter to allow the family to fully participate in the discussion (if applicable)
* Use headphone with a built-in microphone to reduce distractions and extraneous noise, if possible
* Discuss next steps, including acquiring any required signatures

1. **No More Than 5 Days After the Meeting**

* Send the family a copy of the documents generated from the meeting
* Ensure all follow-up from the meeting is completed