

Parents and caregivers please feel free to share this newsletter with your workers.

Family and Children's Services

Children's Developmental Services



It's that time of year to think about planning for the next school year. Many parents of special needs children do not understand the IEP process or their role in it. Parents need to be involved to be sure that all their children's needs are being met.

A Parent's Guide to Individual Education Planning

The Parent's Role In Making The IEP Work

How can parents prepare for a school-based or IEP team meeting?

The IEP typically begins with a team meeting. You may find it helpful to prepare for the meeting by writing out notes to take to the meeting. It may be useful to include the following:

- a list of topics you would like to see included in the meeting,
- questions to raise both for your child and for yourself,
- what you want to see accomplished and what you believe your child wants,
- realistic goals for your child, for the school year and for the future, or
- a statement on any area that might be giving you concern.

If English is not your first language, you may wish to bring someone who could assist you in communicating your concerns or who could take notes or talk to you about impressions of the meeting afterwards.

How can parents be effective participants in meetings?

- Make sure you are introduced to everyone present and that you know what each member can contribute to your child's educational program.
- Know the purpose of the meeting and what the team expects as a result of the meeting. Be aware of the meeting's time constraints.
- Ask who is responsible for keeping a record of the meeting and request a copy of the record.
- Recognize that children often react differently in different circumstances. Your child's behavior at home may be different than at school.
- Share your concerns directly and openly share information that might help in planning for your child.
- If you don't understand something, ask for clarification.
- If you need time to reflect or to collect more information on a topic, ask to have that discussion postponed.
- Summarize the meeting, from your perspective, aloud to the other members.
- Know when the next meeting will be and what steps will take place before then.

What are the key issues in an IEP meeting from a parent's perspective?

As the meeting concludes, you will find it helpful to ensure that there is a common understanding in these areas:

- The name of the key person responsible for the implementation of the IEP and record keeping needs to be clear (often called a case manager).
- The goals in the IEP are practical, realistic and clearly stated, including program options and extra-curricular opportunities, and who is responsible for each goal.
- The IEP for your child is fully understood and supported by those involved, including your child. (This can be particularly critical in secondary school where a number of teachers are involved, and students may have significant autonomy.)
- All the resources suggested in the IEP are indeed available.
- The method for evaluating your child's progress and the person or persons responsible for the evaluation have been clearly decided.
- A date has been set to review your child's IEP.

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How can parents help their children in the IEP process?

A key role for parents is to set out clearly for their child what her own responsibilities are in the IEP process. The extent of responsibilities will naturally depend on your child's age and type of special need, but you can help her to understand that the process will only work if she takes an interest in making it work. This message can most effectively be transmitted to her by seeking her ideas and help in the process, and making her feel important and valued.

A child's intellectual progress depends to a large extent on personal and social development, self-esteem and the ability to work cooperatively and communicate effectively. To support this social development, parents can help their child achieve his goals in several ways:

- Encouraging interaction between your child and schoolmates in a variety of ways and structuring activities to encourage friendship with other children,
- Keeping in touch with teachers and asking them about potential friendships that appear in the classroom, and
- Watching for activities that will give your child opportunities to work towards his personal goals.

How can parents help the school support their children?

The more that parents, teachers, school administrators and resource personnel work together in open communication and cooperation, the more successful the child's education will be. Parents can help by doing several things:

- provide learning experiences in everyday life that will reinforce the formal learning taking place in the school system,
- talk with your child about school, discussing both learning and social activities,
- support the teacher's expectations and the classroom routines and expectations by reinforcing such behaviour at home,
- communicate regularly with teachers, particularly if there is concern about your child's progress, and
- participate in the parent volunteer program at the school by offering assistance with school activities.

SIBLING SIDELINE:

WHEN SPECIAL NEEDS SPARK SIBLING RIVALRY



It's natural for parents to focus their energies on children with special needs, health problems or exceptional abilities -- and feel the personal effects of raising them.

But it's also important not to overlook how their siblings are faring. On the sidelines of all that extra attention, these siblings can come under some major pressures, says pediatrician Scott Steinberg, MD.

"Parents are often emotionally drained or stressed, especially about the uncertainty of a diagnosis. They may be angry and frustrated that it happened," says Dr. Steinberg, with Northeast Cincinnati Pediatric Associates in Mason. "But the healthy child also has to adjust -- both to a sibling taking up more parental time and resources, as well as to a parent who's tired and stressed."

Siblings of children with special abilities or needs may act out to get parents' attention. But the impact on family dynamics can go much deeper, he says, particularly with siblings of special-needs children, who may:

- Feel alone or jealous about extra attention for their sibling and interpret it as rejection
- Wish they had medical problems to get more attention
- Worry they might "catch" what their sibling has
- Be overly helpful or noncompliant for attention
- Try to ease parents' burdens by not making demands or feeling guilty if they do
- Feel guilty for their own good health or have negative thoughts about their special-needs sibling
- Feel embarrassed or resent having to involve their sibling with neighborhood friends
- Resent having to care for a sibling or worry about their sibling's future

Tactics for Reducing the Rivalry

Dealing with misperceptions and emotional responses starts with fostering communication, Dr. Steinberg says. "Try to be a good listener. Encourage siblings to express themselves, including negative feelings. Ask them what they like best and least about each other. Let your children know it's okay to get mad at their special-needs sibling and not to feel guilty if they sometimes resent the extra attention."

One good way to combat misperceptions, he says, is to describe to children their sibling's special needs or abilities, starting with simple explanations around ages 5 or 6. "Share with them how a health condition is evaluated and treated and what to expect. Talk about their sibling's strengths and weaknesses and the best ways to interact with that child."

It's impossible to treat all children equally, he says. But parents should be as fair as possible and take steps to prevent sibling rivalry.

"Have special-needs children do as much for themselves as they can and assign them tasks so everybody has responsibilities. Do chores together as a family."

Dr. Steinberg suggests setting siblings up to cooperate rather than compete, for instance by having them race against the clock as a team rather than individually to complete chores. He recommends devoting time to family activities that everyone enjoys.

"Let each child know he or she is special," he says. "Make sure they're able to develop their own interests and identity. Try to get a few minutes a day alone between each parent and child." Exclusive time with parents will be especially valuable to the sibling of the special-needs child. He also cautions against overburdening older children with care duties for their siblings. However, all siblings of the special-needs child can be enlisted as "partners" with parents in understanding and addressing their sibling's requirements.

Sensory Solutions

Visual - Mirrors

Submitted by Brenda Witherspoon

Mirrors are important for body awareness. By looking in a mirror your child is able to see their positioning. Play a game that will incorporate goals of body positioning/awareness called "Copy Me". You and your child face the mirror, and you ask them to copy the movements that you are doing-but only by looking into the mirror. Start with simple movements until you both get used to it. Have your child perform 3-4 step motor movements or to complete a series of patterned motor movements while watching themselves in the mirror. By adding mirrors to your room, you can encourage your child to make direct eye contact, thus improving their ability to use sensory information to understand and effectively interact with people and objects in their environments.



Butterfly Thoughts

My Perfect Child

As my children were born,
I wanted them to be perfect.
When they were babies,
wanted them to smile
and be content playing with their toys.
I wanted them to be happy
and to laugh continually instead of crying
and being demanding.
wanted them to see the beautiful side of life.
As they grew older,
I wanted them to be giving instead of selfish.
I wanted them to skip the terrible twos.
I wanted them to stay innocent forever.
As they became teen-agers,
I wanted them to be obedient
and not rebellious, mannerly and not mouthy.
I wanted them to be full of love,
gentle and kind-hearted.
"Oh, God, give me a child like this"
was often my prayer.
One day he did.
Some call him handicapped...
I call him Perfect!!

- Author unknown

Announcements

Craft & Social Group Schedule for May

May 1 - bowling 4:00—5:30 p.m.

May 15 - Movie FACS - 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.

May 29 - Teen Cooking FACS 4:00 - 5:30 p.m.

If you would like to sign your child up for these activities please call Debra at 274-7787 ext 229. Ages 6-15.

The group will end for the summer in June with start up again in Fall.

Are you aware that Family and Children's services offer a variety of voluntary services within the Rainy River District? These services include:

Children's Mental Health Services – Assisting children, adolescence and their families who may be experiencing emotional, social, and/or psychological problems in their school, family, and/or community life. Services are provided free of charge, for a wide range of difficulties from mild adjustment reactions to severe psychiatric problems in children ranging in age from birth up to 18 years.

Infant & Child Development – Servicing children 0 – 6 years of age who are at risk for a delay, or children with a diagnosed physical, developmental or sensory disability. Some of the services provided include early intervention programs, developmental screening and assessments, assistance with transition to school for special needs children, and parenting programs on a group or individual basis.

Community Integration – servicing children with a physical or developmental disability 6 years – 18 years and up to 21 years as long as they are in school. The primary focus of this program is to facilitate integration into the community. Some of the services provided include developmental assessments, advocacy in relation to other agencies, linkages to health, financial, and educational resources in the community.

Family Relief – a program that provides families a respite period from the responsibility of the daily care of an individual with a physical and/or developmental disability. The three options to services include In-home respite – provided in the family home, Out-of-home respite – provided in the approved worker's home, and community participation – The individual is accompanied by their Family Relief Worker into the community to participate in community events or activities.

For more information about the above voluntary services please contact

Family and Children's Services

For Fort Frances call (807) 274-7787 or 1-800-465-7764 (Toll Free), for Atikokan call 597-2700, and for Rainy River call 852-3387.

To make a referral for service, please call Integrated Services Northwest, The Integrated Services for Northern Children Program for Single Point of access. For Fort Frances, Rainy River and area call 274-9797, for Atikokan area call 807-597-4528

Do you have something to Share? Please phone Debra Bruyere at 274-7787 ext. 229 or email dbruyere@facsrr.ca



Children's Disabilities
Information

www.childrensdisabilities.info