



Summer IEP Preparation

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It's that time of year again, the lazy days of summer. For children and families, summer is a time of rest, and fun family activities, like going to the beach or pool, or taking a long-awaited family vacation. For families with children with disabilities, summer can be just the opposite, and more stressful than the school year.

During the summer, kids naturally have a less structured schedule, but for children with disabilities such as ADHD, or Autism, a lack of routine can lead to meltdowns, irritability, and disregulated behaviors. For children with learning disabilities, the worry is that the "summer slide" (loss of learning during the summer months) can cause a child to fall even further behind academically than they already were. And while school is just ending, there

is never a better time to start preparing (gasp!) for September. Many school districts rush to have IEP meetings for every student who is classified as needing special education before June ends, but often there are still things that need to be finalized before school resumes in the fall.

Here are our tips for summer IEP Preparation:

- 1)** Take your time reviewing your child's latest IEP. You may have felt rushed during the last IEP meeting, and maybe you're not entirely sure what changes were actually made. We recommend going section by section to make sure you understand what services your child will have for the upcoming school year. Make sure to review year-end IEP progress reports too, to determine if progress toward goals has been achieved.
- 2)** Continue (or start) with private therapies, such as speech and language, occupational therapy, or counseling. This will keep your child progressing toward their personal goals and can also provide you with updated information on what additional services your child may need when school resumes in September.
- 3)** Keep a list of changes that your child may have experienced this summer, such as medication changes, new assessments, or behavior changes, so you can advise your child's school once school resumes.
- 4)** Plan for a "back to school" transition well before school begins. Reach out to school staff in August to find out if your child can take a tour of the building, or meet their teacher before school begins.
- 5)** Attend Extended School Year ("ESY"). If your child qualifies for ESY make sure you know the schedule of when it starts and ends, and if transportation is provided.
- 6)** Keep a log of any private tutoring your child may be receiving over the summer. The log should include the number of sessions, the amount of time per session, the cost of each session, and what the tutoring was for (i.e., Orton-Gillingham instruction, or executive functioning skills).

Most importantly, if you have an urgent issue such as a placement change or request for your child, or if there is an error in their IEP, don't wait until school resumes in September

to discuss the issues with the child study team. Teachers and case managers are not typically available during the summer months to discuss your child, but your school district's Director of Special Education usually has summer hours and can handle issues that may arise during this time. Also, school districts still must comply with the New Jersey Administrative Code 6A: 14, Special Education (N.J.A.C. 6A:14) during the summer, so if you request a child study team evaluation or meeting, the district must follow the appropriate timelines set forth in this section. Make sure that any request you make to the Director of Special Services is sent by email and hard copy with an original signature, so as to not delay your request.



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