

**Irvington Union Free School District  
Pupil Personnel Services Office**

**PARENT TIPS FOR PREPARING FOR YOUR CHILD'S  
ANNUAL REVIEW MEETING\***

*The Committee on Special Education (CSE) or Section 504 annual review is a meeting to discuss your child's educational needs. As a member of the Committee, you participate in discussions and decisions about the identification, evaluation, and educational needs of your child. We look forward to embarking on this collaborative process together.*

**Before your child's meeting:**

- Evaluations that have been completed on your child will be reviewed at the meeting. If you wish to have copies before the meeting, please contact the Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) office at least five days prior to the meeting date and copies will be provided to you. You should feel free to take notes, ask questions, ask for clarification and/or highlight specific areas for the committee's attention. The evaluations contain valuable information and it is important that you understand them and that your input regarding the results is heard. If, after reviewing the district's evaluations and asking for clarification, you disagree with the school's evaluation, you may request (in writing) an independent educational evaluation at the district's expense.
- It may be helpful to make an appointment to meet with or speak with by phone, your child's teachers and/or providers to discuss their evaluations and thoughts for next school year in advance of the meeting. The CSE is a meeting with the specific purpose of designing a program to meet your child's needs. It is not a parent conference with the teacher. Although there is some overlap, lengthy discussions about daily operations or a specific incident in the classroom may not be appropriate.
- The Hudson Valley Special Education Parent Center can be a valuable source of information for you. One of their resources is an Annual Review Checklist (found at [http://www.hvsepc.org/cpse\\_worksheet.html](http://www.hvsepc.org/cpse_worksheet.html)). This tool or a simple list of strengths and concerns may help you organize your thoughts for the meeting. You may wish to consider sharing this with the CSE/504 committee in advance, or with your child's teacher(s).
- It is important to share what methods you have found to be effective in supporting your child's growth and development, including any therapies your child participates in outside of school as the committee discusses how best to support your child's development.
- Consider your child's strengths/weaknesses, interests and preferences in general; how best does your child learn? Think about personality types and whether your child learns best from a specific type of teacher. Note: specific teachers are not discussed at the CSE table; this is something that would be discussed with the building Principal.
- You are welcome to invite other professionals or other support (e.g., family or friends) to the meeting; this person could be there to share his or her expertise or knowledge about your child or just to take notes and/or to provide emotional support. Although, not required, it is

courteous to let the PPS office know in advance who you are bringing someone to the meeting.

- Please provide copies of private evaluations or reports from private therapists to the CSE or 504 Committee in advance of the meeting. This allows for the information from the private evaluations to be integrated with district findings and considerations and also guards against invalidating test results by duplicating testing within too short a time frame.
- You may audio record the meeting. If you decide to record the meeting, you must give the district at least 24 hours advance notice. Recording may also allow you to more fully participate in the meeting as you will not be focusing on taking notes. If you choose to record the meeting, the district will record it as well so that both parties have a copy to review at a later date as needed.
- Read your meeting notice thoroughly. It will list the specific participants who are expected to attend the meeting. If you feel that someone who is not listed should be at the meeting, please contact the PPS office as soon as possible and request that that person(s) attend. This will give the district time to make the necessary arrangements. Note: if the service providers (e.g., speech, OT, PT) attend every meeting, it may result in them missing sessions with the children. If possible, consider reaching out to your child's service providers prior to the meeting. If a related service provider is unable to attend your child's meeting, a written summary will be provided.
- Review your child's current IEP or 504 Plan, past progress reports, report cards, evaluations and reports; consider whether last year's goals were met.
- Write down any questions or specific concerns you have. Consider sharing those questions and/or concerns in advance of the meeting or read aloud at the start of the meeting.
- Extended School Year (ESY) services are available, but only under specific circumstances to prevent significant regression which must be documented. If appropriate, this may be a discussion point at your child's meeting. *Ideally, this conversation should be starting well in advance of the meeting;* late January or early February is a good time to speak with your child's teachers if you feel ESY may be appropriate for your child.
- Check to see if your child is expected to attend any or all of the meeting – many secondary students are encouraged to participate – and that your preparation may be impacted by their attendance and participation. Questions regarding this should be directed to the Director of Pupil Personnel Services.

### **During your child's meeting:**

- Ask questions, including:
  - How will my child's areas of challenge be accommodated to improve achievement?
  - What types of accommodations are necessary to make progress?
  - Which of these will be provided?
  - What types of modifications are necessary to make progress?
  - How will the modifications address the areas of challenge outlined earlier?
  - Specifically, which supports and modifications will be put in place to address your child's disability?
  - What you can do at home to support your child and the school's efforts on his or her behalf.

- Please slow the meeting down if it is moving too quickly; ask for clarification of special education jargon. Although, multiple CSE and 504 meetings are often scheduled on the same day there must be flexibility to allow the meeting to come to fruition. Under extreme circumstances when a meeting cannot be completed in the allotted time, then the team can reconvene to complete the IEP or 504 Plan.
- If your child is nearing 15 years old; starting at age 15 (and at a younger age, if determined appropriate), the IEP must contain appropriate measurable postsecondary goals and the transition services to be provided. Be sure to discuss the transition portions of the IEP which are included at that time. Your input and that of your child are particularly important to the transition sections of the IEP.
- Related services can sometimes be integrated within the classroom and not become a pull-out service. Ask about the options and help the team to choose the best option for your child.
- Home/school communication and cooperation are critical to your child's success. In most cases informal communication with teachers and related service providers is adequate to meet the need but you may request that formalized opportunities to meet with your child's team be placed in the IEP to discuss your child's modifications and/or special education services. This may include periodic team meetings to discuss issues and/or a communication journal to go back and forth between home and school.
- Most CSE/504 meetings are collaborative and productive but if it becomes clear to you that consensus will not be reached you may ask to end the meeting and reconvene if you and the other members of the committee are not able to reach agreement. It may be helpful to define what will occur between the two parts of the meeting to gather more information or intervene in order to make consensus possible.
- You do not have to make a quick decision about the services or accommodations being offered during the meeting; you can ask for time to consider and review the information, and then schedule a follow-up meeting.
- CSE meetings are not once in a lifetime opportunities. The document can be modified at any time when your child's strengths, needs or situations change and develop.
- Everyone at the table has a common goal; to support your child's development and success. There may be differences of opinion in the approaches taken and which pathways to success will be the most successful but that does not change the common goal. Each member's opinions and concerns should be heard and respected. Sometimes staying at the table with open minds on all sides allows for creative, agreed upon solutions to emerge that no one brought to the table. You are part of the committee, not an invited guest. Speak up, ask questions and express your concerns. but also listen carefully with an open mind to the perspectives of others. We welcome you to the table and look forward to working collaboratively to support your child.

### **After your child's meeting:**

- You may find it helpful to debrief immediately (or as soon as possible) after the meeting, make notes and list of follow-up questions, concerns and/or action items.

- If you have concerns after the meeting, reach out to the CSE or Section 504 Chairperson to resolve the issue. If you are not satisfied with the resolution, contact the Director of PPS. You may also reach out to the building principal. If you are still not satisfied with the responses, you may contact the Superintendent of Schools. This tip is not just for the annual review process; if at any time you have a concern regarding your child's special education services or 504 accommodations, you should consider documenting the concern in a letter or email and copying any relevant district personnel.
- It is important to review the final IEP or 504 Plan as soon as possible after you receive it and notify the district in writing of any errors or concerns.
- Please remember to thank your child's teachers and providers, as well as District administrators, for attending your child's meeting and for their support of your child.

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The PTSA Special Needs Subcommittee is a group of parents willing to support you as you navigate the CSE or Section 504 process. Feel free to reach out to them for support if you need help.

Rebecca Rikon and Jennifer Ruoff co-chairs of the PTSA Special Needs Committee

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**\* These tips have been compiled by the Irvington PPS Office and PTSA Special Needs Subcommittee members and are not intended to constitute legal advice. In addition, not every tip will be applicable for each child.**