



# IEP Tips For Our Amazing CASA TEAM!

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Office of Education

# About Josh



- Born and raised in St. Charles.
- Degrees in special education and school administration.
- Taught students with intellectual and emotional disabilities.
- Beginning 7th year at ROE.
- Big Ohio State football and Packer fan!

# Josh's role at the ROE



- I am the Coordinator of Alternative Programs at the ROE.
- My roles and responsibilities at ROE?
  - Truancy Prevention Program
  - Alternative Education Programs
  - Special Education at JJC
  - Contact/Support for court system.

# Why is presenting to you so important to me



# Goals for today



- Gain a basic understanding of IDEA.
- Learn about the parts of an IEP.
- How to prepare for an IEP meeting.
- Where to look for additional special education information.
- Feel comfortable attending IEP meetings.





# What is the Individuals With Disabilities Act?

- On November 29, 1975, President Gerald Ford signed into law the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- The law guaranteed access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) to every child with a disability.
  - In basic terms
    - FAPE is an individualized educational program that is designed to meet the child's unique needs and from which the child receives educational benefit, and prepares them for further education, employment, and independent living.
    - LRE requires school districts to educate students with disabilities in regular classrooms with their nondisabled peers, in the school they would attend if not disabled, to the maximum extent appropriate.
- Infants and toddlers, birth through age 2, with disabilities and their families receive early intervention services under IDEA Part C. Children and youth ages 3 through 21 receive special education and related services under IDEA Part B. (IL now mandates a student who turns 22 years of age during the school year may continue educational services until the end of the school year).

*About idea.* Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. (2020, November 24). Retrieved October 1, 2021, from <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/>.

# 13 Disability Categories



IDEA states a student can qualify for special education under one or more of the following categories:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Deaf-Blindness
- Deafness
- Developmental Delay
- Emotional Disability
- Hearing Impairment
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic impairments
- Other health impairment
- Specific learning disability
- Speech and language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual Impairment



# Other laws for students with disabilities



- The [Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#), Section 504 addresses protections for students with disabilities. Section 504 is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the Department of Education.
- To qualify under Section 504, a child’s disability must be serious enough, or “substantially limiting,” that the child needs specialized services or accommodations.
  - A person with a mental or physical impairment that limits one or more major life activity, such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working, to a substantial degree.
  - Receiving a medical diagnosis may help in receiving a 504 plan, but it is not required by law.
- [Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#), which extends protection against discrimination to the full range of state and local government services, programs, and activities including public schools regardless of whether they receive any Federal financial assistance.

*New on ada.gov.* ADA.gov homepage. (n.d.). Retrieved October 1, 2021, from <https://www.ada.gov/>.

*Protecting students with disabilities.* Home. (2020, January 10). Retrieved October 1, 2021, from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>.

# What's the difference between a 504 & IEP



- A 504 plan assures access to the educational environment.
  - Offers accommodations and modifications to the education environment.
  - Will not provide specialized instruction.
  - Less formal process.
    - No requirement for plan to be in writing (99.9% are).
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
  - Formalized plan.
  - Reviewed annually by an educational team and family.
  - Specially designed instruction and related services.

*Section 504 - duke university school of law.* (n.d.). Retrieved October 4, 2021, from [https://law.duke.edu/childedlaw/docs/Section\\_504\\_Summary.pdf](https://law.duke.edu/childedlaw/docs/Section_504_Summary.pdf).

# Time to prepare for the IEP meeting



# Tip # 1 Contact the IEP team



Make a connection with the IEP team prior to the meeting via email!

- Introduce yourself and your role.
  - This informs the IEP team to include you on the meeting invitation.
- Let them know you are excited to participate and support the student.
- Make sure they know you need a draft copy of the IEP three school days prior to the meeting.
  - May also request any written documents that will be discussed during the meeting.

# Tip #2 Time to review the IEP



Once you receive a draft copy of the IEP, you will want to review the following sections:

- Present Levels of Performance
- Accommodations
- Transition plan (ages 14 ½ or older).
- Goals
- Placement & Services

Tip-compare the prior years IEP to the draft IEP you received.

# Present levels of performance



*If the IEP fails to assess the ‘child’s present levels of academic achievement and functional performance’ the IEP does not comply with [IDEA]. This deficiency goes to the heart of the IEP; the child’s level of academic achievement and functional performance is the foundation on which the IEP must be built. Without a clear identification of [the child’s] present levels, the IEP cannot set measurable goals, evaluate the child’s progress and determine which educational and related services are needed. Kirby v. Cabell County Board of Education, 2006*

# Present level of performance (continued)



You will want to get a crystal clear picture of your child's skills in the following areas:

- Academic: current reading, math, writing levels, etc.
- Functional: routine activities of everyday living.
- Social emotional: skills related to social exchanges and behavior.
- Motor skills: finger dexterity, handwriting, strength, balance, coordination, wheelchair use.
- Health: current impact of the student's health in relation to the disability or condition.

# Accommodations



You want to hear very specific accommodations that everyone at the table understands and can implement.

## Example

- Preferential seating close to the teacher instead of “preferential seating.”

\*Make sure you fully understand what the accommodation will be.



# IEP Goals



You really want to see specific and measurable goals. What are you looking for?

- What are they going to measure?
- How are they going to measure it?
- Are the goals realistic?
- Is it clear the goals are rigorous, yet achievable?

\*Remember-these are not the only concepts and skills the student will be learning.

# Placement and Services



Make sure you clearly understand the placement and services the child will be receiving.

- Are they at the homeschool?
- Are they in the general education setting parts of the day?
  - If not, does it make sense for the child?

If you are not sure of the placement recommendation, you have the right to know more.

- Ask questions of the team about the placement.
- Visit the placement.
- Observe the student.



## Tip #3 Arriving To The Meeting

- Make sure you arrive 5-10 minutes early to the meeting.
- If virtual, log-in early to make sure you do not have tech issues.

Tips-arriving early will show the IEP team you are committed to the student

# Tip #4 Introductions



- Don't be shocked if members of the IEP team do not know who or what a CASA advocate is! I didn't know.
- Introduce yourself and explain your role.

Tip-remind the team you are there to be their partner in developing an excellent plan for the student.

# Tip #5 Notetaking and Questions



- Take careful notes and do not hesitate to pause the meeting to ask questions.
  - If you do not understand something, ask for clarification.
- IEP team will be taking meeting notes during the meeting.
  - Use your notes to help clarify certain parts of the IEP.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions!
  - Use your draft IEP to write down questions you might during the meeting.

# Tip #6 End Of The Meeting



- Be sure to leave the meeting with a copy of the IEP; or minimally, a clear plan that will be sent to you later in the day.
- Only exception-If you and the team agreed to make substantial changes to the IEP.
- Either way, make sure it is evident when you should expect to receive the IEP.

# Josh's Top Picks For Resources



- ISBE Parent Guide To Special Education
  - <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Parent-Guide-Special-Ed-Aug20.pdf>
- Wrights Law
  - <https://www.wrightslaw.com/>

# Questions





# Contact information



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