

## Creating an effective IEP team

### Background

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team is an important part of your child's educational experience. The members of the IEP team consider your child's educational assessment and determine the best educational plan to meet his or her needs. As determined by a federal law named the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), the following people should be part of the IEP team:

- The parent or guardian
- At least one of your child's regular education teachers, if applicable
- At least one of your child's special education teachers or service providers (like an auditory-verbal therapist or speech-language pathologist)
- An administrator with expertise in the school system's special education policies
- An individual qualified to interpret your child's assessment results and make recommendations for your child's educational plan
- Other qualified individuals, invited by you or the school, with specific knowledge or expertise about your child. This may include a representative from the cochlear implant center, or your child's speech-language therapist or audiologist
- Your child, if developmentally appropriate

You may work with the school administration to select members of the IEP team to ensure your child's best interests are represented. A strong IEP team will facilitate your child's success in school. Below, we discuss the role of each IEP team member.

### Role of IEP Team Members

- 1) **Parents or guardians.** Of all members of the IEP team, you most likely know your child the best. Advocate for your child's educational needs and help the team create an effective IEP for him or her. It is your right under federal law to participate in the IEP team meetings. Therefore, the school must invite you to the IEP meeting, and issue the invitation early enough to ensure that you have the opportunity to attend and participate.
- 2) **Regular classroom teacher(s).** If your child is or will be participating in a mainstream education classroom, this teacher should be part of the IEP team. On the IEP team, this teacher will have the most knowledge about the curriculum and general educational goals for your child's grade level. Therefore, he or she will be able to suggest specific accommodations to the curriculum to meet your child's IEP needs and facilitate educational success. The classroom teacher will also monitor your child's progress toward his or her IEP goals.
- 3) **Special education teacher(s) or service provider(s).** Special education teachers or service providers provide additional expertise specifically on cochlear implants or special education to the IEP team. This person may play two roles on the IEP team: special education teacher

and individual qualified to interpret your child's assessment (see #5 on the following page).

- 4) **School administrator.** The school administrator must be both qualified to provide or supervise the provision of special education services and knowledgeable about the resources available to your child within the school system. In addition, the administrator must be able to allocate any resources needed for your child to receive the services determined by the IEP team and ensure that these services can actually be provided. If you are unfamiliar with the school administrator invited to participate on the IEP team, you can request information on his or her qualifications before the meeting.
- 5) **Qualified individual to interpret evaluation results.** There may be several test scores and other assessment results used as data to interpret your child's needs for special education or related services. This person on the IEP team must be able to synthesize all of this information into recommended educational goals, curriculum modifications, or other accommodations to support your child. He or she may be one of your child's special education teachers, a service provider, a school administrator, a school psychologist, or another professional.
- 6) **Other qualified individuals, invited by you or the school.** These people can provide specific knowledge or experience to the IEP team about cochlear implants in general and your child's skills and challenges in particular. Consider inviting your child's audiologist or speech-language pathologist, a representative from the cochlear implant center, or a friend, relative, or other professional who can share important information with the team about your child, if appropriate. It is critical that these individuals know your child personally and can attest to his or her strengths and needs.
- 7) **Your child, if appropriate.** You can determine whether it is appropriate for your child to be part of the IEP team. Age can be a factor. Even if your child is not going to be present at the IEP meeting, it is still a good idea for you to talk with your child about his or her feelings toward school. Learn as much as you can about your child's goals, apprehensions, and hopes so you can ensure this information is conveyed to the IEP team.

### Tips

- Ensure at least some members of the IEP team have experience working with deaf or hard of hearing children and children with cochlear implants.
- If you experience any reluctance from the school about your role on the IEP team or the people you would like to participate on the team, be persistent and positive. You have legal rights to participate in the formation and operation of the IEP team.
- There are times when IEP meetings can be confrontational and you may feel that you aren't getting the services that your child needs. In these cases, you are within your rights to bring an attorney to help you advocate for your child.