



# Special Education Facilitation

## *Guest Participation*



*Promoting productive student-centered Special Education meetings conducted in a respectful and collaborative manner*

## **Facilitated Meetings**

### **What is facilitation?**

Special Education Facilitation is an option for using an impartial third party to promote effective communication and assist a student's Special Education team in coming to consensus on issues related to the student's educational needs. State-sponsored facilitation is a voluntary process; both the parent and the district need to agree to facilitation.

### **Facilitated Special Education Meetings:**

During each meeting, the facilitator holds a safe space to support the special education process and provide an opportunity for a constructive conversation for the student. All team members participating in the facilitated meeting can expect that:

- All parties have agreed to be receptive and respectful of the facilitated meeting process;

- Guidelines that provide structure and focus for the meeting have been provided;
- The meeting will be collaborative and solution-focused with all team members given an opportunity to participate;
- The facilitator treats all parties fairly and with respect, and helps the parties do the same;
- There is a focus on listening for the purpose of understanding by all parties; and
- The primary goal is to come to consensus to develop an IEP that meets the student's needs or on other special education related meetings.

### **➡ “Guest” defined:**

At a facilitated special education meeting, a “Guest” is defined as any meeting attendee who is not a required member of the student's team who has knowledge of the student. This includes, but is not limited to, additional family members or friends, child/family advocates, outside service providers, and sometimes attorneys (including GALs).

### **Expectations for Guests to support the facilitation process:**

Special education meetings, including IEP meetings, are team-based collaborative conversations focused on the unique educational needs of the student. To support the process, *Guests* should:

- Promote the voices of those who work directly with the student, including parents, general education teachers, and special education teachers / case managers.
- Speak in a way that is respectful and productive. Support others to do the same.
- Be solution oriented and focused on the future. Support others to do the same.
- Keep comments focused on the child's needs, not on who's right and who's wrong.
- Support transparent conversations by defining technical terms used and clarifying any facts that may be misunderstood, as appropriate.

SAMPLE AGREEMENT



**COLORADO**

**Department of Education**

## Agreement to Participate in Special Education Facilitation

Special Education facilitation is a voluntary process, where all meeting participants agree to work together to ensure an effective, student-centered IEP development / special education process. The role of the Facilitator is to help all team members reach consensus in a Special Education meeting.

By signing this agreement, I:

1. Agree to use the process of Special Education facilitation for the meeting.
2. Understand that the Special Education Facilitator is an impartial third party and cannot act as an advocate, or legal advisor, and that any recommendations can only be made by the Special Education team.
3. Provide consent to share personal student information with the Special Education Facilitator. The Facilitator will not share this information with others.
4. Agree that the Special Education Facilitator will securely dispose of any written material used by the facilitator at the end of the meeting.
5. Agree that the Special Education Facilitator will not be asked to be a party in any legal proceedings, and that the Special Education Facilitator will not be called as a witness in the future by any meeting participant.
6. Understand that the use of Special Education Facilitation does not prevent a parent or district from the right to resolve disagreements through additional meetings, mediation, state complaint process, or a due process hearing.
7. Understand that the school district remains responsible for the provision of educational services developed through this process.
8. Understand that the Special Education facilitation process typically does not include attorneys, and if attorneys will be present, the meeting may or may not be facilitated by a statewide facilitator (at the discretion of the facilitator).
9. Understand that the facilitator can terminate a meeting if they determine that Special Education Facilitation has not been requested in good faith or one or more of the meeting participants are impeding or interfering with the Special Education Facilitation process.

For more information or to request a facilitation, please visit the CDE website or contact the Alternative Dispute Resolution Specialist directly at the number listed below:

Colorado Dept. of Education  
Exceptional Student Services Unit  
1560 Broadway, Ste. 1100  
Denver, CO 80202

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720-990-1464