

# **Model Expectations of IEP Facilitator Conduct**

## **Preamble**

IEP facilitators can play a vital role in the important work of developing educational programs that can help students with disabilities be successful. IEP facilitators serve in an impartial role and act as process guides to create a balance between participation and result. Facilitators strive to help teams create joint decisions that are thoughtful, positive and appropriate resulting in constructive “road maps” for the future and, where possible, to heal old hurts and restore good relations.

Facilitators operate with the conviction that the inherent wisdom of IEP teams and the deep value of collaboration and consensus results in optimal outcomes and stronger partnerships between family members and professionals. IEP facilitators seek to develop creative, innovative and sometimes unique solutions in a complex substantive, procedural and relational environment. This approach results in better outcomes and higher fidelity of implementation, and the facilitator often plays a critical role in developing an IEP that is in the best interests of the student.

These model expectations serve several roles: to guide the conduct of IEP facilitators; to inform IEP team members about the role of the facilitator; and to promote participant and public confidence in the process.

Note: This document refers to external facilitators, that is, facilitators that are not part of the student’s IEP team. Facilitators that are employed by local school systems and may be a part of the student’s team could also subscribe to these expectations. Additionally, some aspects of the facilitated IEP process and the role of the facilitator may be affected by the application of policies, guidelines or procedures that the participants have agreed to which may take precedence over these expectations.

IEP facilitators:

- believe in the inherent value of the individual and the collective wisdom of the IEP team;
- strive to ensure important contributions from each team member;
- set aside personal opinions and support the team's right to make its own choices; and,
- believe that collaborative and cooperative interactions build consensus and produce meaningful outcomes.

## **IEP Facilitator Pledge/Expectations**

### **1. Stewardship of Process**

IEP facilitators practice stewardship of process and impartiality toward content. The role of the facilitator is to help teams create an IEP that is appropriate and can be implemented. Parents and educators bring knowledge and expertise concerning the student and his or her educational needs and facilitators bring knowledge and expertise concerning group interaction and processes. When facilitators have content knowledge or expertise that the team needs to be effective, facilitators offer it only after team members understand and agree that the facilitator is changing roles.



## **2. Respect for Differences**

An IEP facilitator recognizes that IEP meetings bring together people of different cultures, backgrounds and experience to participate in sometimes challenging discussions that affect people who may not be at the meeting, in particular, the student. Facilitators strive to create an environment of respect where all participants have an opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings, and where different styles of interaction are accepted and different perspectives can be shared constructively.

## **3. Self Determination**

A facilitator will conduct a meeting based on the vital principle of team member self-determination. Self-determination is the act of coming to voluntary, un-coerced decisions in which a team member makes free and informed choices. The facilitator will not undermine a team member's self-determination for any reasons such as higher agreement rates, increased fees, or outside pressures from program administrators, evaluators or others.

## **4. Impartiality**

An IEP facilitator is a servant of the IEP team and the IEP process. This requires trustworthiness, impartiality and an assurance that each team member will be treated equally and fairly in the discussion and decision-making process. IEP facilitators do not advocate for one person's point of view. IEP team members have the responsibility for assisting the facilitator in maintaining his or her impartiality by making the facilitator aware of instances when they believe the facilitator has deviated from this stance or is treating participants unfairly. If a facilitator cannot conduct a meeting in an impartial manner, the facilitator will withdraw from this role.

## **5. Confidentiality**

An IEP facilitator maintains the confidentiality of all information shared and discussed before, during and after the IEP meeting and does not share this information with anyone without consent.

## **6. Conflict of Interest**

An IEP facilitator discloses and discusses openly and honestly any conflict of interest, personal bias, prior knowledge of any individual, or any other matter which may be perceived as preventing the facilitator from working effectively with all team members. If, after disclosing any possible conflict, the team members agree, the facilitator may proceed in this role.

## **7. Competence & Professional Development**

If, at any point, meeting participants believe that the facilitator has deviated from his or her role, or is otherwise inappropriate or ineffective, the facilitator has a responsibility to excuse themselves from the process and allow the team members to select a new facilitator. Facilitators should act in a manner that advances the practice of facilitation and promotes the field of dispute resolution. This includes engaging in professional development activities, participating in evaluation efforts, obtaining feedback to improve their practice, and assisting new facilitators and colleagues in training, coaching and mentoring opportunities. Facilitators should demonstrate respect for differing points of view within the field, seek to learn from other practitioners, work to improve practice and better serve people in conflict.

Components of this document were influenced by or derived from the "Model Standards of Conduct for Mediators" adopted by the ABA, AAA and ACR in 2005, and "A Credo for Facilitators" created by Adler et al in 2008.

