

# Focus on Facilitated IEP Meetings and Mediation

## A Resource Document



A **facilitated IEP meeting** is a voluntary process designed to help an IEP team have a successful student-focused meeting. The facilitator is trained by the Virginia Department of Education and helps the meeting run smoothly and remain focused on the development of the IEP. Facilitators are experts in the IEP process. The facilitated IEP meeting is not a [dispute resolution process](#) like mediation. Sometimes people get confused between these two processes. The chart below describes the role of the facilitator and the difference between facilitated IEPs and Mediation.

Facilitator role	Facilitated IEPs	Mediation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishes ground rules and may help develop the agenda.</li> <li>Remains impartial and objective and creates a collaborative environment.</li> <li>Models and promotes effective, open communication and collaboration among IEP team members.</li> <li>Keeps the meeting focused on the agenda and the student.</li> <li>Clarifies points of agreement and disagreement and encourages mutual problem-solving and solutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through assisted discussion, the facilitator assists IEP team members to work together and accomplish meeting goals.</li> <li>The facilitator helps with the meeting process when discussions are difficult and complex but before an impasse is reached.</li> <li>The entire IEP team works together through the facilitation process. Attorneys are unlikely to be present.</li> <li>The facilitator assists team members to communicate effectively and collaborate to develop an appropriate IEP.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A formal, voluntary dispute resolution process involving assisted negotiation.</li> <li>A trained, impartial mediator helps the parties resolve specific disputes, usually after an impasse has been reached.</li> <li>The parties to the mediation are typically the family and school division representatives, not the entire IEP team. Attorneys may be present.</li> <li>The mediator may work separately with each party during the mediation session.</li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps team members understand each other's perspectives.</li> <li>Keeps members on task with time allotted for the meeting.</li> <li><b>Does not</b> provide advice or recommendations.</li> <li><b>Does not</b> negotiate an agreement or render an opinion on agreements that are reached.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A facilitator does not engage in discussion of the issues; instead, they guide the process.</li> <li>The outcome of the facilitated IEP is an IEP which is revised or completed, not a negotiated contract/agreement.</li> <li>The IEP created is confidential.</li> <li>A facilitated IEP may be less stressful than a formal dispute resolution process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A mediator engages in discussion of the issues and tries to resolve those issues through negotiation.</li> <li>The outcome of mediation is a written agreement/contract, if one is reached, which is enforceable in court. The agreement/contract may include a provision involving revision of an IEP.</li> <li>Mediation discussions are confidential and cannot be used as evidence in a due process hearing or civil proceeding.</li> </ul>

To request a **facilitated IEP meeting**, you can complete the form located here: [Facilitated IEP Request Form – VDOE](#).

To request **mediation**, you can fill out the form located here: [Mediation Services Request-Form – VDOE](#).

**PEATC's mission focuses on building positive futures for Virginia's children by working collaboratively with families, schools, and communities to improve opportunities for excellence in education and success in school and community life.**



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