**What is IEP (Individualized Education Program) Facilitation?**

- A facilitated IEP is an option for early conflict prevention available to parents of children with disabilities and to school districts. The district and parents can request a trained, impartial professional to attend the IEP meeting to help keep members of the IEP team focused while addressing conflicts and disagreements that may arise during the meeting.
- A trained, impartial professional (a facilitator) helps the IEP team with the IEP process. The facilitator helps:
    1. keep the meeting focused on the student
    2. ensure everyone at the table has a voice
    3. encourage active listening by all the participants
    4. keep the group from getting stuck on just one goal (or one part) of the IEP
- The process may be used for any IEP team meeting including: initial, annual, reevaluation, review/revision.
- IEP facilitation is free to all participants. WSEMS will pay the facilitator with grant funds from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. The facilitators have a maximum of three hours to spend with the parties, which includes any time spent before and after the IEP meeting.

**How to request a Facilitated IEP?**

- Contact WSEMS:
- 888-298-3857 (Toll Free Voice)
- 262-538-1618 (TTY)
- 262-538-1348 (FAX)
- Obtain the Request for Facilitated IEP by:
    1. Going to http://www.wsems.us/forms.htm
    2. Calling Jane Burns at the above toll free number)
    3. Writing to: WSEMS, P.O. Box 107, Hartland, WI 53029-0107
- Either parents or school administrators or both may request facilitation. If only one party requests facilitation, the WSEMS will contact the other party to ask for consent to the facilitation and talk about the benefits of facilitation and how the process works.
- This is a voluntary process. If either the parents or school say no, a facilitated IEP meeting will not be held.

- The WSEMS began its IEP facilitation program in 2004. The WSEMS sought advice about the program from a large group of stakeholders in the special education community.

**When to request IEP facilitation?**

- Early in the IEP process.
- When you think an IEP team meeting will be difficult for you (for example, if you feel that there may be a lack of trust, or you are worried about problems with communication).
- Facilitating an IEP team meeting encourages early dispute prevention - before a potential conflict has time to develop into a more serious dispute.
- In some cases, when parties have become very positioned on a certain issue, the WSEMS suggests that mediation may be a more appropriate way to try to resolve the issue. See answers to the question below: What are the differences in the mediation and IEP facilitation processes?

**Who participates in a facilitated IEP meeting?**

- The entire IEP team. The facilitator is present but not as a member of the team. While there are WI legal provisions for who may participate in special education mediation, there are no such requirements for who may participate in a facilitated IEP meeting.

**Who arranges the facilitated IEP meeting?**

- If a date is already set for the IEP meeting, the intake coordinator works with the parties to find a facilitator they feel comfortable working with and that is available on the date already set for the meeting.
- If no date is set for the meeting, the facilitator will work with the parties to set up a date convenient for everyone. The district is responsible for sending out the invitation letter and making sure all proper documents are brought to the meeting.

**Who are the facilitators?**

- WSEMS has a roster of professionally trained impartial mediators/ facilitators.
- They are skilled in facilitation of IEP meetings and have knowledge about the special education process.

- The WSEMS works with the parties to assign a facilitator to an IEP case after both have agreed to a facilitated IEP.

**What is the facilitator's role?**

- The facilitator is not a member of the IEP team. In the opening statement, the facilitator will (take out -share information about his or her background and) clarify their role as facilitator, which is to assist the team but not to make any decisions for the parties.
- The facilitator keeps the IEP team focused on the task of developing an IEP.
- The facilitator models and helps maintain open and respectful communication among team members and offers ways to address and resolve conflicts that may arise in the development of the IEP.

**What are the differences between IEP facilitation and mediation?**

- **In facilitation**, the facilitator helps with the meeting process and helps prevent the conflict from growing. **In mediation**, the mediator helps parties work towards resolving specific disputes.
- **In facilitation,** the facilitator usually works with the parties before they have reached an impasse when the discussion is difficult and complex. **In mediation**, the mediator works with the parties after they have reached an impasse.
- **In facilitation**, the facilitator has a 3-hour time limit to spend with the parties. **In mediation**, the mediator has no time limit for how long they can spend with the parties.
- **In facilitation**, the facilitator assists with communication in developing the IEP. **In mediation**, the mediator assists in trying to resolve underlying issues and emotions.
- **In facilitation**, the IEP process determines the meeting agenda. **In mediation**, the mediator helps the parties create an agenda.
- **In facilitation**, the outcome is the IEP is either revised or completed or not. **In mediation**, the outcome can be a written agreement that resolves the dispute and is a legally binding contract in state and federal court or no written agreement.
- **In facilitation**, we apply a mediation confidentiality law to the process but that has never been tested in court and a judge may not

agree. **In mediation,** the state has a confidentiality law, 904.085, that is tested and that judges uphold.

- **In facilitation**, the entire team usually stays together for the meeting. **In mediation,** the entire group can work together but the mediator may work separately with specific parties (caucus) at times during the process.

**What are the similarities in the role of the facilitator and mediator?**

- Modeling good communication skills for parties and districts for future conversations without the neutral.
- Ensuring that active listening is taking place.
- Helping parties look at common goals
- Keeping the process moving forward
- Keeping the process forward focused
- Keeping the process focused on the student
- Helping parties avoid blaming, shaming, "zingers," and attacks by both parties
- Manages group dynamics

**Where can I get more information?**

- WSEMS Website: www.wsems.us/
- Email: jane@wsems.us
- Call Jane Burns at 888-298-3857
- See Resources page on WSEMS website.