

The logo features a blue oval with the text "It's All About The Plan!" inside. To the left of the oval are three green grass-like blades. The word "Plan!" is in a larger, bold blue font, while "It's All About The" is in a smaller black font.

# It's All About The Plan!

The Parent and the  
Individual Education Program

## **Facilitator Handbook**

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**FRITZ & O'HARE ASSOCIATES**

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# About the Course

*It's All About the Plan!* is a course designed to provide information to assist individuals with disabilities, their families and guardians in meaningfully participating in the process of planning for the services and supports provided through the school or the adult intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) service system.

The course contains four modules:

- The Student and the Individual Education Program (IEP)
- The Parent and the Individual Education Program (IEP)
- The Individual and the Individual Support Plan (ISP)
- The Family/Guardian and the Individual Support Plan (ISP)

*It's all About the Plan!* was developed by Fritz & O'Hare Associates and Southeast Community College (SCC) in Lincoln, Nebraska. The course is offered online through Southeast Community College's Continuing Education Division.

**To register for the course:**

Contact SCC's Continuing Education Division

402-437-2700

**For information about the course, to obtain course materials,  
or to participate in a group session, contact:**



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# Handbook and Parent Guide

This Facilitator Handbook is designed to assist a facilitator in leading a group through the e-learning module, *The Parent and the Individual Education Program (IEP)*. While the module may be viewed individually, there may be benefit to watching in a group setting where participants can discuss the content and their questions with a facilitator and each other.

This handbook is designed to assist a facilitator in leading a group in viewing the module and discussing the material. Information is organized to match the outline of the module and includes:

-  **VIEW TIME** Viewing time for each part of the module
-  **REVIEW** A summary of topics discussed in the module
-  **DISCUSSION** Suggested questions to facilitate group discussion
-  **GUIDE** References to information found in the *Parent and the Individual Education Program Guidebook*
-  **TIPS** Additional information, points to emphasize, or resources

# Customizing for Different Audiences

The training should be tailored to participants' needs and interests, such as for parents of older or younger students or parents in particular school districts. When planning to present the training, think about the audience's priorities, abilities, needs, and schedule. The focus of the presentation may be modified by spending more or less time on certain sections. The module may be presented in one session or broken up for sequential sessions. Facilitators will know their audience best; therefore, final decisions regarding customization are left to their discretion.

## Beginning the Session

Supplemental information for the course is provided in the *Parent and the Individual Education Program Guidebook*, referred to as the Parent Guide throughout this document. Each participant should be given a Guide to utilize during the session and to keep as a resource for future use.

Before beginning the session, the facilitator should review the module purpose with participants. The facilitator may also want to remind participants that, while the content may be review for some, it may be new to others.

The *Parent and the IEP* module has eight sections. Facilitators are encouraged to view each section in its entirety with participants. Total viewing time for the entire module is approximately 30 minutes.

**The purpose of the *Parent and the IEP* course is to provide information to assist parents in meaningfully participating in the IEP process and in supporting their child throughout the process.**

# Part 1:About the IEP

## VIEW TIME

4 Minutes

## REVIEW

1. The basic elements of IEP requirements in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are reviewed.
2. Places to find more information are referenced.

## DISCUSSION

1. What level of knowledge and experience do you have related to the IEP law and requirements?
2. Refer participants with more in-depth questions regarding the law to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) resource in the Parent Guide.

## TIP

Contact PTI Nebraska for specific questions related to the law and your child's educational services. (Contact information is found in Appendix A of the Parent Guide.)

## GUIDE

Page 4: *About the IEP*

Appendix A: *Resources*

# Part 2: The Participants

## VIEW TIME

3 Minutes

## REVIEW

1. IEP law requires certain members to be a part of the IEP team.
2. You have the right to invite others to attend IEP meetings.

## DISCUSSION

1. Who would you expect to attend your child's IEP?
2. Are there others you wish to invite to the meeting? Discuss what role those other participants might play in supporting you or your child at the meeting.

## TIPS

1. There will likely be many people who attend your child's IEP. That's a lot of names and faces to remember. If the meeting doesn't begin with introductions, don't hesitate to ask for them!
2. If there is someone from the school you feel is important to be at your IEP, make sure you communicate your wishes to your child's IEP Manager before the meeting date.
3. There are many resources, both on a state and national level, to assist parents in understanding the requirements related to Special Education services. You can find information in *Appendix A* of the Parent Guide on how to locate these resources.

## GUIDE

Page 5-6: *The Participants*

# Part 3: The Family & Student Roles

## VIEW TIME

4 Minutes

## REVIEW

1. The parent is a central member of the team.
2. It is important for the child to be at the IEP meeting, if at all possible, especially once they reach age 16. This is the age at which transition planning must begin.

## DISCUSSION

1. Think about who knows your child best. Is this you or someone else?
2. How would you describe your relationship with your child's team?
3. How do you feel about your child attending the IEP meeting?
4. What, if anything, makes you hesitant about your child attending the meeting?

## TIPS

1. Communicate regularly with your child's teachers to develop an ongoing relationship.
2. Take the time to prepare your child as much as possible for participation in the IEP.
3. Ask a teacher for help in explaining the IEP process to your child, if needed.

## GUIDE

Page 7: *Family and Student Roles*

# Part 4: Before the IEP

## VIEW TIME

5 Minutes

## REVIEW

1. It is important that parents prepare for the IEP meeting, including gathering necessary documents and making notes.
2. Parents need to assist in preparing their children for their IEP meetings, as well. This may include asking questions, such as:
  - a. What is fun at school?
  - b. What is not fun at school?
  - c. What do you want to learn?
  - d. What new things do you want to try?
3. Parents have specific rights related to the IEP. This includes the right to:
  - a. A copy (at no charge) of the IEP or any other documents related to your child's education.
  - b. Have information explained to you in understandable language.
  - c. Have your concerns addressed related to your child's education.
4. The team must consider all aspects of your child's education, including:
  - a. Social interaction
  - b. Group activities
  - c. Class participation
  - d. Extracurricular activities

## DISCUSSION

1. What documents do you think are important to have for IEP meetings?
2. If you feel it is important to have some of these documents in advance, how can you get them?
3. What methods work well for you in preparing for IEP meetings?
4. Review the *Parent Checklist* (Appendix B in the Parent Guide). Which questions are most important for you? Would you add any more questions?
5. What is the best way to prepare your child for the IEP meeting?
6. Do you feel you know enough about your rights and what to do if they are violated?
7. Has your team addressed all of the required aspects of your child's education? If not, how can you make sure these are addressed?

## TIPS

1. Tips for organizing information:
  - a. Gather documents and bring them to the meetings.
  - b. Ask for school reports in advance so you can review before the meeting.
  - c. Make notes for the meeting.
2. Two important questions to keep in mind:
  - a. What do I want for my child?
  - b. What can be done to help my child learn new skills?
3. Select the questions you want to have answered and communicate those questions to your IEP Manager before the IEP meeting or bring them with you to the meeting.
4. Rehearse what you want to communicate at the meetings with a trusted other.
5. Help your child practice what he/she wants to say ahead of time.
6. View *The Student and the IEP* module with your child.

## GUIDE

Page 8: *Before the IEP*

Appendix B: *Parent Checklist*

Page 9: *Your Rights*

# Part 5: During the Meeting

## VIEW TIME

1 Minute

## REVIEW

1. It is important to plan, prepare and bring thoughts and concerns to the meeting.
2. The meeting is to be a conversation regarding your child.
3. Ask questions!

## DISCUSSION

1. What is your relationship with your child's IEP team?
2. Do you feel you can share your perspective?
3. What have been trouble spots for you? Have you found effective ways to address those?

## TIPS

1. If you feel you are not being taken seriously at your child's IEP, ask a friend or a disability advocate to accompany you to the meeting to help you assert yourself.
2. Your local Arc may be able to help you or a representative from PTI. Contact information for these resources are available in the Parent Guide *Appendix A Resources*.

## GUIDE

Page 10: *Building Positive Relationships*

# Part 6: Dealing with Difference & Conflict

## VIEW TIME

8 Minutes

## REVIEW

1. Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing.
2. Need to respect others' opinions.
3. A problem is usually a difference of opinion, not the other person. Focus on the problem, not the person.
4. Being an assertive communicator will often result in better outcomes.
5. A Five Step Strategy for Conflict Management may be beneficial (see page 12 of the Parent Guide).
6. If this is your child's first IEP, you can refuse to give permission to implement the IEP. However, this will result in a lack of services for your child.
7. Written notice from the school must tell you in detail what the school is proposing to do, why, and what information it used to reach the decision.
8. You may file a complaint or request mediation or due process to resolve a conflict.
9. PTI Nebraska is a resource to assist with concerns you may have.

## DISCUSSION

1. What conflicts have you experienced at IEP meetings?
2. How were those conflicts resolved? Were you satisfied?
3. Can you provide an example of a situation when you were assertive?
4. Can you provide an example of a situation when you were aggressive?
5. What could you have done differently?
6. Think back to a conflict or disagreement with your child's IEP team. What, if any, of the Five Step Strategies were utilized?
7. Were those strategies effective? Why or why not?

## TIPS

1. Use a process to understand the conflict.
  - a. What do you agree upon?
  - b. What do you disagree upon?
  - c. What are possible compromises?
2. Askp trusted others to give you feedback on your communication style.
3. Talk to your IEP Manager about your communication needs and ask him or her to help you communicate more effectively at your child's IEP.



## GUIDE

Pages 11-13: *Dealing with Difference and Conflict*

Appendix A: *PTI Nebraska*

# Part 7: Finalizing the IEP

## VIEW TIME

1 Minute

## REVIEW

1. In finalizing the IEP, it is important to:
  - Identify additional information that may be needed.
  - Review and make sure you understand the information included in the IEP.
  - Make plans for follow-up.
2. You may ask for an IEP meeting at any time if you have concerns or feel that changes need to be made to your child's educational program.

## DISCUSSION

What questions do you have about finalizing your child's IEP?

## TIPS

1. Read the IEP carefully.
2. Make sure all your concerns are addressed and request follow-up, if they are not.

## GUIDE

Page 14: *Final Tips*

# Part 8: After the Meeting

## VIEW TIME

1 Minute

## REVIEW

1. Make plans to follow up with your child's IEP team.
2. Talk regularly with the team.
3. Talk with your child.
4. Request additional meetings, as needed.

## DISCUSSION

1. How often do you communicate with your child's IEP team?
2. What strategies have you used to follow up with your child's team?

## TIPS

1. Talk with the IEP Manager to develop a strategy for regular follow-up.
2. Request e-mail addresses for all members of your child's IEP team so that you can communicate, as needed.
3. Review the IEP periodically to determine if it is being implemented.
4. If you are unhappy about how your child's education is being conducted, be part of the solution. Offer suggestions for improvement.

## GUIDE

Page 15: *Final Thoughts*