

# How to Rock an Online Virtual IEP Meeting

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## Virtual Online IEP Meetings

Everyone keeps talking about how this shutdown thing is going to change our lives forever. One area that we've realized the potential for is working at home and [online](#) meetings. I think [online](#) and virtual IEP meetings are going to be more common even when the rest of our lives stabilize.

I've been working at home and doing [online](#) and phone meetings for almost a decade. And, I know more about IEPs than most people on the planet. So my comfort level for an [online](#) IEP meeting is very high. But, I realize that may not be the case for everyone.



You don't have to be afraid of [online](#) or virtual meetings.

## What IDEA says about online meetings.

IDEA absolutely allows for this:

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### **(F) ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF MEETING PARTICIPATION**

When conducting IEP team <sup>2</sup> meetings and placement meetings pursuant to this section, section 1415(e) of this title, and section 1415(f)(1)(B) of this title, and carrying out administrative matters under section 1415 of this title (such as scheduling, exchange of witness lists, and status conferences), the parent of a child with a disability and a local educational agency may agree to use alternative means of meeting participation, such as video conferences and conference calls.

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My personal preference is video conferences such as Zoom or Skype. You can see facial expressions and body language. And, I find the technology to be better and more real-time communication. I hate those awkward pauses and interruptions in phone conference calls.

## Online and Virtual IEP Meetings

As long as parents do their due diligence, a virtual IEP meeting can be a real advantage. You may not have to leave work or find sitters for siblings, to name a few.

I am not aware of any case law that works for or against parents when it comes to [online](#) or phone IEP meetings. What I mean by that is this. I do not know if a school can force you to attend a virtual meeting if you are uncomfortable doing one. Nor do I know if you can force an in-person meeting if you want to wait for that opportunity.

Given our current situation, my professional recommendation is that you do the meeting now [online](#), rather than waiting for in-person. When we go back to school it's going to be chaotic and there will be a huge backlog of meetings to complete. Get it done now while your team is still thinking about your child and their IEP.

Please make sure that you follow up with your [After IEP Meeting](#) Letter. Right now is a confusing time and there may be an extra-long lapse between your IEP meeting and your final IEP. You want to document it all while it's fresh in your mind.

## Tips for Virtual IEP Meetings

The best over-arching tip I have is this: Keep in mind that *the only thing that has changed about this IEP meeting is the location*. That's it. Location. It is now being held [online](#) instead of in-person. Everything else should remain the same.

1. All standard rules still apply. Just because it's not in person doesn't mean that other wonky rules get to come into play. All mandated IEP team members must be there unless you excuse them.
2. Other rules that seem to "change" when it's an [online](#) meeting: Having a copy of the IEP or evals there for the parent, signing documents and parental input. None of these changes just because the location of the meeting has changed.
3. Confirm what software they are using ahead of time. Download it and try it in advance.
4. Treat it just as you would any other IEP meeting. Do your parent concerns letter and your after IEP meeting letter. The only thing that has changed about this IEP meeting is the location.
5. Be professional. Dress appropriately and sit in a quiet room with no distractions. You wouldn't show up to a regular IEP meeting in pajamas, you shouldn't for this one either. Be on time.
6. Many [online](#) meeting software programs allow for easy recording of meetings. You may want to research this option ahead of time and let your team know. Again, all rules and laws will apply—including that you SHOULD NOT record if you are in a 2-party consent state and do not have consent.
7. Charge the phone or device that you're going to use to 100%. Using these programs can be an extra heavy drain on batteries.
8. Make sure that you are in a location with solid wifi or internet access. It's really annoying on all ends when it's spotty and people freeze up mid-sentence.
9. If you're nervous about how you look or sound on video (I hate how I sound on podcasts and Facebook Lives!) that's just a personal comfort issue that you have to get over. Know that I've done a zillion conference calls and [online](#) meetings, and never once am I focused on "eeuw, that person's voice is weird!" Once you start chatting about the task at hand, you kinda forget you're [online](#).

[Online](#) meetings may be a real positive thing for many families. Once we get over this hump of insecurity and newness, they can be a huge lifesaver for snow days, car breakdowns and so many other situations.

Trust me, once you try it, you'll probably like it.

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