

## **Facilitated Individualized Education Program**

### ***Two good options to consider***

Facilitated Individualized Education Program (FIEP): The option of having a Facilitated Individualized Education Program meeting became available for students in Indiana receiving special education services in 2002. Facilitated meetings are used to encourage a more collaborative relationship between home and school with the intent of improving the quality of the student's goals and objectives, and achievement. A trained, neutral person facilitates the meeting with the goal of appropriate IEPs and services for students. The process is highly visual and all parties are encouraged to communicate and participate. The facilitator serves as a process guide and does not offer input regarding the content or decisions of the meeting. The use of the FIEP process has improved the interactions between parents and schools across Indiana.

Co-Facilitated Individualized Education Program (Co-FIEP): There are situations where the level of trust between the school and family may be diminished or non-existent. It is at these meetings that two, neutral facilitators may be most helpful in guiding the case conference process. The two facilitators are qualified and trained to work as an unbiased team. Typically, one has a public school background and one is a parent. Families and schools choose this co-facilitation alternative when they are looking for as "level playing field" as possible. Co-facilitators complete specialized instruction and practice beyond FIEP training. As neutral facilitator, individuals cannot have any previous involvement with the student or family.

Since a meeting is only as good as the preparation and planning that goes into it, allow at least two or three weeks for the request for a FIEP or Co-FIEP to be processed. This allows the facilitator(s) to make the necessary parent and school contacts crucial in developing a student centered meeting. After each meeting, case conference members are offered opportunities to provide feedback about the process. Both the school and parent are asked to sign a waiver exempting neutral facilitators from being subpoenaed for any administrative or judicial proceedings (i.e. Due Process Hearing). The parents are also asked to sign a release of information.

If you are interested in facilitating meetings, please contact the Cooperative School Services office. Several members of the CSS staff have been trained as facilitators. CSS also coordinates the scheduling of neutral facilitators from outside of our cooperative area.