

# TRAINING IN FACILITATED IEP PROCESS (FIEP) & CONFLICT PREVENTION

*Presented by*



## **Background**

For the first 25 plus years in which the United States education developed and implemented IEPs and convened the requisite meetings in which IEPs were developed, no one had designed a process to make those team meetings work. In 1997, Joyce and Doug Little addressed this issue after spending their professional lives in special education and recognizing the need.

Since January 1999, the Littles have trained over 13,000 participants in 30 states. Clients report overwhelming satisfaction with the training, and report that implementation of the training yields improved relationships and collaborative meetings that focus on the needs of the student

## **About The Training**

Participants learn to utilize facilitation skills to make meetings run smoothly, efficiently, and collaboratively. Techniques such as use of ground rules and agendas are part of the training, in addition to skills such as "*Active Listening Skills*", conflict resolution, and reconciling differences. Participants are taught to understand the various stages of a discussion and how to use these to build agreements throughout the IEP meeting process.

Also, participants learn to think of multiple alternatives and solutions for problems, rather than limiting group interaction to "*them versus us.*" Use of these skills results in soothed emotions, reduced stress, and shortened meetings all while building collaborative relationships between and among those who must implement the IEP.

Team members are taught how to remain focused on the student's needs rather than permitting the group to be pulled off track by stressful power struggles or nonproductive emotional conflicts. Skills such as keeping irrelevant information outside the IEP meeting, and skills for following through and developing an action plan to ensure that the IEP for the student is implemented and supported are also components of the training.

### **About Meeting Facilitation**

The meeting chair is always and ultimately responsible for the meeting and its results. Sometimes, it is helpful to have the assistance of a meeting facilitator when meetings are colored by certain characteristics, such as management of complex and lengthy information, the involvement of multiple agencies, the presence of an advocate, or past history of uneven feelings. Under such circumstances, it is wise to use a meeting facilitator. While anyone can utilize the facilitation skills presented by this workshop, they are especially useful and critical for implementation by a facilitator who assists the chair in managing the meeting process.

### **Training Format**

The Facilitated IEP (FIEP) training is provided in a 2-day or 3-day workshop format. The 3-day training is scheduled to coincide with the contractual day of the educational organization and to provide the training within the constraints of existing bargaining unit agreements, approximately 8:30 to 3:30. The 2-day training is a longer day.

Two or three trainers present the workshop, working collaboratively and modeling the techniques and skills to be presented. The training is limited to a maximum of 40 participants, and is presented for no fewer than 15. This is to ensure individualization of instructional support necessary for the participants to develop and to practice the skills presented.

### **Continuous Support**

In addition to the workshop, Key2Ed comes back at no additional cost to work with the workshop participants for an additional ½ day of seminar activities and support. In this way, Key2Ed ensures that the process will be used properly and to the maximum benefit for IEP meeting participants. This reduces the possibility of the "*dusty manual syndrome*," that is, workshops where information is presented and even implemented for a short time, and then shelved for lack of support from the workshop presenters.

Additionally Key2Ed supports participants 24-hour per day, 365 day per year through telephone, email communication and teleconferencing. If a participant wants a Key2Ed associate to help them prepare for an upcoming IEP meeting and/or debrief after a meeting, an associate is available and will coach the participant.

### **Targeting Participants**

Suggested participants include special education and building level administrators, special education teachers, and school support staff such as school psychologists and speech specialists. Parents have successfully trained in addition to staff and administrators.

