



Sanford  
Autism  
Consulting

*CRYSTAL SANFORD,  
M.ED., M.A. CCC-SLP*

**SANFORD AUTISM  
CONSULTING**

**Preparing for  
Your Best IEP  
Meeting Yet!**



A LITTLE ABOUT  
ME...

# Crystal Sanford, M.Ed., M.A. CCC-SLP

I am a...

- Autism Mom
- Special Needs Sibling
- Speech-Language Pathologist
- Special Education Advocate/Consultant
- Owner of Sanford Autism Consulting, circa 2016



# Sanford Autism Consulting exists to...

empower fellow autism and neurodiverse families who have children with IEPs. Our goal is to move you from frustration and overwhelm to confidence and hope. We do this by advocating alongside you to persistently pursue what your child deserves at school.

# Proprietary Information

- Material found in this PowerPoint may not be reproduced in whole or in part in any form without the written permission of the publisher (Sanford Autism Consulting), with the exception of information drawn from readily available IDEA/IEP specifications.

# Disclaimer

- Information presented through this presentation should not be construed as legal or medical advice. For guiding information regarding your *specific* case, please contact a legal or medical professional.

then  
— & —  
now



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#)

IDEA  
AND  
IEPS

THEN AND NOW

# History of Special Education in the U.S.

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (**IDEA**), originated in 1975 (Education for All Handicapped Children's Act of 1975 or PL 94-142). It is our nation's special education law. Most recent update=2004.
- IDEA requires that schools *find* and *provide* a Free and Appropriate Education (**FAPE**) to students suspected of having a disability in the Least Restrictive Environment (**LRE**), at no cost to the parent. This education should emphasize “special education and related services designed to meet a child’s unique needs”. (Section 300.111)
- IDEA protects the rights of children with disabilities and their parents.
- IDEA covers children birth-21 years (May be 22 ½ in California, depending on the student’s birthdate) or until they receive a high school diploma (whichever happens first).
- IDEA drives Individualized Education Programs (**IEPs**), as well as the California Ed Code.

[Timeline](#)





*WHAT'S  
HAPPENING  
NOW???*

# *What's happening now???*

- There has been an exponential growth in the number of children requiring special education support:
  - Autism
  - Dyslexia
  - Specific Learning Disability
  - Other Health Impaired
  - Section 504 Plans



# Current Status of Special Education

Unfortunately, the current “system” is broken. IEP teams are currently overworked, over-caseload, and doing their best with what they have been given.

Funding has not increased although the number of children requiring special education services has increased exponentially. Congress’ promise of 40% funding of extra cost of special education has been only about 14.6% in actuality. [New Relief Bill](#)

***Solution:*** As parents, professionals, and allies, we can learn to work *collaboratively* with schools and IEP teams so that children are afforded the Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) afforded them under the law (IDEA).

***Final Note:*** The school/school district is **not** our “*enemy*”. Education is a **BUSINESS!** We can learn to handle ourselves in a professional, business manner.

# 5 Tips to Prepare for Your Best IEP Meeting Yet!



∞ In life, we make mistakes,  
we learn from them,  
and we do better next time.

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-ND](#)



# Tip #1: Take Time to Review and Prepare

- Review your IEP documents; do you have a copy of the final IEP from your last meeting?
- Request a copy of your upcoming IEP document and assessment reports (if applicable)
- Organize past IEP documents (binder, computer, etc.)
- Create a separate email account

# Tip #2: Parent Input Statement



- Create a concise 1-2 paragraph statement
- Your “vision statement” for this year’s IEP
- Add a note regarding your child’s strengths, challenges, interests, and goals for the future
- Also add your top 1-2 areas of concern that you want to address this school year.



# Tip #3: Record Your IEP Meeting

- 24-hours notice to **inform** the team that you will record
- If possible, use a digital recorder and have batteries on hand
- Evidence for the future





# Tip #4: Don't Go it Alone!

- If at all possible, bring someone with you to every IEP meeting
- Moral support
- Emotional support
- Options: Regional Center Service Coordinator, private therapists, advocate, family member, etc.



# Tip #5: Watch Your Words

- Prepare your questions prior to the meeting
- Ask for clarification
- "Best" versus "Appropriate"
- Meaningful Parent Participation
- Trigger words



## Do This! ~ YES

- Ask clarifying questions
- State the facts
- Send short and sweet emails; 5 sentences or less when possible
- Use bullet points
- Refer to “a “reliable reporter”

## Avoid These ~ NO

- Emotionally charged words (negligent, impossible, safety)
- Snarky or passive aggressive tone to emails
- **Bold**, **ALL CAPS**, *italicized*
- Making demands or threats
- Placing emphasis on your *opinion*



*Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. That vision is your child's success!*

*~paraphrased from Charlotte Lunsford*



# PARTING WORDS...



# Parting Words...

---

You have a host of rights  
under federal law IDEA

---

You know your child best!

---

Ask questions and trust  
your gut.

---

Seek help if needed, you  
are not alone!



THANK YOU FOR  
WATCHING!

# Connect with Sanford Autism Consulting...

- Facebook: #sdautismhelp,  
[www.facebook.com/sdautismhelp](http://www.facebook.com/sdautismhelp)
- Instagram: @sanfordautism,  
[www.instagram.com/sanfordautism](http://www.instagram.com/sanfordautism)
- [Live Show](#) & [Podcast](#): Thriving Special Families





# A Guide for New Special Needs Parents

- From Diagnosis to Empowerment, a 25-minute audio lesson
- Listen today, [Listenable.com](https://www.listenable.com)

