



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ALLIANCE

ISSUE 6 2008

THANK YOU!

The DD Council and Ann Marie Lane, the YEA Project Director, would like to thank all of the youth with and without disabilities who were involved in the grant projects and activities. The Leadership Advisory Committee Members helped to shape the direction of the grant with their on-going input. Many other youth and young adults assisted as trainers in the pilot leadership training program, as participants in our numerous workshops, as advisors for our website and by sharing their experiences with us and others.

We also extend our thanks to all of the parents, professionals and community organizations who supported our efforts to train and promote new leaders from within the youth and young adults with developmental disabilities in the State of Maryland



Getting Involved in Your IEP

By Stephanie L. Borges

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) tells all public schools they must write an Individual Education Program (IEP) for each student with a disability. The student first has to meet the federal and state special guidelines for special education. An IEP is made to fit your individual needs. The purpose of the IEP is to help you compete equally with students without disabilities.

One of the best reasons for developing an IEP is so teachers will have specific information about you. It tells them your strengths (what you are good at!) and challenges (what you may not be so good at, like activities when you might have to ask for some help) in school and at home. It even tells them how you learn and how best to teach you. It helps teachers and administrators decide which things will help you in school; like if the teacher gave you more time to finish your class work; if you need a calculator in math; if you need someone to help you take notes; whether or not you need written directions to help you remember what to do next, or having someone help you ride the public bus. The IEP tells your teacher how to best support you help make you successful.

When YOU and the team are developing your IEP remember to include the following:

- Your strengths and weaknesses.
- The team must listen to the concerns that YOU and your parents/guardians have about your education and about any assistance you will need to transition from school to the adult world.
- The team must consider any types of supports or assistive technology you might need in order to complete your work.
- The team must also think about results from any tests that were given.
- And at least once a year, the team must talk about whether or not you need extended school year services (ESY).

It is a lot to consider, but all of it is important.

(continued)



YEA UPDATE

THE FINAL NEWSLETTER

This is the last newsletter from the YEA grant.

Our three year grant has ended as of March 31, 2008.

All of the newsletters may be downloaded from the Maryland DDC website at www.md-council.org click on PROGRAMS – then YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ALLIANCE, choose the newsletter you would like to download. Each newsletter will print on four pages.

Check the back page of this newsletter for information about obtaining the 40-hour leadership training program

“Taking Control of Your Life”

Getting Involved in You IEP

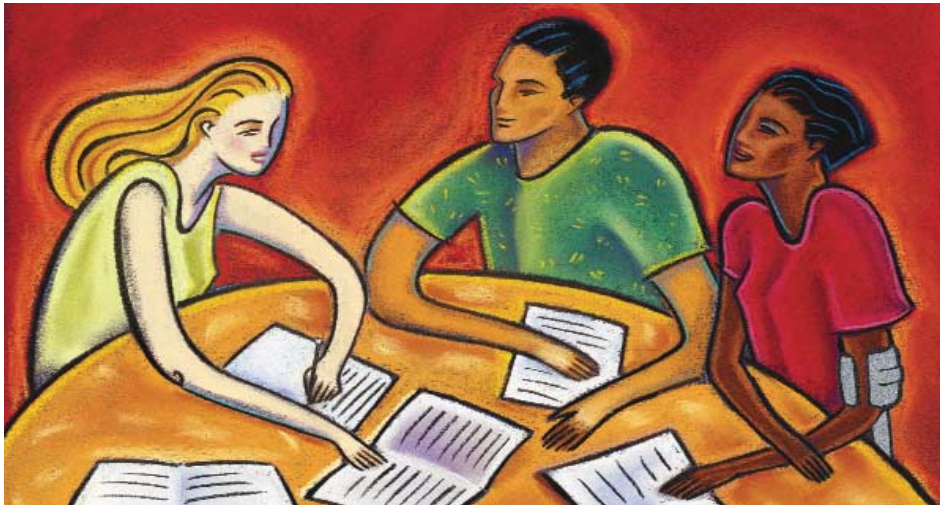
Every IEP must also include the following:

- How you are doing NOW in school and at home
- Goals on your IEP -
 - Things you need to work on and improve
 - How the team can tell if you can now do those goals
 - How the team will tell your parents/guardians about your progress
- Things the school needs to give you in order for you to do well, like calculators and extra time to finish your work.
- Whether or not you need to meet with your guidance counselor or occupational therapist and for how long.
- When you are 16, there will be a statement that tells what you want to do when you grow up.

In Maryland, when you are 14 years old, you must be invited to participate in your IEP meetings. The IEP team members are:

- YOU, the student
- your parents or guardians
- at least one of your regular education teacher if you are in a general education classes
- at least one special educator
- a representative of the local agency who can provide you with needed community services/resources
- an individual who can explain test results
- if needed, a speech pathologist, an occupational therapist, and/or a person to support your needs
- & any guest you or your parents/guardians invite.

Being a team member is extremely important because you know yourself better than anyone. You will be able to tell the team how you feel about school and some of the things that you think can help you learn better. The law requires that your IEP is reviewed and revised, if necessary, at least one time each school year. This means that you and your IEP team must have at least one IEP meeting each year. You, or any other team member, can schedule an IEP team meeting as many times a year as you choose if you think that your IEP needs to be revisited and changes need to be made. Each IEP team meeting is approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour long.



To prepare for your IEP meeting you can do the following:

1. Talk to your parents and teachers about the upcoming meeting. Review with them what the schedule is—what will happen first, second, third, etc.
2. Review last year's IEP with a parent, guardian, mentor or a teacher. Look at the way the IEP is set up. Remember that the vocabulary can be tricky, ask lots of questions about the vocabulary and make sure that you understand what the IEP is saying.
3. Think about your strengths and needs in school and at home, and then create a list. Bring this list with you to your IEP meeting. Make sure that you tell the team what you think you need in school to succeed. By coming to this meeting prepared, you will assist the team in better aiding you in the coming school year.
4. Write your goals for each subject this school year. Look at what your goals were from the prior year and decided what, if any, changes need to be made. DON'T forget to include goals for the transition areas.
5. Practice what you want to say at the meeting with a friend or family member. If you are nervous, look in a mirror and practice what you will say. It is always good to practice before the meeting so that everything that you think is important is presented to the group. Remember, this meeting is for you so make sure that all the things you want said are said!

Some of the benefits to fully participating in your IEP meeting are that you will remember your goals for the coming year; be able to relay your strengths and weaknesses to the team; and be able to advocate for yourself. It also lets the team know you are ready to do your part in getting a good education. Remember, the purpose of creating an IEP is to improve results and outcomes for you, so YOU are the most important member of the team!

So don't just attend your IEP meetings— *be an active team member!*

The **Youth Empowerment Alliance (YEA)** is a project of the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council which promotes independence and leadership skills in youth⁽¹⁾ and young adults with disabilities.

The **YEA** seeks to engage youth and emerging leaders with disabilities in activities that will enable them to define a vision for themselves and their communities. The result will be a successful transition and a higher quality of life for each individual.



Any youth or young adult interested in participating in YEA Project activities, please contact:

**Ann Marie Lane,
YEA Project Director
410-937-4957**

AnnMarieL@md-council.org

(1) Refers to youth at least 14 years of age

Community Resources

RESOURCES

1. www.youthhood.org

The Youthhood website for young people with disabilities.

2. www.md-ylf.org

"MD Youth Leadership Forum" provides youth preparing to exit school with training and experiences, role models, and mentors to assist them in becoming tomorrow's leaders.

3. www.md-council.org

On the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council website you can download Unit #2 IEP Process from the "Take Control of Your Life" leadership training program.

Go to the website: www.md-council.org

- Click on PROJECTS
- Click on YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ALLIANCE
- Click on Unit #2- IEP Process (*listed under YEA Youth Leadership Training*)

YOUTH LEADERSHIP TRAINING

"Take Control of Your Life" is a leadership training program. The YEA grant developed this training to assist YOU (youth and young adults with disabilities) in learning the skills you will need to be successful in school and the adult world. *Are you interested in learning more about the following?*

- Solving problems,
- Making your own decisions,
- Learning how to get involved and become a leader in your community,
- Sharing with others what YOU want to learn about, and
- Making plans for your career and all the things you want to do after high school!

If the answer is YES—then share the information about the "Take Control of Your Life" program with your parents, guardians, school personnel, or someone you know in the community. The entire program is **FREE** and can be downloaded from the Maryland DDC website. Go to www.md-council.org click on PROGRAMS—then YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ALLIANCE

If you have any questions about the program you may call the DD Council at [410]-767-3670 or send an e-mail to info@md-council.org

Federal Grant No. 90DN0193 A Project of National Significance, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Developmental Disabilities, Washington, DC

Maryland DD Council
217 E. Redwood St. • Ste 1300
Baltimore, MD 21202

