



Checklist: Preparing for a Conciliation Conference

In Minnesota, if you receive a Prior Written Notice from the school district and you object in writing within 14 calendar days to what the district is proposing, one of your due process options is to request a conciliation conference to resolve your disagreement. A Prior Written Notice is a written explanation of any proposed or refused action to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or education placement of a pupil, or the provision of FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education).

Your child's IEP team must hold your conciliation conference within 10 calendar days from the date the district receives your request, and at a time and place that is convenient for both you and the district. The entire IEP team is not required to attend, only appropriate district staff.

The following checklist will help you actively participate in your conciliation conference and engage with the school district to determine the appropriate way forward for your child.

Before your conciliation conference:

- If you need assistance to prepare, contact PACER Center to speak to a parent advocate. You may request that a PACER advocate participate in your conciliation conference.
- Think about what you specifically object to in the district's proposal or refusal. Do you disagree with the district's denial for a special education evaluation? Do you disagree with the annual goals and objectives? Are you concerned about the amount of special education and related services? Do you believe the IEP does not include accommodations you discussed with the IEP team and agreed were appropriate for your child at the IEP team meeting?
- Consider making a list of your objections to the district's proposal or refusal and the concerns that you want to resolve. Put your list in order so your strongest objections and your most important concerns are at the top. You may want to send your concerns to the IEP Case Manager before the meeting.
- Gather documents that support your objections and concerns. These might include:
 - Your own notes or any notes you received from school staff from the last IEP team meeting
 - Emails, daily communication logs, incident reports, or your notes on phone calls from school staff
 - Samples of your child's schoolwork or any records you keep at home related to your concerns, such as how many hours your child spends on schoolwork daily
 - Special education records including evaluation reports, current and previous IEPs, and progress reports
- Read the Notice of Meeting to find out who is expected to attend. If you see an unfamiliar name, talk to the IEP Case Manager and ask about the person's role in the meeting. If any school staff whose expertise you think is important to have at the table is not listed, talk to the IEP Case Manager and request they also be invited.
- You may also invite someone to the meeting for support, such as a trusted person from your community who knows your child, a medical or mental health professional, or a racial equity and cultural representative. If you do so, it is important to notify the district before the meeting that they may attend.
- If you have a transition-age youth (ninth grade or above), ask if they would like to participate and practice self-advocacy skills or just be available to answer questions and give input
- Consult PACER resources related to your specific concerns about your child's special education services and supports. If you are not sure where to start, talk to a PACER advocate to be connected to the resources that will help you prepare.

During your conciliation conference:

- Arrive a few minutes early to choose a seat where you feel comfortable and organize your documents. If the meeting is held virtually, make sure there are no technical issues with your remote connection.
- Bring a picture of your child that everyone can see, so the focus stays on the student and their unique educational needs
- Before getting into the discussion, take a few moments to:
 - Consider requesting that an agenda be established so everyone is aware of the areas needing to be addressed
 - Ask how long everyone is available to meet, so you can monitor the clock and complete your list
 - Ask everyone to introduce themselves and explain the different roles they play in your child's educational services
- Engage. Focus the district on your concerns. Ask questions. Listen. Keep an open mind to all the options presented to resolve your disagreement.
- Share your data and the documents that highlight your concerns. Request data from the district to help you understand the school's perspective. Discuss if more data needs to be collected.
- At the end of your meeting, take a few moments to:
 - Ask whoever led the meeting to review the main points that were discussed and any agreements reached. This will help you confirm the outcomes.
 - Review your list of objections and concerns. If any items were not discussed, ask how the district will address them moving forward.
 - Ask to review the next steps. What action steps are expected of district staff? What action steps are expected of you, the parent? It is important to leave with a clear and mutual understanding of what should happen following your conciliation conference.

After your conciliation conference:

- Within five school days after the conciliation conference, the district must provide you with a conciliation conference memorandum that describes the district's final proposed offer of service, along with any proposed IEP resulting from the conciliation conference. If you do not receive a conciliation conference memo within five school days, contact the IEP Case Manager or the district representative who led the meeting and request that it be sent.
- When you receive the conciliation conference memo, read it carefully to be informed of the school district's final proposed offer of service. If it does not reflect agreements you understood were reached with the school district at your meeting, or if you have questions about any part of the proposal, contact the IEP Case Manager or the district representative who led the meeting.
- The district may send you additional documents, such as a Prior Written Notice, an IEP proposal, or a Prior Written Notice of Evaluation. Read these documents carefully and respond to any district proposal within the 14-calendar day deadline indicated on the Parental Consent/Objection form.
- If you were not able to resolve your disagreement with the school district at your conciliation conference, there are other due process options you can use to advocate for your child. Contact a PACER Center advocate, your child's special education staff, or the Minnesota Department of Education, Division of Compliance and Assistance for help in understanding your options.

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