

# Checklist When IEP Teams Consider a Shortened School Day for Non-Medical Reasons

**Purpose:** LEAs can follow this process to discuss and determine the rationale for a non-medically necessary shortened school day. Use this checklist to move through the process, and for monitoring any student already on a non-medically necessary shortened school day.

**NOTE for IEP Teams:** Do not proceed with this checklist if there is insufficient documentation to answer or discuss each consideration as an IEP team. Carefully consider any external reports or documentation provided by the parent or attendees at the IEP meeting that might be pertinent to the decision about the need for a shortened school day for the learner. Carefully consider this information in the decision-making process. For example, consider medical documentation provided by the family. If the district determines medical documentation is needed to determine a FAPE for the student, then the district must pay for the evaluation needed to obtain the district-requested medical documentation. The district could make this decision because they have no medical documentation and need it to determine a FAPE or have some medical information and need more medical information in addition to what has previously been provided or what has been provided by the parent.

## Prior to the IEP Team Meeting

### 1. Secure Professional Documentation

- Obtain documentation and/or any external reports or documentation provided by the parent or attendees at the IEP meeting specifying the need, condition, limitations, expected duration, and recommendations for the shortened school day.

**Iowa Code Summary:** “‘School day’ means any day, including a partial day, when children are in attendance at school for instructional purposes. School day has the same meaning for all children in school, including children with and without disabilities. The length of the school day for an eligible individual shall be the same as that determined by the local educational agency’s board of directors for all other individuals, unless a shorter day or longer day is prescribed in the eligible individual’s individualized education program.” (281– 41.11(2)).

### 2. Convene the IEP Team

- Schedule an IEP team meeting that includes all relevant stakeholders to discuss the student’s needs based on the professional documentation.

**Iowa Code Summary:** Parents and relevant personnel must be part of the IEP team, and their input is crucial in shaping the educational decisions for the student (281—41.321(3)).

## During the IEP Team Meeting

### 1. Weigh Professional Opinion

- Carefully consider any external reports or documentation provided by the parent or attendees at the IEP meeting that might be pertinent to the decision about the need for a shortened school day for the learner. Carefully consider this information in the decision-making process, as it is essential in determining the appropriateness of a shortened school day.

**Iowa Code Summary:** The medical opinion from the prescribing medical provider is critical and must be taken into account when evaluating how a disability impacts a student’s education (281—41.320(1)).

## 2. Involve Parents

- Ensure that parents are fully informed and participate in the decision-making process. Confirm their understanding of how the external reports or documentation provided by the parent or attendees influences decisions.

**Iowa Code Summary:** Parents must be actively involved in the IEP process, ensuring they participate in decisions related to their child's education (281—41.321(3)).

## 3. Assess Educational Impact

- Evaluate the impact of the shortened school day on the student's ability to access the general education curriculum and meet academic and functional goals. Explore alternative strategies or accommodations.

**Iowa Code Summary:** The school day should be the same for all students unless otherwise specified in the IEP, reflecting individualized needs based on expert recommendations (281—41.116).

## 4. Document in the IEP (CHOOSE ONE ACTION)

- If IEP team agrees on a shortened school day:** Clearly document the rationale for the shortened school day in the IEP:
  - Include external reports or documentation provided by the parent or attendees and relevant IEP team discussion
  - Specify the duration and any conditions under which the student would return to a full school day
  - Ensure PWN documentation includes rationale for the IEP team's decision

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.320(2) (All decisions, including deviations from the standard school day, must be documented in the IEP).

- If IEP team does NOT agree on a shortened school day:** Clearly document the rationale for not moving to a shortened school day in the IEP:
  - Include external reports or documentation provided by the parent or attendees and relevant IEP team discussion
  - Ensure PWN documentation includes rationale for the IEP team's decision

## 5. Monitor and Review Progress

- Develop a plan to monitor the student's progress during the shortened school day. Schedule regular IEP meetings to review data and progress.

**Iowa Code Summary:** The IEP must be reviewed periodically, at least annually, to ensure it continues to meet the student's educational needs, especially in light of ongoing medical advice (281—41.324(1)).

## 6. Develop a Reintegration Plan

- Create a reintegration plan with clear criteria and timelines for returning to a full school day when appropriate.

**Iowa Code Summary:** Plans must support the student's educational progress without unnecessary restrictions, ensuring the provision of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) (281—41.101).

## 7. Ensure Parental Rights and Involvement

- Ensure parents fully understand their rights under IDEA, including the right to consent to or challenge decisions made by the IEP team regarding their child's school day.
- Provide information on how to resolve disputes if the parents disagree with the decision(s), especially if they feel the professional recommendations have not been adequately considered (ASK Resource Center Link)

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.507 (Outlines the procedural safeguards available to parents, including the right to mediation and due process hearings).

## 8. Create Communication Plans and Pathways

- Discuss and create plans to keep IEP team members informed after the IEP meeting. This includes Obtaining Signed Consent between LEA, parents, and any other party to exchange information.

# After the IEP Meeting

### 1. Monitor and Review Progress

- Implement a plan for monitoring the student's progress during the shortened school day, collecting data on academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being. Schedule regular IEP meetings to review progress, with attention to any updates from the educational professional. Regular IEP meetings are recommended to occur monthly using all available valid and reliable data.

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.324(1) (The IEP must be reviewed periodically, at least annually, to ensure it continues to meet the student's educational needs, especially in the context of ongoing medical advice).

### 2. Monitor Progress on the Reintegration Plan

- Review progress on a plan for reintegrating the student into a full school day when appropriate, with clear criteria and timelines, developed in consultation with the professional providers and/or staff

**Iowa Code Reference:** Although no specific code addresses reintegration plans, the requirement to provide FAPE under 281—41.101 implies that plans should support the student's educational progress without unnecessary restrictions.

### 3. Maintain Ongoing Communication with Education Professional Providers

- Keep regular communication with the student's professional providers to ensure the educational plan aligns with education professional recommendations. Update the IEP as necessary based on these communications.

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.321(2) (Allows for the inclusion of outside agencies, such as education professional recommendations, in the IEP team if they have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child).

### 4. Ensure Parental Rights and Involvement

- Ensure parents fully understand their rights under IDEA, including the right to consent to or challenge decisions made by the IEP team regarding their child's school day. Provide information on how to resolve disputes if the parents disagree with the decisions, especially if they feel the education professional recommendations have not been adequately considered.

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.507 (Outlines the procedural safeguards available to parents, including the right to mediation and due process hearings).