

# 10 TIPS TO AVOID DISPUTES

LENORE KNUDTSON

KNUDTSON LAW, LLC



## **Tip #1:**

**Keep the focus on the child!**

**Avoid divisive statements like “We can’t do that,” or “The district doesn’t have the staff.”**

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**Propose services AFTER meaningful parent participation.**

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**Focus on the educational benefit to the child.**

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**Get the child’s input WHENEVER appropriate.**

## **Tip #2: Use data to inform and drive services.**

**Data makes sense!**

**Data is level-headed.**

**It is hard for anyone, including a frustrated parent, to dispute good data.**

## **Tip #3:**

**Use Facilitators!**

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**IEP facilitation is VERY successful in calming angst and resolving disputes informally.**

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**Facilitation focused on the process, rather than a certain outcome, helps the parties move beyond impasse.**

## **Tip #4:**

**Ensure that the necessary decision-makers are present at IEP meetings.**

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**Convening a team with the right people is critical.**

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**FAPE decisions should not be delayed until the right players are present unless absolutely necessary.**



**Tip #5:  
Perfect the ART of Prior  
Written Notice!!!**

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**Prior Written Notice (PWN)  
can be the most USEFUL tool  
in your kit.**

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**It is required, so you may as  
well make it beneficial.**

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**Use a PWN form to  
thoroughly explain  
proposals or refusals in a  
language that parents can  
easily consume.**

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**Let parents know when  
changes will be effective in  
your PWN form.**

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**Thoroughly document other  
options you considered, like  
parent suggestions or  
requests.**

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**Include the data upon which  
the school's decision is  
based.**

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**Use the form in meetings to  
document the discussion.**

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**In the event that a dispute  
cannot be resolved  
informally, you are one step  
closer to a solid record  
demonstrating the school's  
efforts.**

**Tip #6:  
Reduce confusion!**

**Lack of understanding contributes to frustration.  
Help parents understand the process, the language,  
and the expectations.**

**Tip #7:  
Use Visual Aids.**

**The use of a white board or easel pad can help  
organize the process.**

**A visual image of the group's accomplishments  
can be very beneficial.**

**Tip #8:  
Move on!**

**Don't stay stuck.**

**Resolve the issues you can, and respectfully defer the  
difficult issues to later in the same meeting.**

**Capitalize on positive momentum!**

**Tip #9:  
Build an agenda in advance.**

**Seek meaningful parental input into the  
agenda prior to any meeting.**

**Don't wait until its too late. Convening meetings to  
address lack of expected progress builds trust.**

**Tip #10  
Schedule frequent reality checks.**

**Parents want to know that what your doing is working!**

**Since an IEP can be amended by agreement between the  
school and parent after the annual IEP, hold more  
frequent mini-meetings to build confidence in the  
school's program and make adjustments where needed.**

**Be responsive and proactive!**