

Utah Special Education Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS)

Related Service Provider Interview Guide

OT/PT

1. What are the best things about your LEA's special education program?

TIPS: Focus on the things that are great about the special education program in your school; for example, teaming and collaboration both within special education and with general education, administrative support, available resources, staff development, parent involvement and support, creative or unique programs and techniques that you have implemented, ways that you are incorporating motor activities into students' educational activities. This is your chance to BRAG!!!

2. Child Find

a. Before making the decision to refer a student for a special education evaluation, list four types of documentation teachers keep to demonstrate that classroom interventions failed.

TIPS: Although prereferral interventions are no longer required under IDEA and the Utah State Board of Education Special Education Rules, Response to Intervention (RtI) data are. Your core curriculum/interventions must be identified and described along with a minimum of two supplemental programs/instruction/interventions with their supporting data attached. This is to demonstrate the appropriateness of curriculum materials, techniques, extra practice or small group instruction that have been used to insure that the student's difficulties are not the result of a lack of appropriate instruction in math and/or reading as per No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The student's general education teacher will need to have current classroom based data, results of local and state assessments, classroom observations, and any evaluation results that may have been made available by parents/guardians.

b. Who are two people who can make referrals for a special education evaluation?

TIPS: A parent/guardian or the LEA staff (e.g., general education teachers, building principal, school-wide assistance team members) can initiate referrals for evaluation for special education.

3. Evaluation and Eligibility

a. Who are the required members of the evaluation/eligibility team?

TIPS: The evaluation and eligibility team is composed of the student's parents/guardians and a "team of qualified professionals". A team of "qualified

professionals” may include, but is not limited to, such school personnel as the student’s general education teacher, a special education teacher and/or another person knowledgeable in educational assessment, a school psychologist, a speech-language pathologist, an occupational and/or physical therapist, audiologist and/or other specialist such as for vision, behavior or hearing.

b. Describe two ways in which you participate in the evaluation process.

TIPS: Discuss how you receive referrals for assessments, the types of assessments you administer including observational activities, how you collect information from parents/guardians and other professionals in and out of the educational setting. How and when your assessment results are communicated to parents and other members of the evaluation/eligibility team and what type of written summary of results you prepare for students you evaluate.

c. Describe two ways that you or the team obtain parental input into the evaluation process.

TIPS: When a referral for special education evaluation arises from general education, a contact is made from the general education teacher to the parent describing concerns regarding the student’s school performance. The person doing the educational evaluation will often interview the parent for a history on the student’s health and development. All information gathered about the student is discussed with parents/guardians as they participate in the process of determining whether or not their student is a student with a disability.

d. How does your Evaluation Team summarized evaluation results?

TIPS: All assessment methods and their corresponding results are identified on the Eligibility Results Summary form (ERS) completed through using the district’s IEP Goalview program.

e. What is your role in the eligibility determination meeting?

TIPS: Discuss your role collecting, summarizing, and analyzing evaluation data for the group in order for the team to determine if the student is a student with a disability. Identify whether or not additional data are require and what that is. If applicable, mention your discussion with parents/guardians and other members of the evaluation/eligibility team.

f. What are two factors you must consider when selecting assessments to administer to a student?

TIPS: A variety of assessments must be used to gather relevant functional, developmental and academic information about the student. Tests must reflect the student’s aptitude or achievement level despite sensory, manual or speaking skills. Tests

must be valid and reliable for the purposes used. The student must be assessed in all areas of suspected disability and tests must yield information sufficient to address the students needs whether associated with a particular disability or not. Tests must be administered in a student's native language or other mode of communication and may not be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis.

g. What assessment tools and training opportunities have been made available to you so that you can select and use instruments that are technically sound and valid?

TIPS: Describe the standardized and diagnostic instruments you use as well as any checklists, observational guides, and other tests on which you have been trained. Discuss any training opportunities in which you have participated in such as district, state, and regional workshops, conferences, UAAACT, or other specialized team training.

4. IEP

a. Who are the required members of the IEP team?

TIPS: The required members of the IEP team are the student's parent(s), the LEA, at least one general education teacher of the student, a special education teacher, a individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results if no other team member is able to do so, the student (when appropriate), and other individuals as appropriate. If a required IEP team member will not be present during an IEP meeting, prior written permission must be obtained by both the student's parents/guardians and the LEA by completing the IEP Excusal Form must be completed and the person's IEP input information must be attached.

b. Describe two of your responsibilities in the IEP process.

TIPS: Once you have evaluated a student's skills (motor or communication), your responsibilities include summarizing the results of your assessment for the parents/guardians and other IEP team members and, if the student is eligible for your services (motor or speech), developing proposed IEP goals to be presented by you or another member of the IEP team at the IEP meeting. You are also responsible to ensure that the goals you have written that are included on the student's IEP are implemented with the student and progress data are collected.

c. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being low, how involved are you in the IEP meeting?

TIPS: Rate your involvement in IEP meetings honestly. Many related service providers are spread across many schools and have such large caseloads that attending IEP's on a regular basis may be impossible. However, if you have a certified assistant who can attend the meeting for you or you work with teachers whose knowledge of your goals and activities is thorough, discuss how they represent you at IEP meetings. Also, discuss your interactions with parents/guardians outside of the IEP meeting, such as individual meetings, telephone conversations, etc.

d. How do you coordinate/collaborate with other members of the IEP team to implement the IEP?

TIPS: Identify how you and your team members keep in touch. Do you do so through staff meetings, team meetings, e-mail, voice mail, memos, text messages etc. because of assignments across schools? Do you have assistance in keeping student files up-to-date with data, therapy notes, assessments, etc?

5. U-PASS Data

a. Discuss four issues to consider when deciding how a student with disabilities will participate in the U-Pass testing program(s) (unless preschool, K or over 18).

TIPS: You need to look first at the age and grade level of the student to determine for which U-PASS assessments s/he will be eligible during the current school year. Next, consider the nature of the student's program and whether it is basically an academic or a functional program. If the student is in a functional program, the Utah Alternate Assessment (UAA) may be the assessment of choice for his/her participation in U-PASS. Most students in special education are in academically based programs even though they may be working below grade level in some areas. Third, you will want to consider what if any testing accommodations will be used for the student taking the general U-PASS assessments in core curriculum areas. The accommodations must match those used with the student in the general curriculum and classroom and must be set forth in his/her IEP. The use of accommodations allowable should be verified by checking on those identified in the U-PASS testing program, especially in specific subtests. For example, reading directions aloud to students might be ok in some math subtests but not in any reading subtests. In addition, it is important to consider who will be administering the test to the student (familiarity of the tester to the student), as well as the time of day and the location.

6. Access to the General Curriculum

a. How does the IEP team determine the amount of special education and related services a student needs?

TIPS: The amount of special education and related services that a student receives depends upon the student's IEP goals that have been written to address their educational needs. The variety, breadth, and depth of the goals direct the IEP team in determining how much instructional time will be required to assist the student in meeting his/her goals.

b. How does the IEP team determine placement?

TIPS: Special education placement is determined on the basis of the student's IEP goals and where (setting) those goals can best be addressed. Settings vary from the general

education classroom to a special school, home or hospital. The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) provision of IDEA dictates that students should not be removed from their general education classroom unless the nature or severity of their disability is such that education in general education classes, even with supplementary aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

c. List two ways you and the team ensure each student with disabilities participates with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate?

TIPS: Special educators and related service providers may use a variety of ways to keep students with disabilities working with their non-disabled peers. In some schools, general and special educators co-teach certain classes, special education or related service providers pullout services may be restricted to just the areas in which the student has demonstrated difficulties. Paraeducators, certified therapy assistants, or peer tutors may be used to provide extra support to students with disabilities in general education classes. General educators and related service providers may collaborate on teaching methods or techniques to keep students with disabilities in the general education classroom setting.

7. Paraeducators

a. How are para-educators trained when working in your program?

TIPS: Do you have paraprofessionals assigned to you? These would **not** be licensed assistants such as COTAs. If so, identify that the district offers a variety of training courses to all paraeducators. Tell whether you or someone else provides most of the training. Does your school, team, or other school staff provide additional training opportunities? Indicate that your paraprofessionals have opportunities to attend the Paraeducator Conference.

b. How is supervision provided for paraprofessionals when they are assigned to your program?

TIPS: Describe who provides supervision of the paraprofessionals assigned to your program. If you are the main supervisor, please describe when and what you do when supervising paraprofessionals. Do you conduct observations of their work, use a checklist or rating system in evaluating their work? Do you provide verbal and/or written feedback to them based on your observations? How is corrective feedback given?

9. Professional Development

a. How are professional development training need determined in your school or LEA?

TIPS: Professional development activities are determined by both your school and by the special education program at the LEA level. Some trainings are provided at your school based on staff input and others at the district level that may be related to Utah State

Office of Education mandates and/or recommendations. Sometimes educators and related service providers identify their own training needs or interests and seek out conferences and workshops offering appropriate training. Describe how it works for you, specifically.

b. Who are the groups of people included in the training?

TIPS: Specify whether or not you participate in some training opportunities for all special education staff and some for your specific field of expertise only (OT/PT, SLP).

c. What professional development activities are provided for you in your school or LEA? (SLP ONLY)

TIPS: Be prepared to identify some professional development activities in which you've participated as a speech-language pathologist during the past two-three years. These may include district, state, and/or local school in-service trainings, regularly scheduled meetings to learn new programs, techniques, review legal issues, etc.

10. Student Progress

a. How often are parents/guardians give reports on their student's progress on IEP goals? What does the report include?

TIPS: Parents/guardians of students in special education are entitled to reports of their students' progress on IEP goals as often as parents/guardians of non-disabled students receive reports of their progress. Describe how often reporting periods occur in your school and what type of information you include in the report that goes to parents/guardians.

b. What are three things you do if a student isn't making sufficient progress to achieve his/her goals by the end of the year.

TIPS: Hopefully, you will not wait until the end of the year if a student is not making progress to achieve his/her IEP goals related to your area. You can observe the student to determine if there are prior skills that s/he has not mastered. You may also look at the student's motivation to see what sort of effort is being put forth. If motivation is an issue, you may need to implement a reinforcement program to get a student going. You may ask if the student is getting sufficient practice opportunities and if not, add those to his/her schedule. If your efforts to improve the student's program do not lead to success, you may need to consult a colleague or the member(s) of a special team in the District who could lend some insight and assistance. In some instances it may be appropriate to reconvene the IEP team and make adjustments to the student's IEP goal that is of concern.

**If related service provider has students in grades K-8 only,
skip questions 12a, 12a1, 12b and 12f**

12. Transition

a. What are two things you do to facilitate transition planning for students 16 and up, and earlier if appropriate?

TIPS: Related service providers play an important role in assisting the special education student and his/her family in planning for future coursework, training, employment, and community participation. Related service providers can assess prospective coursework and post-secondary training that a student desires to see what related skills (motor, communication) are required and what the student must have as entry level skills to participate in the training and subsequent employment. They can also assess the student's skills for community involvement (e.g., mobility) and participation, as well as activities of daily living to determine what skill needs exist and how to prepare them while in school. Related service providers can help guide parents/guardians and teacher toward community agencies that will be able to lend support for the acquisition of skills or adaptation of the environment so the student can participate in employment and community settings.

a. What data and information do you consider during school to post school transition planning?

TIPS: It is important to have some data from vocational planning assessments which may include aptitudes for certain skills as well as job preferences checklists. Career exploration and job sampling may be part of the secondary coursework at your school or other activities of the guidance and counseling program and results from that can yield useful information. Parental/guardian and student input, student skills and needs (mobility, communication), student academic performance (especially at strength) may help the IEP team plan for the student's post-secondary involvement. If the student has or is planning to have a part-time job while attending school, information about the student's performance, likes and dislikes about the job can provide useful insights as well.

b. How do you involve adult service agencies such as Vocational Rehabilitation in the secondary transition planning process?

TIPS: Related service providers in conjunction with special educators in secondary settings often participate in a parent, student, and agency fair at which local agency representatives meet with parents/guardians and their students to share basic information about services and answer questions. This helps both parent/guardian, their students and the agency personnel an opportunity to meet each other initially and may set the stage for future meetings. With prior written notice and parental permission, the special educator can invite agency personnel of interest to the parents/guardians and student, to IEP meetings where post-secondary goals will be developed, revised, or eliminated depending on the student's age and grade in school or post-school. When an agency representative is invited to a meeting, the special educator can provide some information on the agenda for the meeting so the representative can bring current and relevant information to

share. Related service providers may ask what supports are available through the agency to assist a student with a disability when s/he enters post-secondary training or employment.

f. What other agencies might you involve in school to post-school transition planning?

TIPS: Representatives of sheltered employment settings, Division of Services for Persons with Disabilities, representatives of day programs, group homes, and other services appropriate to the student could be invited to transition planning with written prior notice and parental/guardian permission.

13. Extended School Year (ESY)

b. What are two things to consider to determine whether a student is eligible for extended school year?

TIPS: The special educator should consider both retrospective and predictive data when determining eligibility for extended school year services (ESY). Retrospective data typically indicates regression and recoupment with respect to students' skills. If regression is so serious over a break in instruction that recoupment means basically beginning instruction anew or at a significantly lower level, then a student may require ESY to maintain FAPE. Predictive data takes into account the severity of the student's disability, his/her overall rate of progress in skills of self-sufficiency and independence that would be unlikely to continue without ESY. Predictive data may also be used to identify students unable to remain in their current least restrictive placement without ESY services.

14. Procedural Safeguards

a. What are five of the IDEA Procedurals Safeguards or parents' rights?

TIPS: There are numerous procedural safeguards, which can be reviewed more thoroughly in the Utah State Board of Education Special Education Rules. Here is a listing of them by topic: parental opportunity to examine their student's records, parent participation in meetings regarding their student's special education program, the right to an independent educational evaluation if dissatisfied with the LEA's evaluation, written prior notice whenever the LEA proposes or refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, educational placement or provision of FAPE to a student, provision of procedural safeguards notices to parents/guardians, parental consent when the LEA proposes to identify, evaluate, place or change the placement of a student, the right to file a complaint against an LEA with the state office of education, the right to mediation, the right to file a due process complaint, the right to file civil action, the right to confidentiality of student information and transfer of parental rights at the age of majority.

15. Rules

a. What training have you had related to the state special education rules?

TIPS: Describe who provided training to you on the state special education rules and when it occurred. This typically is done by the special education department at the district level and is done on a yearly basis (opening in-service). New staff may have had training on the rules at their in-state college or university or through an assigned school mentor.

16. Parent Involvement

a. What are two ways that parents/guardians are involved in placement decisions?

TIPS: Since IEP teams generally make placement decisions, the parents/guardians are part of that team. Besides being an active member of that team, prior information may have been obtained through phone calls, meetings, etc. between the parents/guardians and other IEP team members. Parents/guardians are also involved in situations where IEP teams in conjunction with other specialized teams within a district make placements in special classrooms, schools or programs (LRE Committee) as part of the team.

b. Describe five areas in the overall special education process in which parents/guardians are involved in determining the educational needs and provision of services for their student.

TIPS: Parents/guardians are involved in the identification process when their student is evaluated for special education. They have the right to present evidence of their own regarding the student, evidence from individuals with special expertise regarding the student such as a health care provider and help determine what evaluations will be completed with their student. Parents/guardians also assist in the determination of whether their student is a student with a disability. If the student is identified as a special education student, parents/guardians are involved in developing educational and behavioral goals for their student, determining types of services, determining accommodations for general classroom settings, determining the student's type of participation in statewide assessment programs. Parents/guardians are also actively involved in determining the placement of their student for special education services. Parents/guardians are involved in annual IEP meetings for their students where decisions are made about services, goals and accommodations for the student. For secondary students, parents/guardians are involved in transition meetings, meetings with outside agency personnel and developing postsecondary and vocational goals for their students.

20. IEP Meetings**a. How are your teachers documenting excusal of attendance not needed at IEP meetings?**

TIPS: Prior written permission from the student's parents/guardian and the LEA must be obtained and documented on the IEP Excusal Form. Their input into the IEP must be written and attached to the form prior to the IEP meeting.

21. What additional resources and/or training are needed to improve the special education program in your school or LEA?

TIPS: Consider your desires for improving your program and what, if any, training would assist with that. Think also about more global areas of training needed in the LEA such as in the area of reading, math and behavior programs in which you feel you and your colleagues could benefit from additional training and/or resources.