



Volunteers Still Needed!
Details on page 4.

Virginia IEP Newsletter

Division Perspective: Experiences With Electronic IEP Systems

Recently, we asked representatives from two Virginia public school divisions about their experiences with electronic IEP systems and how it impacted their day to day operations after converting from a paper-based or local system. During our conversation, we asked Ashej Deljo of Arlington Public Schools, and Cheryl Norris, of Orange County Public Schools, "What benefits have your division realized since you began using an electronic system?" According to Ashej Deljo, some of the benefits Arlington Public Schools enjoys include:

- An online system that is secure and confidential.
- It is a tool for special educators to manage and integrate the student education process from referral to eligibility determination to the development of an IEP.
- It helps educators generate IEPs more efficiently and tracks the progress of every IEP by student and by school.
- It captures required data for state and federal compliance and reporting, if needed.
- The timeline shows users the deadline for every process.
- It keeps track of student's upcoming IEPs and re-evaluations and alerts teachers when IEPs are due.
- It provides documentation of parent meeting requests.
- Some systems allow personalization of banks of goals and objectives.

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Orange County Public Schools has employed an online IEP system for more than a decade. We asked Cheryl Norris to tell us what the experience was like transitioning from a paper-based to an online system.

Transitioning to an Online IEP System

By Cheryl Norris, Orange County Public Schools

In 2002, Orange County Public Schools transitioned from written Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) to an online IEP system. Since that time, the county has employed several different online IEP systems in an effort to implement the one that provides the best solution to special educators, specialists, and administrators. Regardless of the system, the general consensus was that using an online IEP system was a much more positive experience than developing handwritten IEPs or using a document editing program. Though the transition process involved learning curves and growing pains along the way, staff members noted a number of improvements in the online system over prior methods.

Evaluators were pleased with the online systems because they were able to start with the eligibility process. Data were entered as reports were received, decreasing the time spent filling out forms. Student background data automatically became record for the IEP if the student was found eligible for specialized services. The online system tracked the student's eligibility to ensure compliance with upcoming triennial dates.

Among special educators, one of the highlights included the ability to track their caseloads. A single screen provided information regarding students' names, eligibility due dates, IEP due dates, and disabilities. Email reminders were sent automatically at scheduled times to case managers, affording them time to prepare for meetings and remain in compliance with regulations. Teachers and specialists found this especially helpful from a time management standpoint.



Another feature enjoyed by those educators who wrote the IEP documents was the ability to use the IEP "walk-through" process. One of the online IEP systems offered an IEP development method that provided error checking and a progress display. The user was able to view which sections of the IEP he or she had completed. When the user believed he or she had completed

writing the IEP, compliance could be evaluated either automatically by the program or a button could be clicked to have it evaluated manually. The IEP would be checked to determine if all of the appropriate sections were completed based on the age of the student, the placement of the student, or other relevant factors. This was a valuable tool to ensure observance of regulations.

The ability to have the IEP goals and objectives transferred to a report card where educators and specialists could update current progress saved time and resources.

Special educators and specialists also appreciated the report card component of the online IEP systems. The ability to have the IEP goals and objectives transferred to a report card where educators and specialists could update current progress saved time and resources. Multiple users were able to access the same report card to enter comments and a student's status on a record from various locations, allowing itinerant teachers to communicate better with case managers and parents. The report cards tracked the students' progress for the entire length of the IEP, as required by IDEIA, making compliance easier.

Additionally, special educators were able to enter parental contacts in several of the online programs. It is often difficult to keep track of each time a parent or guardian was contacted for an IEP meeting or to discuss a classroom problem using a paper system. Teachers valued the benefit of entering this information into an online database. All of the contacts for all of the students were stored in one place and were secure. Contacts could be linked to specific IEPs for compliance purposes. Contact information could be effortlessly accessed if necessary.

From the administrators' point of view, the online IEP systems provided the ability to produce reports for federal and state requirements. Some of the systems were able to offer ad hoc reporting, as well, enabling users to create improvised reports. Likewise, administrators were pleased with the Medicaid billing features.¹ Because these tools allowed users to access and compile data far more quickly, they reduced the time needed to produce these reports by hand and increased the resources available for other projects and demands.

Overall, Orange County Public Schools had a positive experience transitioning from a handwritten IEP procedure to an online IEP system for eligibilities and for IEPs. The amount of time saved and the amount of stress averted by ensuring compliance has increased productivity and professionalism in special educators, specialists, and administrators.

NEW STATE-RECOMMENDED SAMPLE FORMS REVISED BY WORKING GROUPS NOW AVAILABLE!

Beginning in the spring of 2015, two working groups reviewed the sample forms available on the VDOE Web site. The groups recommended a number of changes and after an extensive review, VDOE is pleased to announce that the newly revised forms are now available on the VDOE Web site. Newly revised state-recommended [sample IEP](#) and [eligibility forms](#) can be found on the VDOE website.



¹ Not all divisions use these systems for Medicaid billing processes.

YOU CAN BE AMONG THE FIRST TO IMPLEMENT THE STATEWIDE ONLINE IEP SYSTEM!

What is the process for divisions who may be interested in becoming Phase I adopters?

Several divisions already have indicated interest in being part of the Phase I adopters. The IEP team will be contacting these divisions to collect information such as the types of student information systems in use, infrastructure questions and to discuss what will be required for onboarding. If your division may be interested in becoming one of the first adopters, click on the button below to tell us who to contact and we'll be in touch.

Yes! We're
interested.

BE PART OF THE TEAM – VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

If interested, contact:

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