

IPP Planning and Meetings: Best Practices and Pitfalls

Outline developed, edited and reviewed by Allen, Shea & Associates | October 2026
Written for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), families, advocates, providers, and service coordinators.¹

Introduction

At the request of her child's service coordinator, a mother recently signed a blank IPP at her regional center. She understood informally that the services she requested would be forthcoming. Later, she received the completed IPP and a service arrangement that she did not want.

A signature on a blank form is weak proof of agreement, and she does have options. However, this action will certainly affect her relationship with this service coordinator as she pursues some adversarial options. Following, you'll find some best practices and pitfalls for everyone involved in the IPP process. Hopefully, they will all lead to better outcomes.

For Individuals and parents

The IPP is made jointly. [Welfare and Institutions Code §4646](#) says decisions about goals are made by agreement.

Best Practices

- Write down your goals and needs before the meeting.
- Bring a support person or advocate.
- Ask for the meeting in your preferred language.
- Ask for a draft IPP before the meeting.
- Read the full IPP before you sign.
- Ask for each service in writing. Include the amount and length.
- Ask what each page and signature line means.
- Keep a copy of everything you sign.
- Take notes during the meeting.
- Ask for a [Clients' Rights Advocate](#) if you need one.

Pitfalls

- Don't sign a blank or partly blank form.
- Don't sign a page you did not read.
- Don't feel rushed. You can take the draft home.
- Don't accept a denial without a written Notice of Action.
- Don't wait past 30 days to appeal a notice.
- Don't rely on verbal promises. Ask for them in writing.

¹ This guide is general information. It is not legal advice.

IPP Planning and Meetings: Best Practices and Pitfalls

Advocates

Advocates support the person's choices. [Disability Rights California](#) offers free help with regional center disputes.

Best Practices

- Meet with the person before the IPP meeting.
- Confirm the person's goals in the person's own words.
- Review the draft IPP with the person.
- Put requests in writing. Keep dated copies.
- Ask the regional center to explain each decision.
- Track the 30-day deadline in [§4710.5](#).
- Tell the person about informal meetings and mediation.

Pitfalls

- Don't speak over the person.
- Don't promise a result.
- Don't sign for the person without legal authority.
- Don't skip the written follow-up after the meeting.

Service coordinators

Service coordinators manage the planning process for the regional center. [§4646](#) and [§4646.5](#) describe the plan and the steps to prepare it.

Best Practices

- Explain each IPP section in plain language.
- Complete every service line before asking for a signature.
- Offer an interpreter when one is needed.
- Give the person a copy of the signed IPP.
- Share the Clients' Rights Advocate contact information.
- Record the person's stated goals and choices.
- Issue a written [Notice of Action](#) when a service is denied, reduced, or ended.
- Explain appeal rights and deadlines in the notice.

Pitfalls

- Don't ask for a signature on a blank or partly blank form.
- Don't add a service after signing without agreement.
- Don't limit options to services the center usually buys.
- Don't discourage a person from bringing an advocate.
- Don't schedule the meeting without the person's input.

Providers

Providers deliver the services listed in the IPP. The [Department of Developmental Services](#) oversees the system.

Best Practices

- Send assessments and progress reports on time.
- Link your services to the goals in the IPP.
- Report changes in the person's needs to the service coordinator.
- Confirm you have a service authorization before you start.
- Explain your reports in plain language.
- Respect the person's choices about services.

Pitfalls

- Don't start a service without an authorization.
- Don't speak for the person or family in the IPP meeting.
- Don't collect signatures for the regional center.
- Don't change a service without the planning team's agreement.

If someone signed a blank IPP

Signing does not end the person's rights. These steps apply.

1. Write to the service coordinator right away. State that you did not agree to the service.
2. Ask for a copy of the signed IPP. Compare it to what was discussed.
3. Ask for an IPP meeting to change or remove the service.
4. Ask for a Notice of Action if the regional center refuses. See [§4701](#).
5. File for a fair hearing if needed. The deadline is usually 30 days from the notice. See [§4710.5](#).
6. Contact the Clients' Rights Advocate. See [§4433](#).
7. Keep dated copies of every letter, email, and notice.

Free help and sources

Free help

- [Disability Rights California](#): legal help with regional center disputes.
- [State Council on Developmental Disabilities](#): Area Boards and Clients' Rights Advocate information.
- [Department of Developmental Services](#): information on the regional center system.
- Your regional center's informal meeting and mediation options.

IPP Planning and Meetings: Best Practices and Pitfalls

Sources

- [Welfare and Institutions Code §4433](#)
- [Welfare and Institutions Code §4646](#)
- [Welfare and Institutions Code §4646.5](#)
- [Welfare and Institutions Code §4701](#)
- [Welfare and Institutions Code §4710.5](#)

This guide is general information. It is not legal advice. An advocate or attorney can review a specific case.