



SEDRC

Special Education Dispute
Resolution Center



Phone: **1-855-RESOLVE (1-855-737-6583)**

Email: **info@osedisputeresolution.org**

Website: **www.osedisputeresolution.org**

Tips for Managing Conflict at CSE Meetings

Members of the Committee on Special Education (CSE) or Individualized Educational Program (IEP) Team, have different perspectives and expertise to contribute. This sometimes leads to disagreement. Here are some tips for managing conflict if it arises.

Conflict is Normal

Not everyone will agree and it is only through exploring differing perspectives that change and growth take place. Try to stay open to differing points of view. Ask inviting, open-ended questions such as, "Can you help me understand your point of view?" or "What might that change make possible?"

Manage Emotions

Emotions are normal too! Emotions signal how much we care about what we are discussing. Managing emotions allows us to express our feelings without causing relational damage. Be prepared to manage your emotions by having some strategies planned like deep breathing, having a hot drink to soothe you, asking for a brief break if needed, or writing to engage your "rational" mind.

Use Active Listening

Stay present, listen carefully to what is being said, and avoid preparing your response. Listen with an open mind, restate what you heard to make sure you understand, ask clarifying questions, and encourage others to talk and listen.

Be Solutions Oriented

Keep the focus on resolving the conflict by finding common ground to build upon what is in the best interest of the student. Solutions are not about winning or losing, who is right or wrong, or who is competent or incompetent.

Practice Good Communication

Clear and honest interaction can help you navigate conflict. Do not remain silent to avoid conflict. Try to be specific about the problem you are experiencing. For example, "I believe physical therapy should happen more often each week" instead of "The PT plan will not work".

Confront the Problem, Not the Person

Sometimes it is difficult to separate the message from the messenger. Try to focus on the issues you want to solve rather than the personality of the person you are in conflict with. This increases the chance of finding solutions to the problem.

Suggest Mediation

If conflict arises during the CSE meeting, consider requesting special education mediation. Let the team know you want to find solutions and having a neutral mediator can help. Mediation is free and can be requested by both parents and districts.

Contact SEDRC

The New York State Special Education Dispute Resolution Center (SEDRC) provides access to free mediation services designed to resolve special education conflicts. SEDRC serves parents, guardians, districts, and other special education stakeholders.