

Outbursts at Team Meetings

General Reminder: *It's not about you (or any adult Team member) – It's about a child!*

High emotions don't always require ending and rescheduling a Team meeting, especially when it may reflect the fact that the issues being discussed may be what matters most to the person who has the outburst. The outburst, whether it be walking out of the meeting, name calling, hollering, crying, demeaning other members of the team, etc., will require that the person facilitating the meeting can remain calm, stay in control of the meeting, and have some strategies to prevent an abrupt end to the meeting.

Consider making use of one or more of these strategies ...

- ✓ ***Coach/prepare other Team members before the meeting ...*** Team reactions to outbursts have the potential of escalating or de-escalating uncontrollable emotions. Remind staff that behaviors that seem inappropriate in the Team setting most likely are reactions to stress. Despite the desire to respond to what may seem to be an “attack,” responding defensively to such conduct tends to escalate emotions. The Team leader should be the key person to deal with the issue.
- ✓ ***Understand where the behavior may be coming from ...*** Issues that surface during a Team meeting can make people feel threatened – not just parents, but other Team members as well. An advocate may be transferring issues from a personal case, a teacher may feel that his/her ability to teach is being questioned, an evaluator may feel that his/her expertise/recommendations are ignored, etc.
- ✓ ***Don't “take the bait” ...*** the best reaction to an outburst at the meeting is to ignore it and continue on with the meeting, acknowledging the individuals anger and reminding everyone on the Team that the focus must be on the child's needs.
- ✓ ***Take a break ...*** If the outbursts persist, the facilitator should briefly ask the Team to take a short break (set time limit). If possible, the facilitator may want to address the conduct with the person in a non-adversarial manner and assure them that the Team focus is on their child and that outbursts are not productive to the Team process. Inform him that if he is unable to control the outbursts, it may be necessary to reschedule the meeting.

