



What if a student, out of embarrassment, or other reasons, refuses to accept IEP supports?

This was the recent scenario in an Ohio school district and their “confusion” with the situation, got them in a little trouble. A student with “*motor skills deficits and orthopedic issues*” refused to accept assistance with carrying her books and backpack. The IEP specifically noted that “*staff members would carry supplies during transition times*” and that parental contact would be made if there were any behavioral concerns. The district remained “passive” with the student’s refusal of supports, indicating that the provision of such supports was outweighed by the student’s desire to be independent. Unfortunately, this position was not communicated with the child’s parents nor was consent for non-provision obtained. To add to the district’s problem, a number of staff members were not aware that such a support was required.

A complaint was filed with the Ohio Education Department who determined that the district violated special education law by allowing the student to carry her own materials and failing to contact the student’s parents of the child’s refusal of assistance. Additionally, the Department cited the district for not appropriately communicating required IEP services with district staff that interacted with the child.

So, what should a district do to prevent such a situation from occurring?

- 1. Communicate with parents** ... this seems obvious. However, we have found that, in a number of schools, staff members honor the student’s wishes. Parents must be notified immediately of the student’s refusal and gain their input
- 2. Reconvene the Team** ... discuss the reasons for refusal. If, by chance, the student is self-conscious about the assistance, discuss possible ways of making such support less obvious. Discuss implementation plans and make sure both the school and parents communicate the purpose of the supports with the student.
- 3. Communicate with staff** ... make sure all staff who will be interacting with the student are aware of the following
 - a. The services/accommodations noted on the student’s IEP
 - b. How such services/accommodations should be consistently implemented
 - c. How to respond to future refusals of required supports