FACILITATOR INTERVENTION TOOLKIT

Increasing Procedural Satisfaction

Clarify roles at the beginning of the IEP meeting. Remind group members, as needed, of the roles/functions of members. *"I'd like to remind everyone that John's role today is limited to taking notes of the discussion and decisions that are made."*	**Honor important off-topic or off-agenda items by creating a "future conversations" page**. *"I can see that is an important thing to discuss in the future. Right now our agenda is pretty full for the amount of time we have allotted. I'd like to add the topic to our future conversations list."*

Use an agenda. Personalize with student's name. Make visible to all. Provide team members a copy to write reminders or notes.	**Use Ground Rules.** Offer proposed list
	Invite input or changes.
	Seek group acceptance (optional)
	Check off as group accepts (optional)
	    Examples: Start on Time; End on Time
	                       Make decisions by consensus.
	                       Turn cell phones to silent.

State and stick to the agenda; refocus the group to the agenda, as needed.
"The agenda for today is…. Is that agreeable to everyone?"
 	
As discussion gets diverted---*"Let me review where we are on our agenda."*
	Use Discussion Guidelines. Specify how members should behave during the meeting. Encourage team to process as well as content.
	    Examples: Listen without judgment.
	                       Value others' ideas and contributions.
	                       Work to resolve differences.
	                       Explain reasons behind your own statements.

Use Thinking Tools. Increase the team's effectiveness by using pictures, graphs, connections and themes, bulleted lists, and charting. Put the problem 'on the wall' to solve together. Examples: Brainstorming, Forcefield Analysis, Gap Analysis, Root-Cause Analysis, Decision Grids	**Break down a broad discussion into smaller, possibly more manageable parts**. *"Talking about Bobby's social relationships is a pretty broad area to tackle. Why don't we start by talking about how he relates to students during lunch?"*
Invite options. Sometimes it is helpful to use a <u>technique</u> that will generate ideas from everyone. "You have discussed a lot of different ideas. *"I'd like to ask everyone to write down your ideas on the post-its on the table. One idea on each post-it, like this (demonstrate a nonsensical idea such as "go to Hawaii"). Then we will group these ideas & see if we can come up with 3 to 4 ideas to consider."*	**Seek resources to ensure all the necessary information is present and understood by all before asking the group to generate and discuss solutions**. *"It seems like we might need more information about Joanie's performance in reading before we can make any final decisions about what she needs for next year. How do you want to get this information?"*

Step out of the content and talk about the process.
Factually describe the predicament:
"The group is having trouble staying on topic. Three people have asked us to stay focused on Johnny's progress, but someone keeps changing the subject."
Get agreement from the group to proceed:
"It might be helpful to step back from the discussion for a moment and explore what's getting in the way. I'd like to open up a discussion of how we are working together. Is that agreeable with the group?"
Invite a discussion on the process (Mid-Point Check):
"Does anyone have any thoughts about the way we are working together?" "What might be blocking us from working more effectively?"
Prepare the group to return to the content discussion: Summarize any decisions about working together. Then state, "At this point let's return to talking about Johnny's progress in math."

Use consensus language that allows team members to show a level of agreement rather than yes/no.
Allows team members to show a range of agreement about a recommendation.
Reduces the chance of automatic "no" because member can't agree completely.
  "The recommendations are _____and____. Talk about your level of agreement with the recommendation. Talk about whether the recommendation is something you can whole-heartedly support or live with or have concerns about. If you have concerns, let's discuss more fully."

FACILITATOR INTERVENTION TOOLKIT

Increasing Psychological Satisfaction

Acknowledge feelings and emotions
Speakers may be unwilling to discuss a problem or make a decision until they believe others understand the depth of their feelings.
"It seems like this student has really hurt your feelings and you are doubting your effectiveness as a teacher."
"You sound hurt."
"You seem frustrated."

Acknowledge & validate actions.
"John, it was really helpful when you asked us to think about where we wanted to see Billy in two years."
"It appears that being a good parent is very important to you."
"It appears that your daughter becoming a productive adult is very important to you and you are working hard to make that happen."

Clarify or test generalizations, assumptions and judgments. Bring out into the open and clarify.
"You said no one cares what you think. What do you mean when you say no one cares?"
"What did you see that led you to believe the school people weren't listening?"
"Ms. Parent, on what basis are you making the comment that the school is not meeting your child's needs?"

Ask Questions

  Gain additional information
   "What kind of progress has Billy made in math?"
  Solicit facts
"When was your son evaluated at the center?"
  Solicit opinions and judgments
"What did you think led to his actions?"
  Solicit feelings
"How did you feel when that happened?"
"What do you need to say or do (or hear) in order to move forward?"
  Confirm your understanding of information
"You said you have called the school 6 times. Is that correct?"
  Invite elaboration
"You mentioned you have worked with Susie at home on her behavior. Talk about what you have done."
  Reality Check Question
"If we aren't able to work this out, what impact do you think that will have on your daughter?"
  Scaling Question
"On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "not interested" and 10 being "more interested about this than anything," where would you say you fall in terms of your motivation to work with the team on this issue?"
  Miracle Question ("Magic Wand" or "Crystal Ball")
"If time and money were no obstacle, what type of reading interventions would you design for Marie?"

Use Neutral Language. Reduce or alleviate defensiveness and increase understanding.
Original statement: *"I am absolutely furious with this school. No one ever returns phone calls, and the teachers are very rude and obnoxious."*
Neutral statement: *"It sounds like you are upset about the response you think you are getting from the school."*

Summarize Using Neutral Language. 1) Acknowledge emotion with less intense language; 2) Summarize from their perspective; and 3) Use descriptive terms.

Summarize. Redirect the discussion. Refocus the conversation. Move to the next stage of the discussion. Let the speaker know what was heard. Confirm accuracy of what was said. Start "reframing" the group's take or understanding of the issue or situation. Clarify areas of agreement and disagreement.
"So far I have heard the following concerns…"
"So far we have discussed….."
"Let me summarize the agreement so far."
"Let me summarize areas where we haven't reached agreement."

Hold up a "mirror" by reflecting what the facilitator sees happening in the meeting. Specific, observable actions. No accusations or generalizations or attributions of motives.
"Three of you have grown quiet and not said anything."
"You have rolled your eyes twice during this part of the discussion."

Reframe a complaint or negative as a neutral or positive.
"You said you are really tired of being ignored & not getting information. It sounds like you want school staff to listen to you and give you information".
"You have clearly stated what you don't want. What is it you want?"

Work with team members to identify underlying interests.
"What is most important to you in this situation?"
"If you were to have ___, what would you (or your child) have that you want and need?"
Summarize for group and, possibly chart for all.

Apologize or facilitate an offer of apology.
Recognize: *"I'm …*
Remorse: *"sorry"*
Responsibility: *"This is what I did."*
Restitution: *"This is what I am doing to correct it."*

FACILITATOR INTERVENTION TOOLKIT

Increasing Psychological Satisfaction

Invite discussion, including different opinions.
"What are positive aspects?"
"What are negative aspects?"
"Let's open this up for discussion."
Write down ideas individually and post on chart.

Enforce the ground rules to establish a safe environment for all.
"I'd like to remind everyone that we agreed to speak one at a time."
"It is really hard for all to hear when there are side conversations."
"Each person's opinion is valued here. We need to allow each to speak without interruption. Is everyone still willing to not interrupt?"

Use humor---careful, careful, careful!
Humor can backfire in a major way if used inappropriately. The most effective humor might be something that is directed at the facilitator or the situation.

Use metaphors. Can be a powerful intervention. Develop a core list for your toolkit. Examples: sports, garden, nature, machines.
"At times the group is running toward the goal line---but in the wrong direction."
"We seem to have a missing piece to this puzzle we are assembling."

Increasing Substantive Satisfaction

Clarify what information is needed in order to make *informed* decisions and who can provide that information. This is best done prior to the beginning of the IEP team meeting so that the meetings will go smoothly and efficiently.

Invite participants to share information related to the content (substance). The agenda should be structured in a way that enables all of the substantive information to be presented.

Invite someone from outside of the meeting to join the team and provide information. At times it might be helpful to invite someone into the IEP meeting for the purpose of sharing specific additional information. They may or may not be present for the entire meeting.

Take a break or reschedule the meeting in order to obtain additional information needed before decisions can be made. One of the underlying values of facilitation is that group members make informed decisions. It is not helpful to participatory processes to ask individuals to make a decision without all the necessary information. This tends to lead to suspicion on the part of the members. *"What aren't they telling me?"* It is better to postpone a meeting than to ask participants to rush to a decision without all the information.

Interventions for Resistance, Conflict and Impasse

Acknowledge the team seems to be stuck. Ask for suggestions for moving forward.
"At this point the group seems stuck. What needs to happen at this time?"
"What does the group think is happening right now?"
"It seems like the group is stuck. What do the rest of you think?"

Acknowledge areas of agreement so as not to focus just on areas of disagreement.

Provide face saving support.
People will have a hard time changing their position or stance on an issue if they aren't allowed to save face (their public identify). Does one person need additional support to save face in backing down from a position? What needs to happen for one to "let go" of the conflict?
"We have heard new (or additional) information that may have changed our opinion."
"Given this in-depth discussion, my guess is that many of us are thinking about this in a different way."

Explore the possible purpose (pay-offs) of the impasse. Who is getting what by not resolving the issue? What might each want to gain? This exploration or "reality check" is best done in private or through individual meetings with team members.
"What will it mean for you if this isn't resolved?"
"What are the cost for you of not resolving this?"
"What are the 'pay-offs' for you of not resolving this?"

This is also an opportunity to use the scaling question.
"On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all interested and 10 being I'm so interested I'll stay all night, rate how motivated you are to resolve this issue."

Acknowledge strong feelings and re-direct if bullying or attacking others occurred.
"I understand you have very strong feelings about this issue. It will help our decision-making process if we can refrain from talking about personalities or motivations (attribution) and instead look at the problem and possible solutions."

"We agreed to talk about issues and not people. How can we avoid this type of miscommunication in the future?"

FACILITATOR INTERVENTION TOOLKIT

Interventions for Resistance, Conflict and Impasse	
Acknowledge that something seems to be missing or unstated. *"I sense there is something present here that has not be said. What is it?"* *"There is something going on under the surface. Can someone say what it is?"* *"There is a gremlin here. Can someone see it and tell us what it is?"* *"What hasn't been said is louder right now than what has been said."*	**Acknowledge the one who dominates, monopolizes, or tries to control the discussion and then re-direct.** "Acknowledge the one who has spoken. Follow with, "We haven't heard much from the rest of you. What is your thinking about this? _____, we'd like to give others a chance to talk. Can you give us a one sentence summary of your point? Then we can hear from other members of the group."
Refer back to the purpose of the meeting when one person gets off track. "Talk about how that relates to (goal). _____, I'm not clear how that related to _____. Would you like us to add that concern to the parking lot for a future discussion?" **Look at where you are in process**. Consult your map. Have you forgotten something? Would it be helpful to take a step or two back and begin again from that point?	**Change the tone and climate of the meeting with verbal and nonverbal cues**. **Have a mantra for what you know to be your weakness**. For example, if impasse causes you to speed up then keep saying to yourself: "slow down, stay calm", or maybe "there is much to discuss Russ."
Remind people that "perfect" is an unreachable goal and seeking it can block some good (thus, not perfect) solutions**.	**Offer encouragement** pointing out that they were at impasse when they came in the room and still have made some progress.
Do a process check: "I'm noticing points are being made with considerable emotion. What can we do to change the tone to create a healthy debate?"	**Ask people to sit quietly and reflect on these questions**: "What is the obstacle to resolution here? Is there something I'm missing about what others are saying?"
Help the parties define what they need by developing criteria for an acceptable outcome rather than focusing on the outcome itself	**Help people focus on what they have accomplished so far** in the conversation, summarizing areas of agreement, and reminding them that they have the power to change the situation.
Consider the types of questions and the questioning techniques you have been using. Maybe a "Lt. Colombo" type question can help.	**Suggest that you want to try just one more thing before calling it quits.** Ask 'A' to state his or her position and the thinking behind it one more time. Ask 'B' to restate what the first said. Ask 'A' if 'B' has it right. Repeat for B. Look for opportunities to clarify.
Try a role-reversal asking each person to assume the other's role and then react to the impasse.	**Ask team members to define** the impasse and to brainstorm 15 ways to change the situation.
Say Nothing: Given a desire for change, and some brainstormed ideas, ask them what they'd like to do next and then say nothing for at least eight seconds.	**Move on to another issue** that is easier to deal with and build on the agreement reached there.
Regroup by asking some questions about just the facts.	**Offer a model** of something you've seen other parties in this situation do.
Offer a far out "what if". Maybe the parties' reactions will get them unstuck.	**Suggest a trial period** – a temporary agreement – and then a formal review of how it's working.
Use structured approach and technologies to interject needed objectivity. Examples: force-field analysis, systematic problem-solving, cause and effect.	**Ask each person to write down their last best solution** – the one they think the other will accept. Now exchange papers and discuss.