



A Parent's Guide to Special Education

What is Special Education?

Special education is instruction that is specially designed to meet the unique needs of children who have disabilities. Special education and related services are provided in public schools at no cost to the parents and can include special instruction in the classroom, at home, in hospitals or institutions, or in other settings. This definition of special education comes from IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This law gives eligible children with disabilities the right to receive special services and assistance in school. More than 6.8 million children ages 3 through 21 receive special education and related services each year in the United States. Each of these children receives instruction that is specially designed to meet his or her unique needs and to help the child learn the grade level appropriate skills.

What are the steps?

1. **REFERRAL:** Parents or teachers can refer students to be assessed for special education services. You will receive an assessment plan to review and sign.
2. **ASSESSMENT:** The assessment will include tests, observations, work samples, interviews, and/or school records. The results will be used to determine if your child needs special education services.
3. **IEP:** Individualized Education Program...The plan will be developed by the IEP team. Once you consent to the plan it will be implemented.
4. **REVIEW:** The IEP will be reviewed at least once per year and more often if necessary.

Disability Categories...

IDEA lists 13 different disability categories under which 3- through 21-year-olds may be eligible for services.

The disability categories listed in IDEA are the following:

- 1) Autism
- 2) Blindness
- 3) Deafness
- 4) Emotional Disturbance
- 5) Hearing Impairment
- 6) Intellectual Disability
- 7) Multiple Disabilities
- 8) Orthopedic Impairment
- 9) Other Health Impaired
- 10) Specific Learning Disability
- 11) Speech or Language Impairment
- 12) Traumatic Brain Injury
- 13) Visual Impairment



A New Vocabulary...

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act

APE: Adapted Physical Education

BSP: Behavior Support Plan

CASA: Court appointed special
advocate

CDE: California Dept. of Education

CMH: County Dept. of Mental Health

COE: County Office of Education

ESY: Extended School Year

FAPE: Free Appropriate Public
Education

FERPA: Family Educational Rights and
Privacy

IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Act of
2004

IEE: Independent Educational
Evaluation

IEP: Individualized Education Program

LRE: Least Restrictive Environment

NPS: Non-public school

OCR: Office of Civil Rights

OSEP: Office of Special Education
Programs

OT: Occupational therapy

PT: Physical therapy

PWN: Prior Written Notice

RTI: Response to intervention

SAI: Specialized academic instruction

SECTION 504: Section 504 of the
Rehabilitation Act of 1973

SELPA: Special Education Local Plan
Area

SLP: Speech and Language
Pathologist

If you have

A

Question...

ASK

IEP BASICS

An Individualized Education Plan, or IEP, is the written document specially developed to meet the educational needs of your child. Every child receiving Special Education services must have an IEP.

Students with IEPs need to participate in the general education curriculum as much as possible with appropriate accommodations and/or modifications. An accommodation is a change in how the student is being taught. It helps a student overcome or work around their disability. A modification is a change in what is being taught or expected from the student.

The IEP is developed by a team of people who work with your child. This team consists of:

- You...the parent or guardian of the student
- General Education teacher, if the student is or may be participating in the general education environment
- Special Education teacher working with the student
- Site Administrator – principal, vice-principal, or a designee
- School Psychologist
- Related services personnel as needed to meet the educational needs of the student
- Student – whenever appropriate

Once the original IEP is established the team meets at least once a year for an annual review. The team will discuss the progress made on current goals and determine future goals. Additional IEPs, called Supplemental IEPs, may be held, as needed, throughout the year if requested by either you or the school.

Parental consent must be obtained before the IEP can be put into effect. At the end of the meeting you can consent to all, part, or none of the IEP. The last agreed upon IEP will be in effect until that agreement has been made.

PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

Planning for an IEP will be one of the most helpful things you can do for yourself and your child.

Please consider the following:

- Organize your paperwork.
- Familiarize yourself with the current copy of the IEP.
- Write down any questions that you may have.
- Write down any areas of challenge that you would like the IEP team to address.
- Gather copies of assessments or schoolwork you would like to share with the IEP team.
- Bring any outside assessments to share with the team.
- Communicate any concerns with the case manager. Please request clarification as needed.

Questions you may have:

1. Look at the meeting notice and determine if you understand each person's role. If not, ask your case manager.
2. Have you thought about bringing a relative or a friend to the meeting?
3. Will you tape record the meeting? You must let your case manager know 24 hours in advance of the meeting.
4. Do you need an interpreter? Have you asked the school to provide one?

Suggestions for Participating in Your Child's I.E.P.

1. Listen closely to what the IEP team members are saying. Don't hesitate to ask them to repeat, give additional explanation, or define terms in everyday language. Before you sign the IEP, you should understand and agree with the following:

- The placement and plan
- The goals
- The information in the special factors section
- The modifications and or accommodations
- How progress will be monitored
- Who is responsible for providing services and how they are coordinated.
- What can be done at home to reinforce goals of the IEP.

2. If you have a question or concern about any part of the IEP, you may sign for the parts you want to be implemented and plan a subsequent meeting to discuss remaining concerns.

4. You may take the IEP home before signing; however, if you have additional concerns that warrant changes, the IEP team will need to reconvene. In any case, an IEP must be in effect before special education and related services are provided.

5. You are an important member of the IEP team. Keeping good communication with those working with your student is essential.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

You, the parents, and your child with special needs have certain legal rights. You are entitled to:

1. Receive written notice from the school asking for your consent to assess your child.
2. Participate in the planning and development of your child's IEP and receive a copy.
3. Receive a full explanation of your rights.
4. Written notice before any proposed changes to your child's IEP.
5. Review your child's school records with a school administrator.
6. Participate in the annual review and revision of your child's IEP.
8. File a complaint with the district and/or the state if you believe a law has been violated relative to special education services for your student.
9. Request a Due Process Hearing when you and the school cannot agree on what type of program will be most helpful for your child.

C. Due Process

The intent of special education law is to provide a free appropriate public education for each child that will meet his or her unique needs. School personnel will try their best to make changes in your child's program that you feel are needed. Sometimes, however, the school may not agree with you or may not be able to meet your request. If this happens, and you and the school are not able to agree over how to meet your child's educational needs, you have the right to use the Due Process procedures provided for by law.

Due Process is part of the special education law that spells out how parents and school personnel may formally pursue a disagreement. Due Process covers what to do if you and the school cannot through respectful communication agree about any one of the following:

1. The school's responsibility regarding their legal requirements to you and your child.
 2. Identification of your child as a student who needs Special Education services.
 3. The type of assessment proposed for your child and the test results.
 4. The planning of the IEP.
 5. Special Education services being denied, changed or stopped.
 6. The belief that you or your child's legal rights have been violated.
- Most problems can be resolved through discussion with the school team or program specialists.

SUPPORT FOR PARENTS

OMBUDSPERSONS: An Ombudsperson is available to assist families and staff with the following:

- Responding to parent and staff inquiries
- Informing and clarifying parents of their rights
- Investigating complaints
- Assisting parents with regard to the Individualized Education Program/Individualized Family Service Plan (IEP/IFSP) and 504 Individualized Service Plan meetings, filing complaints and hearing requests
- Acting as a liaison between district, parents and community organizations.

Compliance with special education laws is a priority of the ombudsperson.

Contact information:

Richard Miller: (619) 725-8187

Lora Keller: (619) 725-8186

PARENT OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT CENTER

Information of interest to all parents...

<http://www.sandi.net/page/1685>

COMMUNITY ACTION COMMITTEE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION (CAC)

Serves in an advisory capacity to the Board of Education and the Special Education Administration

<http://www.sandi.net/page/3175>