

Frequently Asked Questions about the IEP

A Document for Parents

1. **What is the Law that requires schools to serve the educational needs of students with disabilities?**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that requires schools to serve the educational needs of eligible students with disabilities. Schools must evaluate students suspected of having a disability. Not every child with learning and attention issues will qualify for special education services under IDEA.

2. **What is an IEP?**

IEP stands for Individualized Education Program. Students who receive special education services have an IEP. The IEP is a written document that gives information of how the student is currently functioning in school, what the school will do to help the student, and what services the school will provide for the student. The IEP is designed to meet a child's individual needs. All children receiving special education services must have an IEP. The IEP has two general purposes: (1) to set learning goals for your child; and (2) to state the supports and services that the school district will provide for your child. It is the LAW.

3. **What is an IEP meeting?**

The IEP meeting is collaboration between the parent, special education teacher, general education teacher, related service providers and school representatives to address ways to help your child achieve success. You are a member of the IEP team. The annual IEP meeting is the time to review, revise, and update your child's IEP for the coming school year. Every element of the IEP should be covered in the meeting. It is important that the IEP focus on the child as an individual.

4. **Do I need to attend the IEP meetings?**

Yes. Parental involvement is the key to your child's success at school. The information that you can provide at these meetings is very important to your child's educational goals in school and at home. The law states that the IEP meeting be scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time for all team members to attend.

5. **What will be discussed in the IEP meeting?**

At the first IEP meeting, expect to hear the results of evaluations, current classroom performance, and behavior. Be prepared to hear about your child's strengths and weaknesses. The school staff will have recommendations for how they can help your child in his/her area(s) of weakness as well as how the team can best promote your child's strengths.

6. **What should I do before the meeting?**

- Return Notice of Committee Meeting to schedule the IEP meeting to the school. If you cannot attend the meeting, call the school to reschedule.

- Write down questions you may have for the team. You are entitled to receive a draft copy of the proposed IEP. If you don't receive a copy contact the teacher.

7. **What should I do during the meeting?**

- Be an active member of the IEP team. Ask questions! If you don't understand something, ask to have it explained.
- If you do not agree with programming, speak up and voice your concerns. You should receive a copy of the IEP within 5 days of the meeting.

8. **What should I do after the IEP meeting?**

- Start a file of the IEP and any assessment results you receive.
- Review your child's IEP during the year.
- Practice with your child at home.
- Help your child focus on abilities and progress.
- Find activities that showcase your child's strengths to help develop confidence.

9. **What information is in your child's IEP?**

The following statements will be included in the IEP:

- **Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance:** This is a statement that describes how your child is currently achieving in the school setting. This includes how your child's disability affects his/her participation and progress in the general education curriculum.
- **Annual Goals:** The IEP must state annual goals for your child. These goals reflect what the IEP team thinks he/she can reasonably accomplish in a year. The goals must relate to the academic standards and address any behavioral or communication needs.
- **Special Education and Related Services to be provide:** The IEP must list the special education and related services to be provided. This includes **supplementary aids and services** (e.g. preferential seating, a communication device) that can increase your child's access to learning and his/her participation in school activities. It also includes changes to the program or supports for personnel that will be provided for your child.
- **Participation with children without disabilities:** The IEP must include an explanation that answers this question: How much of the school day will your child be educated separately from children without disabilities or not participate in extracurricular or other nonacademic activities, such as lunch or clubs?
- **Dates and Location:** The IEP must state (a) when special education and related and supplementary aids and services will begin; (b) how often they will be provided; (c) where they will be provided; and (d) how long they will last.

- **Participation in state and district-wide assessments.** State and local tests of student achievement are given to children in certain grades or age groups. In order to participate in these tests, your child may need individual accommodations or changes in how the tests are administered. The IEP team must decide what accommodations your child needs and list them in the IEP. If your child will not be taking these tests, the IEP must include a statement as to why the tests are not appropriate for your child, how your child will be tested instead, and why the alternate assessment selected is appropriate for the child.
- **Measuring progress:** The IEP must state how school personnel will measure your child's progress toward annual goals. It must also state when it will give you periodic reports on your child's progress.
- **Supplementary aids and services:** play a pivotal role in supporting the child with a disability in the general education classroom and their participation in a range of other activities. For example, supports to address your child's environmental needs, levels of staff support needed, specialized equipment needs that may be needed, pacing of instruction, assignment accommodations, etc...
- **Special Factors:** Depending on the needs of the child, the IEP must also discuss these special factors: behavior, limited proficiency in English, blind or visually impaired, communication needs, and deaf or hard of hearing.
- **Assistive Technology:** The IEP team will also talk about whether the child needs any assistive technology services. AT services may be low-tech or high tech, including, but not limited to adapted furniture, tools, digital books or print adaptations.
- **Transition Services:** By the time your child is 14 (or younger if the IEP team finds it appropriate for the child), the IEP must include measurable postsecondary goals related to the child's training, education, employment, and independent living skills (when appropriate). The IEP must also include the transition services needed to help your child reach those goals, including what the child should study.

10. Who will be in the IEP Meeting?

Many people come together to develop the IEP. Team members will include:

- You, the parents
- At least one regular education teacher
- At least one of the child's special education teachers
- A representative of the school system (principal, AP, or district office)
- An individual who can interpret evaluation results
- Your child (when appropriate)

- **Other individuals** (invited by you or the school) who have knowledge or special expertise about the child. With your consent, the school must also invite representatives from other agencies that are likely to be responsible for transition services. (if the child is 14 or older).
- Related Service Providers (if applicable).

11. What happens during an IEP meeting?

- The special education teacher should have sent you a draft IEP to review.
- The different team members share thoughts and suggestions. If this is the initial IEP meeting the evaluation results may be reviewed to be clear on the strengths and needs of the child.
- The team will discuss and decide the educational and other goals that are appropriate for the child and the type of special education services your child needs.
- The IEP team will also talk about related services your child may need to benefit from his/her special education. Examples of related services include: Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Transportation, etc.

12. Does the school need my consent to implement the IEP?

Yes. The school must obtain your informed written consent before the initial provision of special education and related services can begin. The school must make reasonable efforts to obtain that consent. If you do not respond to the request for consent for the initial provision of special education and related services, or you refuse to consent, the school system may not override your lack of consent and cannot implement services.

13. Can I revoke my consent for special education and related services after initially giving permission?

Yes. At any time after giving initial consent, you may revoke consent, in writing, for the continued provision of special education and related services. Once you revoke consent, the school system may no longer provide services to your child, and they may not use mediation or due process procedures to try to override your revocation of consent. Your child will no longer receive the services and supports that were included in the IEP.

14. Can the IEP be changed?

Yes. The IEP must be changed at least once a year to review the child's progress and develop a new annual IEP. You do not have to wait for the annual review. You, or any IEP team member, may ask for a review or revision at any time. The meeting to revise the IEP will be similar to the IEP meeting for annual review.

15. Does the IEP meeting have to be in person?

No. You do not have to attend the meeting in person after the initial IEP meeting where you provide informed written consent. When holding an IEP meeting, you

and the school may agree to use other means of participation, such as video conference or conference calls.

16. May a team member be excused from attending an IEP meeting?

Yes. Under certain circumstances and only with the consent of both the school system and the parent, a member can be excused. If the member's area of the curriculum or related service is not going to be discussed or modified at the meeting, then he/she may be excused, if you, as parents, and the school system agree in writing. A member whose area of expertise is going to be discussed or changed at the meeting may be excused under two conditions: (1) the parent and the school agree to excuse the member; and (2) the member gives written input about developing the IEP to you and the team before the meeting.

17. Do parents have the right to a copy of the child's IEP?

Yes. The school district is mandated to give the parent a copy of the IEP at no cost to the parent.

18. Does the IEP committee take a vote on decisions concerning the IEP?

No. The team should work toward consensus. However, the public agency (the school/district) has the ultimate responsibility to ensure that the IEP includes the services that the child needs in order to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).