
What is an IEP (Individualized Education Program)?

An IEP is a program that addresses a child's special education experience at school. Special education services must be provided even for undocumented children who need these supports. The school district is required to provide these accommodations/services, at no cost to parents.

Who is eligible for an IEP?

In order to qualify for an IEP, your child generally must be between the ages of 3 and 18, and have one of 13 specific disabilities listed in a federal special education law (IDEA). The identified disability must also be affecting their school performance and/or their ability to learn in a general education setting.

Eligible conditions can include specific learning disabilities, emotional disabilities, cognitive delays, intellectual disability, and certain medical/health conditions.

If they are found not to be eligible for an IEP, they may still qualify for a 504 Plan. A 504 Plan is another way for a child to receive accommodations, support, or services to support their learning.

How do I start the process?

A written request should be sent to your child's school principal or director of special education services. It should ask the school district to evaluate whether your child is eligible for special education services. (See example on back).

What types of services or placements are available?

There are many options, and your school will be able to tell you what is offered there. Some examples include:

- Modifications to general education classroom (e.g., sitting at the front of the classroom, being given written notes/handouts to follow along with during classes, etc.).
- Resource Specialist Program (RSP) – your child will be pulled out of the general education classroom for a particular subject(s) to receive more individualized help.
- Special Day Class (SDC) – a special education classroom environment for those with more extensive educational needs.
- Additional services/therapies (e.g., speech therapy (ST), occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), nursing assistance, psychological counseling, etc.)

Who attends the IEP meeting?

- All individuals who help develop the IEP: parents, child (if older), school administrator, general education and/or special education teachers, nurse, and/or school psychologist.
- Other people who sometimes attend are those who provide special services like ST, OT, or PT.
- An interpreter, provided by the district, if parents do not speak English.
- Parents can also bring a representative to the meeting, such as a relative, family friend, the child's therapist/counselor, an educational advocate, or someone who has independently evaluated your child, such as a neuropsychologist. Parents can also bring an attorney; however, the school district must be notified of this 5 days prior to the meeting.

TIPS for Parents

- Assessments should be completed and an IEP developed within 60 calendar days of receipt of parent's written consent for an evaluation.
- Discuss any concerns your child's current teachers have prior to IEP meetings.
- Bring copies of any prior assessments and/or medical/psychiatric diagnoses.
- Actively participate in the meeting (e.g., bring a list of questions; discuss status of goals).
- An IEP is a legal document. If you are uncertain about anything or disagree with findings or recommendations, you **do not** have to sign the IEP.
 - The parts of the IEP that you DO agree to can be started while other aspects can be rewritten or appealed.
 - Parents can take a copy of the written IEP home before signing to review it first
 - The school district must offer to translate the written IEP into the language of the child's parents, by request, if parents do not speak English.
- Parent can request an IEP meeting any time it is appropriate to review or change the plan.
- It is generally NOT recommended to bring an attorney to an IEP meeting unless an issue is already in dispute.

Sample Letter – Request for Assessment (fill in bold portions)

(Your Name)

(Your Address)

(Your Telephone Number)

(Date)

(Name of Principal, Special Education Director, and/or Program Specialist)

(Address)

Re: (Your Child's Name/Date of Birth)

Dear (X),

I am writing to refer my child, **(Name)**, for a full assessment to determine if **s/he** is eligible for special education services and support. **S/He** is **(age)** years old and attends **(name of school)**. I am requesting my child be evaluated for an IEP in the areas of **(speech, academics, behavior, etc.)** for the following reasons: **(e.g., s/he is not clear when speaking; s/he is failing several classes; s/he has a medical/psychiatric condition that is impacting learning)**.

I also request that my child be evaluated under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 if applicable.

I would like an assessment plan authorizing this evaluation within 15 days after receipt of this request. I am also requesting that the IEP meeting be set within the time required by law so that we may discuss the results and programing my child required. Please ensure that I get copies of the assessment reports one week before the IEP meeting.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

(Your Name)

RESOURCES

¹C.A. Childress, Psy.D.; ²Goldblatt E. S. (2007) 18 Tips for Getting Quality Special Education for Your Child. Disability Rights California www.disabilityrightsca.org/pubs/513001.htm; ³Wayne RESA Parent Advisory Committee (2003) Parent Handbook.