

IEPs: Getting Started

Center for Autism and Related Disabilities

University of Florida/Gainesville

IEP Training Series

Part 1 of 5

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Intended audience

- The content presented in this training series is intended to benefit parents of students with disabilities who are eligible for special education services under IDEA.
- However, all interested parties, including family members, educators, related service professionals, and school administrators are welcome and encouraged to participate in this series.

What we will cover today

- What is an IEP
- Who qualifies for an IEP
- The evaluation process
- Parent participation
- Procedural safeguards
- Who attends the meeting
- The purpose of the IEP
- The purpose of the IEP meeting

Learner Objectives

- Define IEP
- Explain purpose of IEPs

What is an IEP?

- Individualized Education Program or Plan
- Present level of function
- LRE
- Statewide assessment options
- Goals and objectives for school year
- Supports and services provided to your child
- Measures used to record progress and mastery
- Written for a maximum of a one-year period of time
- A roadmap for how to help your child achieve his/her goals for the year
- A “best guess” for what your child will learn this year
- NOT a group of lesson plans for your child or your child’s class
- NOT a promise of what your child will learn this year

How is the IEP used?

- School districts use the IEP to document supports and services promised to the child
 - Learning tools, personnel, accommodations
- Teachers and therapists use the IEP to identify teaching strategies, plan lessons, choose learning materials, document progress
- Families use the IEP to record goals and progress, document supports needed and used

Remember

- If it's written on the IEP, the school team is responsible for addressing each goal and objective by the end of the school year.
- The idea is for each goal and objective to be mastered by that time; however, the school team is only responsible for documenting that each objective has been addressed (efforts were made to teach the objective to mastery).

Who qualifies for an IEP?

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Deaf or Hard-of-hearing
- Developmentally Delay (ages 0-5 years)
- Emotional/Behavioral Disability
- Homebound or Hospitalized
- Intellectual Disability
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech and/or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment or Blindness
- Dual Sensory Impairment

Medical diagnosis versus educational eligibility

- Many children with ASD have received an ASD diagnosis from a physician or other medical or mental health provider.
- A medical diagnosis is different than a determination of ESE eligibility.
- Evaluation criteria are different for the two types of assessments.
- The educational evaluation will determine ESE eligibility and educational needs.
- Each school district must follow the State Board of Education rule (see next slide) before any ASD eligibility is assigned
 - providing a medical diagnosis is helpful to the process, but is only one piece of the evaluation process set by the state.

Evaluations

- Parent or district requests evaluation
- Gather relevant functional, developmental and academic information
- Must be completed within 60 days

Educational Evaluations

- Minimum student evaluations shall include all of the following:
 - behavioral observations targeting social interaction, communication skills, and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, or activities, across settings
 - comprehensive social/developmental history
 - comprehensive psychological evaluation
 - comprehensive speech/language evaluation
- Medical information will be considered

A note about evaluations

- Schools must obtain parental consent prior to evaluating a child for special education.
- These evaluations must be nondiscriminatory and unbiased.
- In addition, parents have the right to request an evaluation, at no cost to the family. Parents have the right to be present at the evaluation, and ask questions.

The eligibility process

- The Road to Determining ESE (Exceptional Student Education) services:
 - Referral for evaluation (the school meets with you and gets your permission to do some testing)
 - Individual evaluation (a variety of professionals may be involved at this stage as they work to figure out the child's specific needs)
 - Eligibility determination (which education program does my child qualify under?) If eligible, then?
 - Development of the first IEP
 - Consent for service provision and location

Parent Participation

- Parents have the right to attend and be active members of all educational meetings regarding their child
- This includes (but is not limited to) evaluation, eligibility and service meetings
- It is the responsibility of the school district to encourage active participation of the parents in the child's education
Especially the development of the Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Procedural Safeguards

- Parents have the right to certain safeguards afforded to them under IDEA.
- These include:
 - The right to examine all educational records
 - The right to have an impartial hearing
 - The right to mediation
 - The right to be accompanied by an attorney
 - The right to due process

Who attends the meeting?

- Parent or legal guardian
- Teacher
- Special education representative
- Regular education representative
- School administrator
- LEA (representative from the local education agency)
- Advocates
- Anyone else who knows your child well

*Can participate in person or by phone

The purpose of the IEP

- Documentation/game plan
 - What will your child learn?
 - How will he/she be taught?
 - What help will your child need?
- Accountability
- Progress monitoring

The purpose of the IEP meeting

- Gather team members
- Celebrate successes and acquisition of skills
- Identify needs
- Identify strategies to address needs
- Create plan of action for instruction and monitoring progress

Thank You for Viewing!

Other titles in this series:

Part 2: Being Prepared

Part 3: Alphabet Soup

Part 4: Components

Part 5: Tips for a Successful Meeting