

All About The IEP

When a child receives special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), he or she must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This is a written document listing, among other things, the special educational services that the child will receive. The IEP is developed by a team that includes the child's parents and school staff.

The IEP is an extremely important document in the educational lives of students with disabilities receiving special education under IDEA. The resources we've listed below will help you learn more about IEPs—what the law requires, what information a typical IEP contains, how IEPs are developed, and so on.

What Is An IEP?

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written statement of the educational program designed to meet a child's individual needs. Every child who receives special education services must have an IEP. That's why the process of developing this vital document is of great interest and importance to educators, administrators, and families alike.

What Is The IEP's Purpose?

The IEP has two general purposes:

- to set reasonable learning goals for a child, and
- to state the services that the school district will provide for the child.

Who Develops The IEP?

The IEP is developed by a team of individuals that includes key school staff and the child's parents. The team meets, reviews the assessment information available about the child, and designs an educational program to address the child's educational needs that result from his or her disability. Want the specifics of who you'll find on an IEP team?

What Is An IEP Team?

To write an effective IEP for a child with a disability, parents, teachers, other school staff and often the child come together at a meeting to look closely at the child's unique needs.

These individuals combine their knowledge, experience, and commitment to design an educational program that must help the child to be involved in, and progress in, the general education curriculum that is, the same curriculum as for children without disabilities. The IEP guides the delivery of special education and related services and supplementary aids and supports for the child with a disability. Without a doubt, writing and implementing an effective IEP requires teamwork.

Who Is On The IEP Team?

Here's a list, as specified in IDEA, our nation's special education law. Note that the order in which the IEP team members are going to be listed has nothing to do with their priority on the team. Every member has an equal say and important expertise to contribute.

IDEA (at §300.321) describes the IEP team as including the following members:

- the **parents** of the child
- not less than one **regular education teacher** of the child (if the child is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment)
- not less than one **special education teacher** of the child, or where appropriate, not less than one special education provider of the child
- a **representative of the public agency** who is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities; is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum; and is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the public agency
- an individual who can **interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results**
- other individuals who have **knowledge or special expertise regarding the child**, including related services personnel as appropriate (invited at the discretion of the parent or the agency)
- the **child** with a disability (when appropriate).

When Is The IEP Developed?

An IEP meeting must be held **within 30 calendar days** after it is determined, through a full and individual evaluation, that a child has one of the disabilities listed in IDEA and needs special education and related services. A child's IEP must also be reviewed at least annually thereafter to determine whether the annual goals are being achieved and must be revised as appropriate.

What's In An IEP?

Each child's IEP must contain specific information, as listed within IDEA, our nation's special education law. This includes (but is not limited to):

- the child's **present levels of academic achievement and functional performance**, describing how the child is currently doing in school and how the child's disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general curriculum
- annual **goals** for the child, meaning what parents and the school team think he or she can reasonably accomplish in a year
- the **special education and related services** to be provided to the child, including supplementary aids and services (such as a communication device) and changes to the program or supports for school personnel
- how much of the school day the child will be educated separately from nondisabled children or not participate in extracurricular or other nonacademic activities such as lunch or clubs
- how (and if) the child is to participate in state and district-wide assessments, including what modifications to tests the child needs
- when services and modifications will begin, how often they will be provided, where they will be provided, and how long they will last
- how school personnel will measure the child's progress toward the annual goals.

Can Students Be Involved In Developing Their Own IEP?

Yes, they certainly can be! IDEA actually requires that the student be invited to any IEP meeting where transition services will be discussed. These are services designed to help the student plan for his or her transition to adulthood and life after high school.

We have provided a separate [“Disability Transition to Adulthood”](#) document for students with disabilities who are ready to leave high school and go out in the world as young adults.