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