



IEP MEETING GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Special education provides educational services that are individualized to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities. Students with IEPs receive services that prepare them for education, employment, and to live independently after they graduate.

Special Education Law Requirements:

- **Individualized Education Program (IEP):** The IEP is the legal document that lists the services a child with a disability will receive at school. The IEP must be developed to address the child's individualized needs.
- **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** Special education services are to be provided to a student with a disability as they are documented in his/her IEP. Every student with an IEP is entitled to an education that is appropriate for his or her unique needs without any cost to the parent/guardian. An IEP must be provided to allow the the child to make appropriate progress in light of his/her circumstances.
- **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** Students with disabilities should be educated in their "Least Restrictive Environment," which means they should be in classes with students who do not have disabilities as much as possible ("to the maximum extent appropriate.")
- **Annual IEP Meeting:** The IEP team is required to meet at least once a school year to create and review an IEP for the next year.
- **Psychological Re-evaluations** must take place at least every 3 years. The parent can request an evaluation once a year.
 - When requesting an evaluation or a re-evaluation, the parent/guardian should request testing both in writing (and keep a copy) and verbally in a school meeting.
- **Prior Written Notice (PWN):** The school is required to send the parent/guardian a document called "Prior Written Notice" before and after an IEP meeting. It should explain what the team discussed, what decisions were made, and the reasons that the school will or will not take the actions discussed in the IEP Meeting.
 - If the IEP team denies a service or evaluation parent/guardian requested or decides to changes the student's services, the parent/guardian can ask the team to include the reason for the denial or change in Prior Written Notice.
- **Due Process:** If the parent/guardian disagrees with the category the student qualifies for special education under, the school's evaluation, the special education services being provided, or the educational placement of the student, the parent/guardian can file a complaint called "Due Process".
- **Informed Parental Consent:** Once a parent/guardian gives permission, the school can begin to follow the IEP. The IEP includes an "informed parental consent" page for the parent/guardian's signature and permission.
 - The parent/guardian should only sign the page "Informed Parental Consent" once the parent/guardian has seen the final copy of the IEP and agrees with everything in the IEP. If the parent/guardian have concerns, the parent/guardian should request another IEP meeting in writing to discuss the concerns. The parent/guardian also has the right to file due process if he or she disagrees with the IEP.
 - **Initial IEP:** After a child qualifies for an IEP for the first time, the school can only begin to follow the IEP once the parent/guardian gives permission.
 - **After the First IEP:** The parent/guardian has 15 days to sign the IEP before the school will begin to follow it, unless the parent/guardian has filed a due process complaint.

Child Find:

- **Child Find** is the school's responsibility to identify and test students who may need special education services. When a child is suspected of having an educational disability, the school must do testing to determine whether he or she qualifies for special education services. Child Find includes children who are suspected of having a disability, even if they are moving up to the next grade
 - If the parent/guardian has concerns about a student's grades, behavior, and/or attendance, parent/guardian should give a letter to the principal about their concerns.

Getting Special Education Services:

- In order for the student to get special education services, the student must meet specific requirements under one of the special education categories. The student's disability must negatively affect the student's educational performance.

Parent/Guardian Participation Rights:

- The parent is an important and equal member of the IEP team.
- The school must take steps to make sure that parents/guardians are present at each IEP meeting or are given the opportunity to participate, including:
 - Notifying the parent early enough to give the opportunity to attend.
 - Scheduling the meeting at a time and place that works for both the school and parent/guardian or rescheduling if needed
 - If a parent/guardian cannot attend, the school must provide other ways for the parent to participate including phone calls or video calls.
- If the parent provides written request for an IEP meeting, the meeting must occur within ten school days.
- If the school requests an IEP meeting, the meeting must occur within ten calendar days.
 - If the parent/guardian can't attend an IEP meeting at the time the school has requested, write a letter or e-mail to the principal saying that the parent/guardian are unable to attend, but that the parent/guardian want to participate in the meeting. The letter should include times that parent/guardian are available.
- The parent/guardian has the right to review the child's educational records prior to an IEP meeting.
- The parent/guardian should receive a draft version of the IEP 48 hours prior the IEP Meeting. The parent can also request other evaluations and records to review prior to IEP Meetings.

Legally Required Members of the IEP Team:

- The Parent(s) or Guardian(s)
- General Education Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- Principal, Assistant Principal, or someone the principal chooses to take their place for the meeting
- School Psychologist if a psycho-educational evaluation is being discussed
- Related Service providers if related services or evaluations are being discussed
- The child, when appropriate
- Individuals with special knowledge about the child (advocates, social workers, mental health providers, family members, family friends, and others)

Each member should be present for the entire IEP Meeting unless the parent/guardian gives permission for him/her to leave.

Required IEP Information:

- **Medical Information** should include all current medical and mental health diagnoses and names of the child's medication.
- **Strengths** should describe what the student is good at, positive characteristics of the student, and how he/she learns best.
- **Present Levels of Performance** should explain what the child can do and what the child cannot do in specific areas including academics (English Language Arts and Mathematics), social emotional behavior, adaptive behavior, vocational skills, and transition (for students age 14 and older).
 - Present levels must be current within the past year and come from a variety of sources.
 - If present levels are older than a year, ask that the levels be updated with current information.
- **Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA), Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), and Safety Plan** should be marked on the IEP if the student has one.
 - An FBA and BIP should be created when the student's behavior disrupts his or her learning or the learning of other students.
 - A safety plan should be created when the student is at risk of harming self or others or if the student is at risk of being harmed by others.
- **Measurable Annual Goals** must address each area of educational need that was described in the Present Levels of Performance.
 - Data should be collected for each goal to determine how the student is making progress.
 - The parent/guardian can ask, "In one year, how are we going to tell if my child has reached this goal?"
- **Accommodations and Modifications** should meet the child's individualized needs.
- **Service Hours** should meet all of the child's individualized needs and be provided in the Least Restrictive Environment.
 - Services should be provided to allow the student to make meaningful educational progress.
 - Students with disabilities should only be placed in special education classes or moved to a Special Day School if the IEP Team has data to support that the student needs that level of support to make progress.
- **Related Services** are provided to students who need these services in order to benefit from special education. Related services include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, special transportation, and more.
- **Extended School Year** provides special education and related services to students who require services throughout the year, including school breaks. This is often for students who lose skills over breaks, if it takes him/her a long time to relearn skills they have forgotten, or if the student's skills need ongoing attention.