



School Support

What is an IEP (Individualize Educational Plan)?

- An IEP is a plan made by a child's school to support them when they need extra help or therapies. It is a formal plan that involves specialized instruction, supportive services and measurable goals. The plan is created collaboratively by educators, parents, and other professionals, and it is reviewed and updated regularly to ensure the student's progress.
- Public schools must create an IEP for each child who receives special education services, according to the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The law guarantees a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities.

How can an IEP help my child?

- An IEP can include specialized and personalized instructions including:
 - **Customized support:** The IEP outlines specific accommodations and modifications that can help your child succeed, such as extended time on tests, assistive technology, or alternative teaching methods.
 - **Clear Educational Goals:** The plan sets measurable, achievable goals for your child's learning, helping to track progress and focus on areas where they need improvement.
 - **Access to Supportive Services:** The IEP ensures that your child can receive specialized services including speech/language therapy, physical therapy, and occupational therapy.
 - **Collaboration with Educators:** The IEP fosters collaboration between parents, teachers, and school staff working together toward your child's success.
 - **Legal Protections:** Under federal law, an IEP provides your child with the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

How do I get my child an IEP?

- Submit a formal written request to the IEP coordinator or school principal. Be specific about your concerns! Include any documentation (for example, your child's regional center evaluation, if they have one) that may support your child's needs and include the date. Keep track of when you turn in your letter requesting an IEP because the school is required to make a plan for the IEP assessment within 30 days . You may need to follow up on this request.

[timeline table]

- Discuss with your pediatrician for advice and specific recommendations. Pediatricians can help advocate for the needs of your child, including a letter of support in certain cases, though the plan will ultimately be at the discretion of the school.

[downloadable template letter]



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What happens if my child’s IEP request is denied?

- When parents don’t agree with the services outlined in the IEP, they have the right to ask for mediation, a process in which a neutral third party brings the school and parents together to work out a resolution. Parents can also file a due process complaint with the school system. The complaint triggers a resolution process between parents and IEP team members. If that fails, the case is brought before a hearing officer who will resolve the dispute.

Keep in mind, you can always request an “emergency IEP meeting” if needed, or to make revisions to the IEP throughout the year.

What is the difference between an IEP and a 504 Plan?

IEPs and 504 Plans Explained

	Individualised Education Program (IEP)	504 Plan
Requires measured annual goals with progress reports.	Yes	No
Must include post-secondary transition services.	Yes	No
Requires the child to fit one of 13 categories of conditions requiring extra support.	Yes	No
Has formal, measurable goals.	Yes	No
Requires accommodations to assist free appropriate public education.	Yes	Yes
Requires the school to address health needs of children at risk for severe disease (including severe COVID).	Yes	Yes
Can incorporate a health plan to help prevent transmission of disease to vulnerable children (e.g., sanitizing equipment, avoiding shared toys or tools).	Yes	Yes
For children who need special support but not necessarily specialized instruction.	No	Yes
Requires the child to have a record of a physical or mental impairment substantially limiting one or more major life activities.	No	Yes
Provides accommodations beyond kindergarten through 12th-grade education at the post-secondary level.	No	Yes