

The IEP process



Here are the major steps for getting an IEP for your child.

1. Identification

The special education law IDEA requires states and local districts to look for, find, and evaluate kids who need services and supports. Teachers and other school professionals may also refer kids for an evaluation. A parent or guardian can refer their child, too.

2. Evaluation

To get an IEP, kids must be evaluated for special education services. The process involves testing to see how the child thinks and solves problems. It also involves looking at standardized test scores and grades to understand the child's level of performance.

3. Eligibility meeting

School professionals and parents meet to talk over the results. The school decides whether the child is eligible for services under IDEA. If the child qualifies, the school has 30 days to hold a meeting of the IEP team to develop the child's plan.

4. IEP meeting

The purpose of the IEP meeting is to develop the child's special education program. The team talks about the student's needs and the services the school will provide. Once the team agrees on the details, the school finalizes the program and parents sign it.

5. Services/supports begin

The child starts getting the services and supports outlined in the IEP. Parents get copies of the written plan. The child's teachers also must have access to the document.

6. Progress monitoring

The school monitors the child's progress toward IEP goals throughout the year. Schools must give progress reports on IEPs at least as often as they give progress reports to students in general education.

7. Annual IEP review

The IEP team meets once a year to review the IEP and make any adjustments for the next year, based on the child's progress. But parents can request a meeting at any point to talk about their child's progress.

8. Reevaluation

Schools must typically reevaluate students every three years to see if they still qualify for special education services and if their needs have changed. This step may be called a "triennial." If the school decides to cut services, it must give prior notice to parents and guardians. Parents have the right to dispute the decision.