

Step 1

Evaluation

A team of qualified professionals evaluates your child in all areas of development, not just areas related to the child's suspected disability. The results of the evaluation are used to determine if your child is eligible for special education and related services, and to make decisions about an appropriate educational program for the child.

Step 2

Eligibility

If you and the school district agree that your child is eligible for services, you and the school staff will plan your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) at an IEP team meeting. You are an equal member of this team. Some states may have a different name for the IEP team meeting.

Step 3

IEP Meeting

The IEP team gathers to talk about your child's needs and to write the IEP. The IEP lists any special services your child needs, including goals your child is expected to achieve in one year, and objectives or benchmarks to note progress. The team determines what services are included in the IEP, as well as the location where those services and modifications are delivered. Placement for your child must be in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) appropriate to your child's needs. He or she will be placed in the regular classroom to receive services unless the IEP team determines that, even with special educational aids and services, the child cannot be successful there. You are part of any group that decides what services your child will receive and where they will be provided.

Step 4

Services Provided

During the school year, your child receives a specialized education, based on the IEP written expressly for him or her. A key part of this plan includes a variety of special education and related services designed to support your child's special needs and unique learning goals.

Step 5

Monitoring

Your child's progress toward the annual goals is measured, as stated in the IEP. You are regularly informed of your child's progress and whether that progress is enough for your child to achieve the goals by the end of the year. You get these progress reports at least as often as other parents are informed of their nondisabled children's progress.

Step 6

IEP Review

At least once a year your child's IEP is reviewed and revised if necessary. You or others can make suggestions for changes.

Step 7

Reevaluation

We've come full circle. At least every three years your child must be reevaluated. This evaluation is often called a "triennial." Its purpose is to find out if your child continues to be a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEA, and to determine your child's specific educational needs.

YOU TAKE CHARGE!

Throughout the process, IDEA has given you, as the parent, the right to disagree with any decision made on your child's behalf. IDEA also provides recommendations for resolving those disagreements. We'll cover those in more detail later in the course.