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# **A GUIDE TO THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)**

# Introduction

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Students that are going through the school system and are having a difficult time keeping up with the day-to-day task of their classroom and assignments from their teachers may need that extra help and support and could qualify for an Individualized Educational Program (IEP).



Each program must be designed for one student and must be a truly individualized document. This program is offered free of charge to families of kids in public schools and outlines the goals and any support services that may be needed for a child to succeed in school.

The IEP creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students (when appropriate) to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities. Together, these individuals can bring together the knowledge, skills experience, and commitment to design an effective educational program that will help the student progress in the general curriculum.

Without a doubt, writing and implementing an IEP requires a full team effort. Understanding how to get and use these services will help your child be as successful as possible in school

# Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)



The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children.

## **IDEA does the following:**

- Ensures that all children with an identified disability receive special education and related services to address their individual needs.
- Ensures that children with disabilities be prepared for employment and independent living.
- Ensures that the rights of children with disabilities and their families are protected under the law.
- Assesses and ensures the efforts of institutions providing services to persons with disabilities.
- Provides assistance to states, localities, federal agencies, and educational service agencies in providing for the education of children with disabilities.

Part C: Early Intervention Ages 0-3

Part B: Special Education Services for School Age Children 3-21

## **Entitlements of IDEA:**

- Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Assessments
- Individualized Education Plan
- Right to file a complaint
- Right to due process (Mediation, Informal Administrative Hearing)

# WHAT IS AN IEP?

## At a glance

- IEP stands for Individualized Education Program.
- The purpose of an IEP is to lay out the special education instruction, supports, and services a student needs to thrive in school.
- IEPs are part of PreK-12 public education.



## The purpose of an IEP

An IEP is more than just a written legal document (or “plan”). It’s a map that lays out the program of special education instruction, supports, and services kids need to make progress and thrive in school.

IEPs are covered by special education law, or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). They’re created for eligible kids who attend public school, which includes charter schools.

There are many benefits to getting an IEP. The process begins with an evaluation that shows a student’s strengths and challenges. Families and schools use the results to create a program of services and supports tailored to meet the student’s needs.

Having an IEP gives students, families, and schools legal protections, too. It lets families be involved in decisions that impact their child’s education. It also gives students rights when it comes to school discipline.

IEPs are a part of public education. They’re given to eligible kids, ages 3 and up, who attend public school. That includes charter schools.

**THESE SERVICES ARE PROVIDED AT NO COST TO PARENTS**



# What is a 504 Plan?

## At a glance

- 504 plans are formal plans that schools develop to give kids with disabilities the support they need. That covers any condition that limits daily activities in a major way.
- 504 plans aren't part of special education. So, they're different from IEPs.



## What's in a 504 plan

504 plans often include accommodations. These can include:

Changes to the environment (like taking tests in a quiet space)

Changes to instruction (like checking in frequently on key concepts)

Changes to how curriculum is presented (like getting outlines of lessons)

Accommodations don't change what kids learn, just how they learn it. The goal is to remove barriers and give kids access to learning.

## How to get a 504 plan

The process for getting a 504 plan is different, and simpler, than the process for getting an IEP. But it varies from school district to school district

Kids don't need to get a full evaluation to get a 504 plan. But many do. In fact, schools often suggest a 504 plan if a child doesn't qualify for special education but needs support.

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# How to Obtain an IEP?

**Step 1: Formalize your thoughts about your child and their struggles in learning areas into a letter to the school (current or future).**

**In the letter you will have to request a "special education evaluation" and leave your contact information. Depending on the School District, you may deliver the letter in person, via email, or fax it and be sure to have an administrator worker give you a formal confirmation of receiving the letter. Also keep a copy for your own records.**

## Approval

**Within 15 Calendar Days**

**Step 2: School responds with a written Assessment Plan that will outline the assessment and evaluation that will be done for your child**

**Within 15 Calendar Days**

**Step 3: Review your Assessment Plan, you will then consent to the plan by signing it and return the assessment Plan to the school.**

**Step 3B: If you need additional help contact the Parent Resource Centers. They will provide free guidance throughout the whole process \*no referral needed.**

**Within 60 Calendar Days**

**Step 4: The school carries out all the evaluations and reaches out to schedule an IEP meeting.**

**Step 5: After the IEP meeting and if your child is eligible, you will receive an IEP, 504 Plan, or neither**

**Step 6: The IEP is created**

## Denial

**Step 2: School responds with a denial letter of not having an assessment for your child**

**Step 3: You can appeal the denial letter if you believe your child would benefit from an IEP. If the appeal is unsuccessful you have other options: Section 504 Plan, as well as higher due process.**

**Step 4: If Your Appeal is successful, follow step 2 in Approval graph**



## Parent Resource Centers:

**Learning Rights Law Center:** 213-489-4030 [www.learningrights.org](http://www.learningrights.org)

- Focus on special education and IEP support (No Regional Support)

**TASK:** 626-300-1043 [www.taskca.org](http://www.taskca.org)

- Serves all Southern California





## Request for Special Education Evaluation #1

Parent/Gurdian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's DOB: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Adress: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Principal/ Special Education Coordinator:

I am the parent of \_\_\_\_\_ who is in grade \_\_\_\_\_ in  
(circle one) Mr./Ms./Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ classroom. I am requesting a special education  
evaluation in all areas related to suspected disability to determine whether my child is eligible  
for special education and/or related services under that Individuals with Disabilities  
Education act.

I am requesting these assessments because I am concerned about the progress my child is  
making in the following areas: \_\_\_\_\_

Specifically, I am concerned about \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to participate with the school staff to decide what testing is done and what other  
information should be collected and provided about my child. Please provide me with a copy  
of Permission to Evaluate Consent form (PTE) within the required 10-day period.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_





## Request for Special Education Evaluation #2

Parent/Gurdian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's DOB: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Adress: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear (person's name),

I am writing to request that my son/daughter (child's name) be evaluated for special education services. I am worried that (child's name) is not doing well in school and believe he/she may need special services in order to learn. (Child's name) is in the ( \_ ) grade at (name of school). (Teacher's name) is his/her teacher.

Specifically, I am worried because (child's name) does/does not (give a few direct examples of your child's problems at school). We have tried the following to help (child's name): (If you or the school have done anything extra to help your child, briefly explain).

I understand that I have to give written permission in order for (child's name) to be evaluated. Before the evaluation begins, I have some questions about the process that I need to have answered (list any questions you may have). I would be happy to talk with you about (child's name). You can send me information or call me during the day at (daytime telephone number). Thank you for your prompt attention to my request.

Sincerely,

Your name

**Cc: your child's principal (if the letter is addressed to an administrator), your child's teacher(s)**

**Note:** If your child has been identified as having a disability by professionals outside the school system, add the following sentence to the end of the first paragraph: “(Child's name) has been identified as having (name of disability) by (name of professional). Enclosed is a copy of the report(s) I have received that explains (child's name) condition.”





## After the IEP is written

When the IEP has been written, parents must receive a copy at no cost to themselves. Everyone who will be involved in implementing the IEP must have access to the document.

This includes the child's:

- regular education teacher(s);
- special education teacher(s);
- related service provider(s) (for example, speech therapist)
- any other service provider (such as a paraprofessional) who will be responsible for a part of the child's education.

Each of these individuals needs to know what his or her specific responsibilities are for carrying out the child's IEP. This includes the specific accommodations, modifications, and supports that the child must receive, according to the IEP.

## Implementing the IEP

Implementing the IEP Once the IEP is written, it is time to carry it out—in other words, to provide the student with the special education and related services as listed in the IEP.

This includes all supplementary aids and services and program modifications that the IEP team has identified as necessary for the student to advance appropriately toward his or her IEP goals, to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum and participate in other school activities.

# The difference between accommodations and modifications

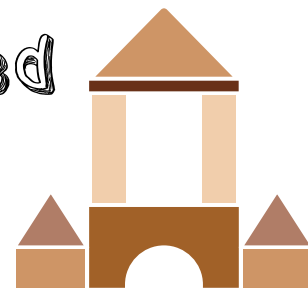
When a student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 plan, you'll likely hear the words accommodation or modification. While the two words sound similar, they mean different things.

An accommodation changes how a student learns the material. A modification changes what a student is taught or expected to learn. Here is a chart that explains the differences.

	Accommodation	Modifications
<b>Classroom Instruction</b>	<b>Accommodations</b> can help kids learn the same material as their peers. This allows them to meet the same expectations. A student who has trouble focusing might get seated next to the teacher, but still has to do all the regular class assignments.	Kids who are far behind their peers may need changes to the curriculum they're learning. These are called <b>modifications</b> .  For example, a student could be assigned shorter or easier reading assignments, or homework that's different from the rest of the class. Kids who receive modifications are not expected to learn the same material as their classmates.
<b>Classroom test</b>	using spellcheck might help a student with writing difficulties take notes during class. At the same time, this student might benefit from having extra time to complete the spelling test or using a keyboard if the physical act of writing is difficult.	Modifications in testing often mean that a student covers less material – or material that is less complex. For example, a spelling test may require the class to study 20 words. However, a student with modifications might only have to study 10 of them.



# IEP Frequently Asked Questions



## Can I get an IEP if my child is above 3 years old but is not yet enrolled in school?

- Yes, children above 3 years old can qualify for an IEP and special education services even if they are not yet in enrolled school.
- With an IEP, these children can receive early intervention services from the school.
- After the child turns 3, the school district replaces regional centers as the "primary payer of services" for your child.

## How do I obtain IEP for my child who is not yet in school?

- Write a letter to your child's school requesting an evaluation for special education.
- If you child is not enrolled, send it to the school in your neighborhood (what school they would attend)

## Who develops the IEP at the IEP meeting?

- An IEP team is put together for each student and consist of school staff , such as the principal and the student's teacher, as well as the child's parent/guardian(s).
- A qualified representative must be present to interpret assessment results for each specific evaluation area. Parents can bring a lawyer, but the school needs to be notified of this attendance at least 24 hours in advanced.
- Other individuals such as service coordinator, family friends to support the family. Parents should notify the school that these individuals will be at the meeting.

## How often do we change my child's IEP?

- Changes can be made to the IEP at any time during the school year, but annual meetings are necessary to evaluate your child's progress towards the goals and milestones.



## What is written in the IEP?

- Your child's annual educational **goals**- list of measurable goals created by parents, progress towards these goals will be measured and reported to parents.
- Your child's **services**- which services the school district will provide such as when, where, how often, and for how long will the services be provided.
- Your child's **placement**- where your child will be educated/receive services, how much time they will spend with non-disabled versus disabled children.

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

- IEP provides an **educational plan** for children who qualify for special education.
- 504 Plan is for students who do not qualify for special education but have disabilities or impairments that limit one or more major life activities and limits a child's ability to participate/ learn effectively within the general education curriculum.
- 504 Plan is used to **outline accommodations** that the child will receive, usually in a general education classroom, to support their academic success.
- Each plan will look different based on the child's specific needs.
- For Example: a student may have ADHD might need a quiet place to take test, but otherwise can participate in general educational activities. This child would not qualify for an IEP because they do not require specialization instruction to reach academic goals, therefore the student will have a 504 plan.

## Can children who attend private schools access special education services?

- If a child attends private school, the public school district of the area **must** pay for the child to be evaluated for special education/services and carry out an IEP meeting
- The district and the schools may be able to provide certain accommodations and therapies, there is **no guarantee** that a private school will fund services for special needs students. Public school may be able to but is not obligated to funds services for child attending private school.



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