

IEP OVERVIEW

What is it?

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

An IEP is an individualized plan for a child's special education services at school. It provides personalized special education and related services at no cost to parents.

Admission, Review, Dismissal (ARD)

In Texas, ARD Committees develop the IEP for students receiving special education. The committee is made up of a student's parents and school staff. The group meets at least once a year to make decisions about whether a student is eligible for special education services. If a student is eligible, and the ARD then decides what services are appropriate. In Texas, the meetings of these committees are called "ARD meetings."

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

A federal law that identifies children with disabilities and provides them with specialized programs and services to help them succeed in school. IEPs are provided under IDEA

Who Is Eligible?

Under IDEA, "children with disabilities" are defined as individuals between the ages of three and 21 with one or more of the following conditions (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1401 (3)(26); 34 C.F.R. Sec. 300.7):

- Intellectual Disability
- Hearing impairment (including deafness)
- Speech or language impairment
- Visual impairment (including blindness)
- Serious emotional disturbance
- Orthopedic impairment caused by congenital anomalies
- Orthopedic impairments caused by diseases
- Orthopedic impairments -other
- Autism
- Traumatic brain injury
- Specific learning disability
- Multiple disabilities
- Other health impairment (OHI)

To qualify for special education, a student's impairment must be causing significant difficulties in school and require special education services.

Children with medical conditions that impact their ability to attend school and learn qualify under the other health impairment category (OHI).

TIMELINE AND STEPS

SCHOOL RECEIVES INITIAL REFERRAL



Within 15 School Days, the school is required to send parents a consent form with the evaluation plan explaining the assessments they plan to give your child.

Write a letter to the school asking for your child to be tested for IEP because of his/her medical condition. Take the letter to school or district office and ask for a copy of the letter with the time/day stamped on it as proof of receipt.

NOTICE & CONSENT FOR EVALUATION



Make sure you agree with all aspects of the plan before signing. Be sure to keep a copy of the consent form with the time/date signed and time stamped.

SIGN & RETURN THE PLAN



The School has 45 School Days from the day that the consent form was signed to complete the Full & Individual Evaluation (FIE) based on the proposed evaluation plan.

EVALUATION



Within 60 School Days, the school district must assess the student and hold an ARD meeting to explain the results. At the meeting the ARD committee will determine eligibility for special education services.

ARD MEETING



ARD MEETINGS 101

Who Attends?

The ARD committee must consist of:

- o A legal guardian of the child
- o At least one of the child's general education teachers
- o At least one special education teacher
- o A school psychologist or other specialist who can interpret assessment results
- o A district representative with authority over special education services

You can always bring:

- o A friend or family member
- o A professional works with your child outside of school
- o An advocate

**ARD meetings can feel overwhelming
and it may help to have support.**

WHAT HAPPENS IN AN ARD MEETING?

ARD meetings must follow a specific agenda.
The agenda is listed below.

1. Introduction
2. Purpose of ARD Meeting
3. Waivers
4. Review Evaluation Data and Other Information
5. Determination of Eligibility
6. Transition Planning (if appropriate)
7. Review Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance
8. ARD/IEP Additional Considerations:
 - i. Some Students: Auditory Impairment, Autism, Blind/Visual Impairment, Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), Communication, Language (Limited English proficiency)
 - ii. All Students: Assistive Technology, Extended School Year (ESY) Services, Graduation, Annual Goals and Objectives, as needed.
10. Accommodations or Supplementary Aids & Services
 - i. Related Services (Including Frequency (how often), Duration (amount of time) and Location of where services will be anticipated to be provided (Place)
 - ii. Transportation Needs (if appropriate)
11. State and District Assessment
12. Determine other services to be provided
 - i. Coordination between Regular and Special Education.
 - ii. Grading
13. Determine Placement
14. Consider Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
15. Assurances or Effects of Removal from the General Ed. Classroom
 - i. Consider Opportunity to Participate
 - ii. Consider Potential Harmful Effects
16. ARD Committee members agreement or disagreement (Consensus/NonConsensus)

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR MY CHILD'S ARD MEETING?

Review Your Child's Records

Look for any information, including homework, grades, test performance, and outside reports that you may want to bring up during the meeting.

Ask to See the Assessment Report 1 Week Before the Meeting

This will give you time to read the report and prepare questions before the meeting.

Invite Allies to the ARD

It can be helpful to have another set of ears or someone who brings another perspective on your child at the meeting.

Prepare Questions and Recommendations

It is helpful to write down any concerns, suggestions, or questions you have before the meeting, so you can address them all with the ARD committee.

Inform the School About Any Special Guests or Requests

The school will be better prepared to handle your requests if you let them know ahead of time.

Relax and Reflect on Your Child

Once you have prepared for the meeting, relax and try to remember what your child's strengths and challenges are at school.

Remember you are an expert on your child.

WHAT COULD/SHOULD I ASK DURING THE MEETING?

- What special education services will they receive?
- What related services will they receive? (Speech & Language, Occupational Therapy, Adaptive Physical Education)
- Can we go through the IEP plan piece by piece?
- What extra help, people or materials will they receive?
- What training does the staff have in this accommodation or intervention?
- What will program modifications look like? (extra time, copies of notes)
- What support and services are needed for the student to be involved in nonacademic activities? (Nonacademic activities include, physical education, library time, assembly time)
- What are the reasons that the student will not be involved in general education at any time?
- Does the student need assistive technology devices and services?
- How will the services and modification work? When will they begin? Where? How often?
- What transition services (post secondary or work) will the student need starting at age 16?
- What can I do to support IEP goals at home?
- Who should I contact if I want to call another meeting?

WHAT DO I DO AFTERWORDS?

Review and Sign the Final IEP

The committee will finalize the IEP after the meeting. You should only sign the IEP if you are satisfied with the plan.

Debrief Your Child

It is important to make your child aware of their accommodations, so they will be able for them if it is needed.

Save the New IEP Document

It is important to keep track of what you and the school decided so you can reference it in the future.

Monitor Your Child's Progress

Keeping track of your child's progress will help you determine what elements of the IEP plan are working and what are not. This way you will be able to adjust the IEP to make it more effective.

WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE DECISION?

Write Disagreement with Signature

If you disagree with the decision but need to sign the IEP for your child to get any special education services, write your disagreements next to your signature so there is a record of the complaint. If your child does not need the IEP changes right away, do not sign the IEP.

Review the Evaluation Report Again

Go through the report and note which results or recommendations you disagree with. Mark if there are areas of concerns that you feel were not assessed.

If the School District Does Not Follow the Rules or Fails to Provide Officially Approved IEP Services

File a compliance complaint if you believe the school has violated a part of special education law or procedure. The Department of Education will investigate the complaint.

Request Mediation

Under IDEA, the school must provide mediation for free. This involves meeting with a mediator who will help you and the school come to an agreement.

File a Due Process Complaint

A final option is to request a due process hearing. In a hearing you and the school will present evidence to a hearing officer, who will make an official decision on the case. This can be a complicated legal process and may require support from a lawyer or advocate.