

# Individualized Education Program (IEP)

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## WHAT IS AN IEP

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An IEP is a written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting with an IEP team in compliance with IDEA. The IEP is a written record of the decisions made by the IEP team. It further serves as a commitment to services needed to meet a student's individual learning needs. It services as a communication tool for parents and school personnel. The IEP has two general purposes:

1. To establish measureable annual goals for the child and;
2. To state the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services that the school system will provide to the child.

When developing an appropriate IEP for a child with a disability, the IEP considers the child's involvement and participation in areas of school life:

- The **general education curriculum**, (the subject matter taught to children without disabilities and the skills they are expected to develop for example; math, science, history, and language arts).
- **Extracurricular activities, and Nonacademic activities**, (school activities that fall outside of the general curriculum. These activities are usually voluntary and tend to be more social

than academic. They typically involve others of the same age and may be organized and guided by teachers or other school personnel. Examples may include yearbook, school newspaper, school sports, school clubs, lunch, recess, band, assemblies, field trips, after-school programs, and recreational clubs.

Parents of a child with a special education need should learn how to use the IEP process as an effective tool to obtain appropriate special education and related services for their child. Each IEP must be an individualized document designed for one student.

## WHO DEVELOPS THE IEP

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The IEP is developed by a team of school personnel and the child's parents. IDEA requires that the IEP team be made of the following membership:

1. Parents of the student,
2. At least one special education teacher,
3. A regular education teacher,
4. A representative of the school with the authority to commit district resources,
5. A person who can interpret evaluation data,
6. The student when it is appropriate,
7. Representatives of any other agencies that may be responsible for paying for or providing transition services,



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8. Others invited by the school district or the parents.

An IEP team member may fill more than one of the positions if properly qualified. Team members work together to develop an education plan that will address the child's individual needs and enable the child to participate in general education and school activities with his nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. The IEP team develops a written plan that will guide the delivery of the child's special education and related services.

## ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE IEP

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Parents are equal members of the IEP team and assist in identifying and stating the child's needs clearly in the IEP and selecting appropriate services and placement. Parents are experts on their child and can speak about their child's strengths and needs. Parents also can contribute to the IEP by expressing their ideas for enhancing their child's education. They can share insights about how their child learns, their child's interest, and other things that only a parent would know. They can also listen to the ideas of others about what their child needs to work on at school and share their suggestions. They can also report on whether the skills the child is learning at school are being used at home. Parents may ask that the IEP meeting be postponed until a later date if the team cannot agree. Parents are also decision makers regarding the placement of

their child and must be a part of the team that makes placement decisions for their child.

If the parents have a limited proficiency in English or are deaf, they may need an interpreter in order to understand and be understood. Therefore, if parents need an interpreter for a meeting to discuss their child's evaluation, eligibility for special education, or IEP, they should let the school know ahead of time. The school will make arrangements for an interpreter so the parents can participate fully in the meeting.

## SCHEDULING AN IEP

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A meeting to write the IEP must be held within 30 calendar days of deciding that the child eligible for special education and related services. The school staff has the responsibility to:

1. Contact the participants, including the parents,
2. Notify the parents early enough to make sure they have an opportunity to attend,
3. Schedule the meeting at a time and place agreeable to parents and the school staff,
4. Tell the parents the purpose, time, and location of the meeting,
5. Tell the parents who will be attending,
6. Tell the parents that they may invite people to the meeting who have knowledge of or special expertise about the child.



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## CONTENT OF THE IEP

IDEA requires that certain types of information be included in every child's IEP. Other information may be included or required depending on the specific needs of the student. Each child's IEP is different and is prepared for one child's needs. Some local school systems may include additional information in IEPs not required by IDEA or Alabama Code, in order to document that they have met aspects of federal or state law. IDEA requires that all IEPs contain the following information regarding the child with a disability:

- **Present levels of educational performance** The IEP must include statements of how the child is currently doing in school. This information comes from classroom tests and assignments, individual tests given for eligibility for services, observations from the parents, teachers, or related service providers, and other school staff. The statement must also explain how the child's disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general curriculum.
- **Measurable annual goals** These are goals that the child can reasonably accomplish in a year. The goals are broken down in short-term objectives or benchmarks. Goals may be academic, address social or behavioral needs, related to physical needs, or address other educational needs of the child.

The goals must be measurable to monitor whether the child has achieved the goals.

- **Special education and related services** The IEP must list the special education and related services to be provided to the child or on behalf of the child. This includes supplementary aids and services that the child needs. It also includes modifications (changes) to the program or supports for the school personnel, such as training or professional development that will be provided to assist the child.
- **Participation with non-disabled children** The student should be educated with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. The IEP must explain the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular class and other school activities.
- **Plan for delivering services and modifications** The IEP must state **when** services will begin, **how** often they will be provided, **where** they will be provided, **who** will provide them, and **how long** they will last.
- **Measuring and reporting progress** The IEP must state how the child's progress will be measured and how parents will be informed of that progress.
- **The access to general education curriculum, including the amount of**



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*time spent participation in general education.*

## IEP SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Academic and non-academic activities**

If the IEP team decides that a child needs a particular device, support, or service the team must include this information in the IEP. This requirement covers all activities of the school day, and extracurricular services and activities that all students receive (athletics, transportation, health services, recreational activities, and special interest groups or clubs sponsored by the school.

- **Assistive technology devices or services**

The IEP team must always consider the child's need for assistive technology devices or services. If the child needs these devices or services they must be included in the IEP and be provided at no cost to the parent.

- **Participation in state and district-wide tests**

The IEP must state accommodations and modifications the child will need to take the tests. If a test is not appropriate for the child, the IEP must state why the test is not appropriate and how the child will be tested instead.

- **Transition planning**

Beginning at the age of 16 or younger if appropriate, the IEP must address the school courses the

student needs to take to reach his or her post-school goals. The IEP must also state transition services that are necessary to help the child prepare for leaving school. Transition services will be different for each child. Transition services must take into account the students interests and preferences. Evaluation of career interests, aptitudes, skills and training may be considered. Parents and students should always be included in the IEP meetings where transition is discussed. Other participants might include school vocational counseling staff and other outside agencies that provide vocational services. Some examples of transition services that lead to postsecondary education, vocational training, vocational rehabilitation, integrated employment, adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.

- **Age of majority**

Alabama transfers rights to youth at the age of 19. Beginning at least one year before the student reaches 19 the IEP must include a statement that the student has been told of any rights that will transfer to him or her at the age of majority.

- **Behavioral assessments and plans**

If the child's behavior interferes with his or her learning or the learning of others, the IEP team must consider assessments, strategies and supports to



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address the child's behavior and to help the student learn how to control or manage his or her behavior.

- **Extended school year services (ESY)** ESY are special education services provided during times when school is not in session. ESY services are provided to prevent the loss of significant learning during school breaks. Transportation must also be provided by the school if the child qualifies.
- **English language learners** If the child has limited proficiency in English, the IEP team will consider the child's language needs as they relate to the child's IEP.
- **Braille instruction** If the child is blind or visually impaired the IEP team must provide for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille.
- **Communication needs** If the child has communication needs, the IEP team must consider these needs. For example if the child is deaf or hard of hearing, the IEP will consider his or her communication needs such as sign language. This includes how the child will communicate with classmates and school staff.
- **Teacher support** If school staff needs additional training in order to adequately assist the student, such training should be documented in the IEP as a support.

## RELATED SERVICES

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Related services are all the services needed for a child with a disability to benefit from his specialized instruction. They are not instruction but rather services provided to make the education and instruction accessible and effective. Related services include:

1. Transportation
2. Physical and occupational therapy
3. Orientation and mobility services
4. Counseling
5. Psychological services
6. Social work services
7. Recreation, including therapeutic recreation
8. Rehabilitation services
9. Rehabilitation counseling
10. Speech, language, and audiology services
11. Medical services for diagnosis and evaluation
12. School health services
13. Parent counseling and training.

## AFTER THE IEP MEETING

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Parents are given a copy of the IEP in writing and services contained in the IEP are provided. Teachers and related service personnel with responsibility in the child's IEP are given access and know their responsibilities for carrying out the IEP. The child's progress toward annual goals are monitored, measured, and reported



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to the parents as stated in the IEP. The child's IEP will be reviewed at least annually or more often if the parents or school ask for a review. The IEP is revised if necessary.

## IF PARENTS DON'T AGREE

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If parents do not agree with the IEP and placement, they should express their concerns to the IEP team and try to work out an agreement. If they still disagree, parents can ask for mediation. Parents may file a state complaint or may request a due process hearing.

## APEC IS HERE TO HELP

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APEC provides free training, information, and consultation to families. Visit our training calendar for more information about learning opportunities at [www.alabamaparentcenter.com](http://www.alabamaparentcenter.com) or call our center.

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IEP V.3

