

## School Assistance For Children

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a federally-mandated, written contract that coordinates the academic needs of a special student with the student's school. It is a contractual plan that guides both home and school efforts to help ensure that students with special needs receive a federally-mandated, free and appropriate public education.

Before an IEP is developed, a student must demonstrate that he qualifies for and has need for IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) services. The IEP process begins with an educational report (ER), or evaluation.

Following the ER, the IEP team—the people who write the IEP—convenes to review the ER. Team members must include parents and/or caregivers; at least one teacher and a local education agency representative, or LEA, to commit school resources. The IEP team may also include children and youth services and juvenile probation professionals, lawyers, and physicians to help write a comprehensive, effective and coordinated IEP. However, prior notice and permission to evaluate must be discussed with the parents or caregivers.<sup>1,2</sup>

Using the ER, the IEP team must first determine the student's present educational performance levels. When determining IEP goals, the team must consider the student's classroom placement and the least restrictive environment needed to help ensure that the goals will be met.<sup>1,2</sup>



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To write an effective IEP, the IEP team lists short-term and long-term goals. Short-term goals impact the student's immediate education activities. Long-term goals prepare a student for transition to adult life. The goals need to be realistic, attainable, measurable and challenging.

The team must next decide how the goals will be achieved. Setting observable behaviors to meet the goals is a critical step in writing an effective IEP. Each goal must have clearly stated objectives that are observable and measurable.

In addition to the IEP team matching the student's strengths and needs to the school's curriculum, some students need extra help to meet the goals and objectives. Here are a few examples of supports and services that children may receive:

- speech therapy to enable the student to express herself/himself more fully;
- training on attention/focusing cues;
- in-class peer tutor assistance;
- reduced visual or auditory distractions (which can be achieved through preferred seating as near as possible to teacher or keeping the student and teacher positioned so they are not in front of bright light sources like windows);
- scribing or oral reporting assistance; and
- an assistive technology assessment by a qualified person to determine additions, deletions or modifications.

### Implementing the IEP

Each state has unique guidelines for the interpretation and implementation of IEPs. State public education systems may be contacted for the details. Parents of children with IEPs report a wide range of success and failure in their interactions with the school systems. Some children get excellent educational help without even having an IEP in place; however, some get disappointing help even with an IEP. Parents and caregivers need to be aware of their children's legal rights for receiving additional help in school.<sup>4</sup>

### References

1. Special Education: IEP sample. Accessed via [http://specaled.about.com/cs/ie/p/a/ieparticle\\_2.htm](http://specaled.about.com/cs/ie/p/a/ieparticle_2.htm)
2. Special Needs and Special Gifts: Writing the IEP. Accessed via [www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/1580/writing\\_an\\_iep.html](http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/1580/writing_an_iep.html)
3. Looksmart: Organizations for the hearing impaired. Accessed via <http://search.looksmart.com/p/browse/us1/us317916/us147916/us64045/us1115171/us330094/>
4. Wrightslaw. Individual education plan legal issues. Accessed via [www.wrightslaw.com/swish](http://www.wrightslaw.com/swish)

### For More Information

Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
[www.agbell.org](http://www.agbell.org)

American Society for Deaf Children  
[www.deafchildren.org/home/home.html](http://www.deafchildren.org/home/home.html)

Auditory-Verbal International  
[www.auditory-verbal.org](http://www.auditory-verbal.org)

Communication Services for the Deaf  
[www.c-s-d.org](http://www.c-s-d.org)