

SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT HANDBOOK



**PROGRAMS FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN
OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The purpose of this handbook is to help parents understand special education services. When you first “think” your child may need special education services, you may experience great difficulty. For example, you may be so overwhelmed by the process of finding assistance for your child that you don’t know what to do next or where to seek advice. Members of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), a group composed largely of parents of children receiving special education services, prepared this handbook to help guide you through the process of obtaining special education services in the Oakland Unified School District. CAC members are available to support you along the way.

The CAC hopes this handbook will guide you step-by-step through the processes of referral, assessment, planning and implementation of your child’s instructional program and special education services. This handbook is organized around a series of questions parents frequently ask about special education.

Sincerely,

Community Advisory Committee



WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)?

The Special Education Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is made up of parents, district personnel, agency representatives and other persons concerned with the needs of individuals with disabilities. The primary function of the CAC is to advise the district on special education programs and services. The CAC monitors the needs of the special education population by utilizing teachers, administrators and community members. The CAC is committed to maintaining and developing high quality programs in the district.

The CAC is mandated by the California Education Code which gives the CAC a number of specific responsibilities. These responsibilities include:

- ✍ To advise the Board of Education of the OUSD and its office of Programs for Exceptional Children regarding the development, amendment, review and implementation of the Local Plan for Special Education.
- ✍ To assist in educating parents, students, OUSD staff, and community members regarding special education issues.
- ✍ To assist in recruiting parents and other volunteers who may contribute to the implementation of the Local Plan for Special Education.
- ✍ To support activities on behalf of individuals with exceptional needs.
- ✍ To assist in parental awareness of the importance of regular school attendance.



The mission of the Community Advisory Committee is:

- ✍ To serve as a forum for parents, students, teachers, and community members to advise the district regarding special education programs and services.
- ✍ To function as a liaison between the district's office of Programs for Exceptional Children and parents, students, and community members.

If you would like to find out more about the CAC, please attend a CAC meeting. Meetings are held the first Monday of the month, except for July and August. Meetings are from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Please call the parent line for additional information. 879-2708.

The CAC is committed to maintaining and developing high quality programs in the district.

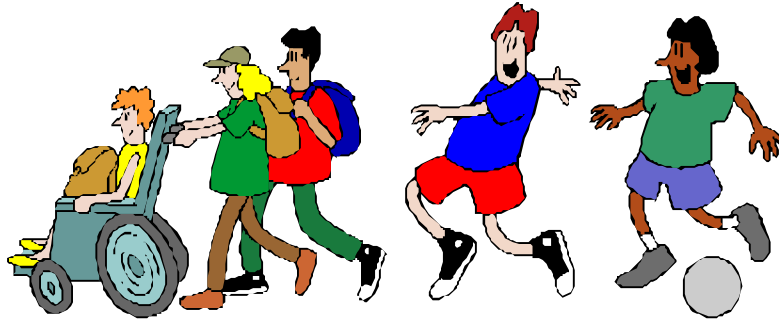


WHY ME? COPING WITH A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY

Coping may be easier if you are aware that –

- ⌘ there is no special training that prepares a person to be a parent of a child with a disability.
- ⌘ you may experience overpowering feelings of failure and guilt. It can help to talk with knowledgeable people, to find out it's not your "fault."
- ⌘ after learning your child has a disability, you may go through a grieving process. The grieving stages are natural and may include:
 - ⌘ Denial.-- "Never." "Not me."
 - ⌘ Guilt -- "Why me?" "If only I had ..."
 - ⌘ Isolation -- "It's too much trouble to take my child out."
 - ⌘ Panic – "Will my child ever learn to take care of himself?"
 - ⌘ Anger – "No one can help me."
 - ⌘ Bargaining – "Maybe if ..."
 - ⌘ Hope – "Is there a school or a place I could take my child for help?"
 - ⌘ Acceptance – "There are good days and bad days. We'll make it."

For help and information, call the Alameda County Developmental Disabilities Council for their Resource Guide, which is free. [510] 267-3261.



WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

A student having one or more of thirteen disabling conditions which adversely affects his or her educational performance, may be eligible to receive special education services.

The thirteen disabling conditions are:

- ✍ Autism
- ✍ Deaf-blindness
- ✍ Deafness
- ✍ Hearing impairment, i.e., hard of hearing
- ✍ Mental retardation
- ✍ Multiple disabilities
- ✍ Orthopedic impairment
- ✍ Other health impairment
- ✍ Emotional disturbance
- ✍ Specific learning disability
- ✍ Speech or language impairment
- ✍ Traumatic brain injury
- ✍ Visual impairment





WHAT IS SPECIAL EDUCATION?

The California Education Code (section 56031) defines special education as:

1. specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of individuals with exceptional needs (IWENs), whose educational needs cannot be met with modification of the general instructional programs, and
2. related services, which are needed to assist IWENs to benefit from specially designed instruction.

Special education is an integral part of the total public education system. Other features of special education include:

- ✍ It is provided in a way that promotes maximum interaction between students with and without disabilities in a manner which is appropriate to the needs of both.
- ✍ Services are provided at no cost to parents.
- ✍ It provides a full range of program options, to meet the educational and service requirements of individuals with exceptional needs in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The LRE is generally one in which peers without disabilities are working toward similar education goals.

Special education for eligible students provides necessary specially-designed instruction, aids, and services, as determined by the individualized education program (IEP) team.



Examples of Specially-Designed Instruction

- ✍ Use of manipulatives in an algebra lesson
- ✍ Systematically teaching a student to walk
- ✍ Inclusion of pictures in a lecture-type lesson

Examples of Specialized Aids

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| ✍ Books on tape | ✍ Adaptive switches |
| ✍ Textbooks with enlarged print | ✍ Watchers |
| ✍ Auditory training equipment | ✍ Beeper balls |
| ✍ Communication boards | ✍ Footrests |

Examples of Support Services

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| ✍ Collaboration and consultation with teachers and parents | ✍ Functional behavior plans |
| ✍ Modified lessons | ✍ Orientation and Mobility Training |
| ✍ Job coaching | ✍ Sign language interpreter |

The IEP team, of which the parent is an important member, determines a student's eligibility and identifies any needed program, aids, and services. Such instruction, aids and services are considered necessary for the student to progress in school. The needed program aids and services must be provided in the Least Restrictive Environment [LRE]. Members of the student's IEP team meet at least once a year:

- ✍ To review the student's progress, the program and services and the appropriateness of the placement; and
- ✍ To make any necessary changes in the student's program.



It is important to know that: Special Education is the provision of necessary instruction, aids, and services for **eligible** students such as:

- ⌘ Brailled Homework
- ⌘ Consultation with Resource Specialists
- ⌘ Environmental Accommodations
- ⌘ Physical Assistance
- ⌘ Behavior Plans
- ⌘ Occupational Therapy
- ⌘ Modified Curriculum
- ⌘ Adapted Physical Education
- ⌘ Speech and Language Instruction

But also remember that Special Education is NOT A PLACE, AND ...

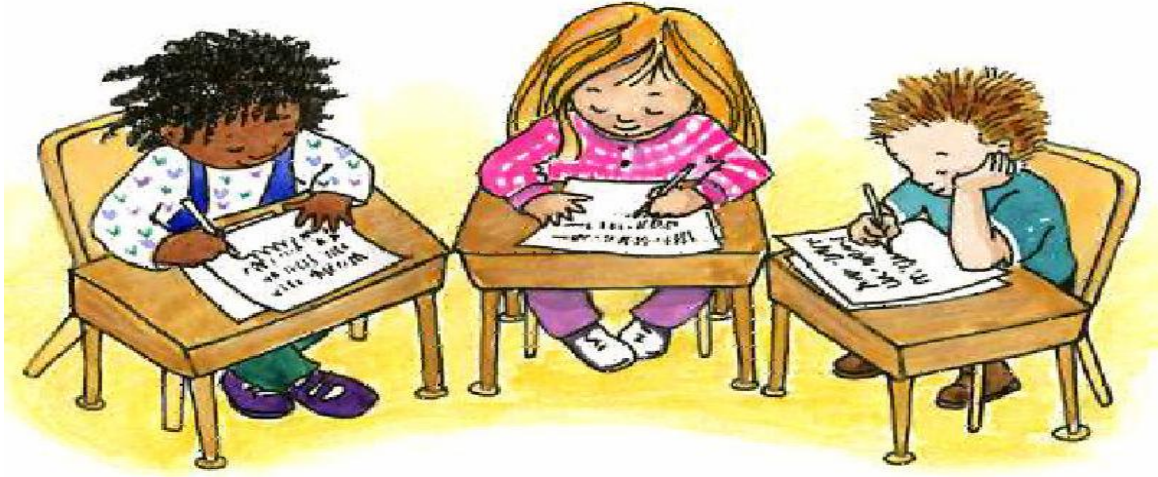
Special Education is NOT supplementary aids or services for students with learning difficulties which are due primarily to cultural or economic differences, lack of familiarity with the English language, or limited school experience. In addition, special education is not designed to meet the needs of students who have temporary physical disabilities.

WHERE ARE SPECIAL EDUCATION AIDS AND SERVICES PROVIDED?

Eligible students must receive necessary and sufficient supplementary aids and/or services to meet their specific education needs, wherever the placement. However, as a student's educational needs change, so may the environment where the aids and/or services are provided. Below is the array of major placement options currently available for eligible students.

- ✍ General Education class
- ✍ General Education class with aids/modifications
- ✍ General Education class with specialist services [e.g. speech, Resource Specialist]
- ✍ Special class with mainstreaming
- ✍ Special class with support services [e.g. mental health counselors]
- ✍ Special class Full Inclusion
- ✍ Special class in another district
- ✍ State Special School [such as School for the Deaf in Fremont]
- ✍ Home/Hospital (Due to Medical Requirements)
- ✍ Nonpublic, nonsectarian school
- ✍ Residential program with public school nearby
- ✍ Residential program with school on-site





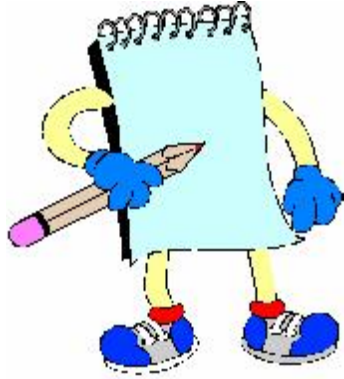
SCHOOL CONSULTATION TEAM (SCT)

HELP BEFORE CONSIDERING

Sometimes a child does not make sufficient progress in the general school program, even with modifications and remedial instruction. Under current federal and state law, anyone can refer a child when he or she suspects a child has special needs. Such a child can be referred by his or her teacher or parents to the school's "Student Consultation Team" (SCT). The SCT, which typically includes the parent, may develop a plan of modifications and/or interventions to be implemented in the general education classroom over a period of time. If these modifications/interventions are not successful, the SCT may ultimately refer a child for consideration of special education eligibility. You will be notified in writing of this referral.

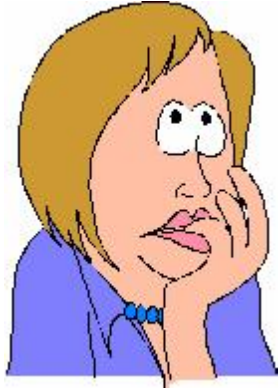
The SCT process is not meant to delay a special education assessment. Rather, the SCT meeting provides a forum for discussing identified concerns. It is a time for problem solving. One outcome of the process may be a special education referral. Parent participation in the SCT is particularly valuable. Parents bring important information to the SCT and also receive important information from school personnel. Parent participation helps ensure that a full discussion of a child's educational performance takes place.

If your child has a pattern of serious difficulty with school work and frequently shows some of the problems on the following list, it is possible that modification of the general education program or special education services may be needed.



SCHOOL-RELATED PROBLEMS THAT MAY WARRANT PROGRAM MODIFICATION OR SPECIAL EDUCATION

- ✍ Seems to learn at a rate significantly slower than classmates.
- ✍ Makes little progress in one or more basic skill areas in spite of modifications or remedial instruction.
- ✍ Has a short attention span or is unable to pay attention.
- ✍ Exhibits work that is disorganized, illegible, or incomplete.
- ✍ Uses immature language or speech patterns.
- ✍ Seems overly quiet or appears withdrawn.
- ✍ Has poor memory for things seen or heard.
- ✍ Reverses or confuses sounds, letters, words, or numbers beyond grade three.
- ✍ Has difficulty with pencil and paper tasks.
- ✍ Seems very clumsy or has difficulty moving or locating body in space.
- ✍ Has an inadequate or distorted understanding of time relationships.
- ✍ Seems easily frustrated or lacks patience.
- ✍ Seems to act without thinking.
- ✍ Has unusual posture when reading or writing.
- ✍ Has trouble shifting from one idea to another.
- ✍ Stubbornly refuses to attempt new learning tasks.



HOW DOES MY CHILD GET SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES?

Several procedural steps are required for a student to be identified for special education services and for reviewing the ongoing need for these services. These steps are:

1. Referral
2. Assessment Plan.
3. Assessment Period.
4. Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team Meeting.
5. IEP Implementation.
6. Annual Review IEP.
7. Triennial Assessment.

The following pages provide details for each of these steps. As you move through the steps, you will receive a number of documents and you may have contact with several school district personnel. It is important that you keep up-to-date records of each step in the process and of your participation. It is recommended that you:

- ✍ Keep copies of IEPs, letters, notices, etc.
- ✍ Keep notes of telephone conversations and agreements, with names, times, and dates.
- ✍ Request that oral agreements be followed up in writing, or follow-up with a written statement of your understanding of the agreement.
- ✍ Send correspondence by registered mail; if hand-delivered, have it initialed and dated by the recipient.

**Remember: As you proceed, if you don't understand something,
ASK QUESTIONS.**

PROCEDURAL STEPS

STEP 1 - REFERRAL

If you suspect your child may have a disability, you can seek help in several ways. One way is to discuss your concerns with your child's teacher(s). You may find that the teacher shares your concerns and is trying to address them. If your concerns continue, you should **request that a Student Consultation Team (SCT) or School Success Team [SST] meeting be convened.** The teacher will gather information for that meeting. You should also attend the SCT/SST meeting, and prepare to share information about your child's school performance and talk about your concerns. The team may decide that modifications of the general education program are appropriate to address your child's needs. If so, these modifications or interventions will be written down and monitored. If the modification or interventions are not successful, the SCT/SST will meet again. The SCT may then decide to refer your child for a special education assessment and complete the Referral Form.

A second way to seek help is to make an appointment with the school **Resource Specialist.** The Resource Specialist will discuss your concerns with you and will ensure that you fully understand the special education process and that you have considered other ways to address your child's needs. The Resource Specialist may suggest beginning the Student Consultation Team (SCT) process, if not already tried, or may begin the assessment plan process. The law requires consideration of modifying the general education program (with documentation) before referring a child for special education.

A third way to seek help is to make a **written referral for special education assessment** to the school principal or to the Resource Specialist. You should outline your areas of concern about your child's suspected disability and request an evaluation. Once the school receives your written request for assessment, the assessment process must begin. The school must give you an assessment plan within 15 days of their receipt of your written referral. You then have at least 15 days to respond to or approve the assessment plan. Once you have approved the plan and the district has received your signed approval, the school has 50 days [excluding days of vacation in excess of five days when school is not in session] in which to complete the assessments and hold an Individualized Education Program [IEP] meeting.

Special education consideration is probably not warranted in cases where the data and other information reviewed by the SCT may suggest that your child does not have a disability of such severity that the identified needs cannot be met in the general education program, with or without modifications. If you agree, interventions will be documented on an action plan form and a monitoring follow-up plan will be proposed. In this case, the team, including you, agrees that assessment is not appropriate at this time. Your agreement with the intervention plan means that you withdraw your request for an assessment.



STEP 2 – ASSESSMENT PLAN

The parent must sign an assessment plan before the school can begin an individual assessment for a child. Parents must be informed about the assessments’ purpose, the methods or techniques which will be used, and the people (by title) who will be conducting the assessment. If a parent refuses to approve an assessment plan when the district believes an assessment is needed, the district may request a ruling through the due process procedures. Once the parent approves the assessment plan, the school has 50 days in which to conduct the assessments and to meet with the Individualized Education Program Team, of which the parent is a member.

When you receive the assessment plan, you should review it carefully. The questions from the checklist below should help you review it before you sign it. If your answers to the questions in the checklist are generally positive, you are ready to sign the assessment plan and return it to the school so that the assessment process may begin.

ASSESSMENT PLAN CHECKLIST	Yes	No
Do you have a thorough understanding of the areas in which your child is being tested?	?	?
Do you have adequate information about the tests?	?	?
Is the assessment plan comprehensive, i.e., does it address all areas of your child’s suspected disability?	?	?
Does the assessment plan take into account any outside evaluations you may have?	?	?
Did you cooperate by releasing requested information to the school district, such as medical reports, independent psychological assessments, or other relevant data?	?	?
Are the tests given in your child’s primary functional language, and do they take into account the nature of your child’s disability?	?	?

Quiet!

EXAM IN PROGRESS

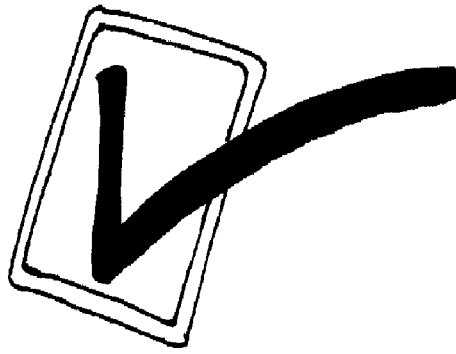


STEP 3 – ASSESSMENT PERIOD

The “assessment” of your child is conducted to determine whether or not your child has special needs that qualify him or her for special education services and to assist in instructional planning. Testing should result in identification of your child’s present skill levels and learning needs. The final step in the process is the IEP team meeting where the separate components of the assessment are brought together. The assessment involves collecting important information from you and from qualified district personnel. These people may include some or all of those listed below:

ASSESSMENT TEAM MEMBERS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

People Who May Be Involved	Expected Contributions
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✍ Review and approve the assessment plan by signing it. ✍ Provide health and developmental history. ✍ Describe the child’s responses to tasks and social interactions in the non-school settings of home, neighbor-hood, and community. ✍ Release existing assessment reports if available, including physicians’ reports.
General classroom teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✍ Inform the team about the child’s academic, physical/motor performance, and social behavior in the classroom.
Nurse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✍ Reviews the child’s medical background and physical development. ✍ Screens vision and hearing
Speech/language specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✍ Provides relevant information about speech and language development.
School psychologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✍ Examines the child’s social, emotional, academic and cognitive development.
Special Education Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✍ Test child in academic areas and classroom performance



During this step, your child will be evaluated. The evaluation may include:

1. Formal/informal test(s) administered in a one-on-one setting.
2. Review of school records.
3. Parent interview.
4. Teacher interview.
5. Observation of the student in the classroom and possibly in other settings, such as on the playground.
6. Health and Developmental History.

In addition, the assessment will include reviewing any outside evaluations you have obtained and made available to the school district.

Data gathered during the assessment will be summarized in written assessment reports. You can request that copies of the reports are sent to you before the IEP meeting. You may want to consider the following questions as you review the assessment reports.

Assess the Assessment

	Yes	No
Based on what you know about the nature of your child's problems, was the assessment thorough?	?	?
Did the assessment provide a clear picture of how your child performs in critical skill or developmental areas?	?	?
Did the assessment describe your child's areas of strength as well as weaknesses?	?	?
If appropriate, did the assessment include observations of your child in social as well as academic settings and/ if so, did the assessment findings pinpoint specific behaviors needing improvement in such a way that progress can later be measured?	?	?

STEP 4 – INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) TEAM MEETING

What is an IEP? The IEP is a legal document which must be written for each child who receives special education services. Your child's IEP helps ensure that special education services support identified learning needs, and that their appropriateness is evaluated regularly.

The IEP specifies services to be provided by the school district. It describes anticipated long term goals and short term objectives for your child, and serves as a "blueprint" for instruction in the school environment. However, it is not a daily lesson plan.

The IEP must be reviewed and updated at least once a year. You or your child's teacher(s) can request a review more frequently.



Who must attend an IEP team meeting?

Current law stipulates that, at a minimum, the following persons constitute a valid IEP team meeting:

- ✍ the parent(s) or guardian(s);
- ✍ a teacher knowledgeable about your child [a child's general education teacher and special education teacher participate];
- ✍ an administrator, or designee;
- ✍ the student, when appropriate (usually middle and high school students attend); and
- ✍ individuals who conducted any assessments or a person who is qualified to interpret and explain the assessment results, including the instructional implications of evaluation results.

Who else may be members of an IEP Team?

People listed in the table identifying assessment team members may be members of the IEP team and should be invited to the meeting. Others who may be included are:

- ✍ advocates from organizations or agencies, such as a Regional Center counselor.
- ✍ non-school therapists or specialists who work with your child.
- ✍ a friend or relative who will provide moral support and take notes.

How does a “team approach” to an IEP team meeting work?

The team approach to developing an IEP involves communication and cooperation among you (the parents), your child's teacher(s), and other specialists with different kinds of skills who may work for the school district or outside agencies. Together, you will prepare an IEP that best suits your child's present educational needs. Think of the IEP team as a circle of participants with your child at the center (see below). Note that not all potential participants will be present at every meeting. The team develops the IEP at a meeting that must be held at a time and place that is convenient for you and the school personnel.



What must the IEP document contain?

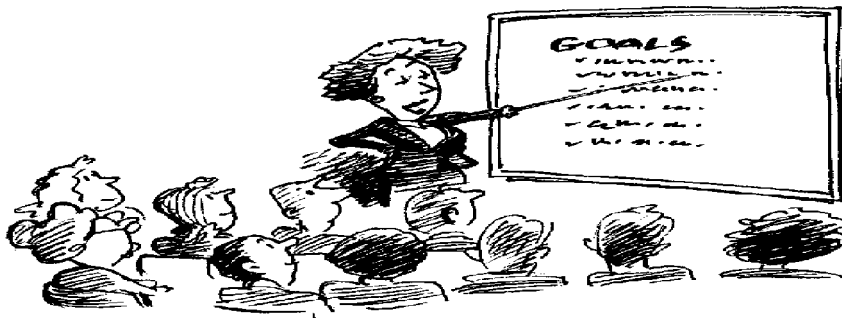
In addition to eligibility information, the IEP document always includes at least six specific items:

1. Your child's present levels of educational performance

Statements about what your child can and cannot do are based on assessment information. These may include information about academic, social, language, motor, self-help, and pre-vocational skills. Statements should describe the way your child performs and how the disability affects your child's participation and progress in the general curriculum. They should not list only test scores.

2. Your child's annual goals and objectives

Based on your child's identified learning needs, the IEP specifies skills your child will work on. The IEP must specify annual goals, i.e., what your child can reasonably be expected to accomplish within one year. Short-term objectives are measurable, intermediate steps between where your child is now (i.e., present levels of performance) and the annual goals. The objectives are developed based on a logical breakdown of the skills necessary to achieve the goal. The objectives serve as guides for planning and implementing instructional activities in the classroom and as milestones for measuring progress. The goals and objectives must relate to meeting your child's educational needs that result from the identified disability and enabling your child to participate in and progress in the general curriculum. For children who are limited English proficient (LEP), the goals and objectives must address English language development and be based on the child's level of English language proficiency. The teacher(s) and other specialist who work with your child in school are responsible for designing learning tasks and activities which correspond with the goals and objectives written in the IEP. Those responsible must also keep a record of your child's progress and report that progress to you at regular intervals. It is important that you tell the IEP team your own expectations for your child. If your expectations are integrated into the IEP, you and other team members can work together to achieve the same goals.



3. Placement

Placement refers to the setting(s) in which your child's IEP will be implemented. A variety of placement options may be appropriate.

It is important that you, as a parent or guardian, explore options recommended through the IEP team process and state clearly your own goals and preferences for your child. For example, you may want your child to attend your neighborhood school because you value the advantages of a local community education (e.g., no long bus rides, friends who live nearby). You may feel that the appropriate program for your child is an adaptation of the general education program at the local school to fit your child's needs (i.e., inclusion). An inclusive program may require extra effort from parents/guardians, but it is an option you may prefer. The IEP must specify the extent of a child's participation in the general education program and explain why and when a student will not participate in the general education program. The IEP must also indicate when the placement/services will begin.

4. Designated Instruction and Services (DIS)

The IEP must specify any related services required for your child to benefit from his or her special education program (e.g., orientation and mobility training, adapted physical education). These services are called Designated Instruction and Services. The IEP must indicate when such services will begin; how long they will last, and how frequently they will be provided, based on the individual needs of your child.

5. Annual and Triennial Dates

These are dates by which the annual review of the IEP will be held and triennial (3-year) assessment will be conducted. The IEP team may decide that the IEP needs to be reviewed sooner than one year. If so, the review date will be specified on the IEP.

6. Signatures and Parent/Guardian Approval

Persons attending an IEP team meeting are asked to sign the IEP to indicate their participation, however, only the parent/guardian is asked to approve the IEP. This is because an IEP cannot be implemented without parent approval. If you as a parent or guardian are well prepared and have communicated with key personnel in advance of the IEP team meeting, you probably will be ready to approve the IEP at the conclusion of the meeting.



Other IEP Items include:

1. Medical/Health

Basic information will typically include vision and hearing screening results. If your child has important medical or health considerations, such as seizures, this information will be recorded on the IEP. If your child needs to take medication [prescribed or not] on a continuing basis for a chronic condition, please note that staff can only administer prescription medication when a note from the child's physician and parent is on file and the medication is in the original container.

2. Transportation

Your child may or may not qualify for special education transportation services. The IEP team is responsible for determining the appropriate level of transportation services for each student. To make this determination, the IEP team should consider the nature and severity of your child's disability. Consistent with state law, only the most severely disabled students are transported curb-to-curb. Transportation is documented on the IEP if the IEP team determines that a student requires curb-to-curb transportation (which may include "yellow bus," AC transit tickets, or reimbursement to parent for mileage).

3. Participation in State or District wide Assessments

The IEP must identify the individual modifications your child requires in the administration of state or district wide achievement assessments. If the IEP team determines that you child will not participate in particular assessments, the IEP must state why that assessment is not appropriate and state how your child will be assessed instead.

4. Individualized Transition Plans (ITPs)

The Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) is a plan to prepare for a child's entry into the adult world. The first ITP is written at an IEP team meeting when the child is 14. The document addresses several planning areas (such as instruction, community and employment) that will help the child live and work as independently as possible in the community after completion of high school. Other agencies, such as the Department of Rehabilitation and the Regional Center, participate in the development of this plan. The ITP takes place annually, as part of the IEP team process, once a student is 14 years old.

How can I prepare for an IEP team meeting?

To be most effective at an IEP team meeting, you need to prepare for it in advance. This section suggests several ways to help you prepare.

✍ **Understand the assessment results**

Parents have the right to request that they receive a copy of the assessment results five (5) days before the IEP team meeting. It will be very helpful to you if you understand the assessment results before you go to an IEP team meeting. You can then discuss the assessment with any non-school support people or experts who know your child. You will be better prepared for the IEP team meeting, and any support people or experts you have invited to the IEP team meeting will also be better prepared.

If you have questions about the assessment that need to be clarified in advance of the IEP team meeting, you may contact the person who did the assessment (e.g., psychologist, speech and language specialist, adapted physical education specialist, etc.)

✍ **Be prepared to work as a team member at the IEP team meeting.**

Keep in mind, the IEP is developed by a team. Remember, you have known your child longer than anyone else and routinely observe your child in many different situations. You have important information to contribute. Communication and teamwork among all of the people present will provide your child with an appropriate program.

✍ **Decide if you wish to audiotape the IEP team meeting**

You may audiotape the IEP team meeting if you give the district at least 24 hours notice. Provide the notice to the staff member who sent you the invitation to the meeting. If you choose to record the meeting, you will need to supply the tape recorder and the blank tapes. Recording the meeting may be helpful to you because it provides you with the opportunity to review key parts of the meeting if you need to. If you choose to record the meeting, the district will also typically record the meeting.



✍ **Invite others to the IEP team meeting**

Bring with you anyone who knows about your child and the problems he or she is experiencing. Include others outside the school district who are involved in your child's development. In addition, invite a person (e.g., a friend, relative, or support group member) who will provide you with moral support during the IEP team meeting. You may want to ask this person to take notes for you. If your child is a Regional Center client, you may invite his or her counselor. Regional Center programs may augment and complement what the school district provides, and coordination of services makes programming for your child more effective. If your child is receiving services from individuals outside the school district, you may wish to invite them to participate in the meeting. For example, the school program and a non-school therapist's program may be much more effective if the therapist, school specialist(s), and teacher(s) collaborate and become knowledgeable about each other's programs. The non-school therapist may also provide valuable information and advice to teachers and others who work with your child every day.

✍ **Formulate your own goals and objectives for your child**

You know your child best, and have expectations about your child's future. These are based on your own values, background, and experiences. Be prepared to voice your expectations at the IEP team meeting so that related goals and objectives can be included in the IEP.

Note: Remember that you are one of the experts on the needs of your child. Your own values, knowledge, and hopes are critical to your child's education plan.

Samples of expectations you might have as a parent, and possible activities which may lead to achieving these expectations, are found in the following table. You need to think in advance about your own goals for your child to insure that your expert knowledge of your child is taken into account.





PARENT EXPECTATIONS AND SAMPLE POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

Expectation:

I want my child to be able to get around independently.

Activities:

1. Walk with parent to school.
2. Walk with friend to school
3. Walk with friend to store.
4. Walk alone to store.
5. Ride city bus with parent to mall.
6. Ride city bus with friend to mall.
7. Ride city bus alone to mall.

Expectation:

I want my child to read.

Activities:

1. Recognize upper case and lower case letters.
2. Sound out three letter words accurately.
3. Memorize 100 simple words.
4. Read aloud short sentences fluently.
5. Read silently short paragraphs with comprehension.

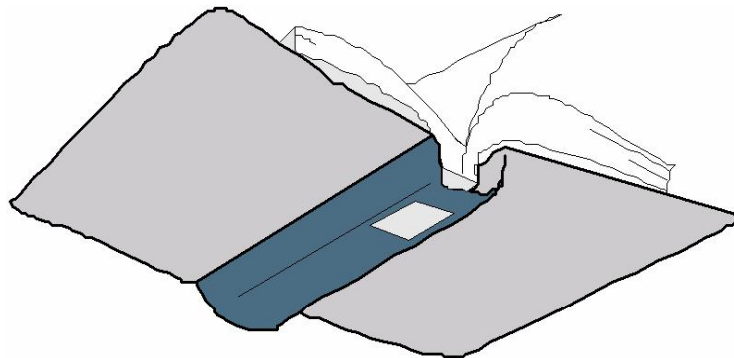


Communicate!

Before the IEP team meeting, talk informally with the school personnel who assessed your child as well as his or her teachers to find out what range of recommendations are possible or likely, based on the assessment results.

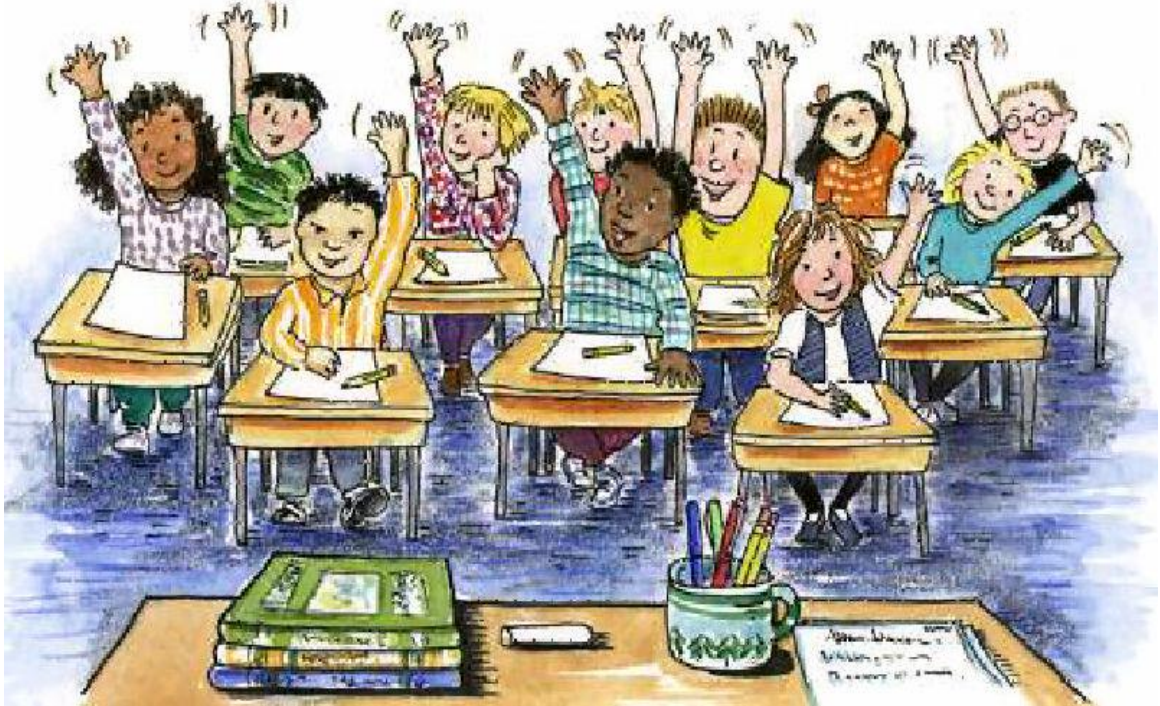
Keep good records and bring appropriate ones to the IEP team meeting. Prepare a notebook that includes sections such as:

- ✍ Background information
- ✍ Developmental history
- ✍ Medical history and medical reports
- ✍ Family health history
- ✍ Educational history
- ✍ Psychological and therapy reports
- ✍ Copies of your child's previous IEP's and school progress reports
- ✍ Samples of your child's past and present work
- ✍ Copies of records from outside agencies (such as Regional Center)
- ✍ Copies of letters you have written or received regarding your child's disability/abilities
- ✍ Records of your contacts with schools and agencies (personal visits, telephone calls, etc.)
- ✍ Your long-term goals and short-term objectives for you child.



STEP 5 – IEP IMPLEMENTATION

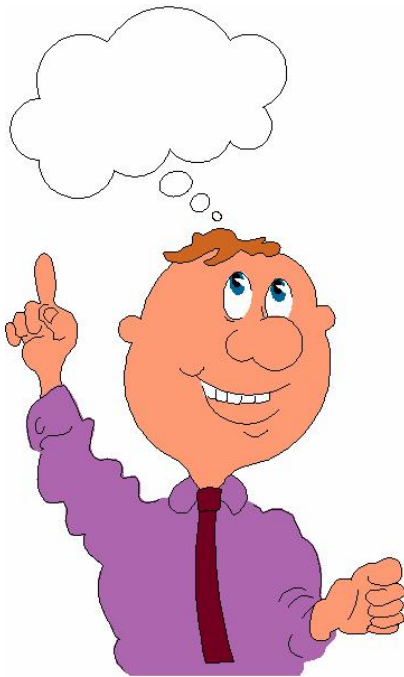
The IEP team meeting is only a beginning. The IEP is implemented once you approve it. You then need to monitor your child's educational progress. To do this, you should maintain regular contact with your child's teacher(s) and other professionals involved in his or her program. Remember, the IEP is only a piece of paper until it is translated into meaningful instructional activities. In addition, you may find there are things you can do at home which reinforce the work that is being done at school. This enables you to assist your child to achieve the IEP goals.



STEP 6 – ANNUAL REVIEW IEP

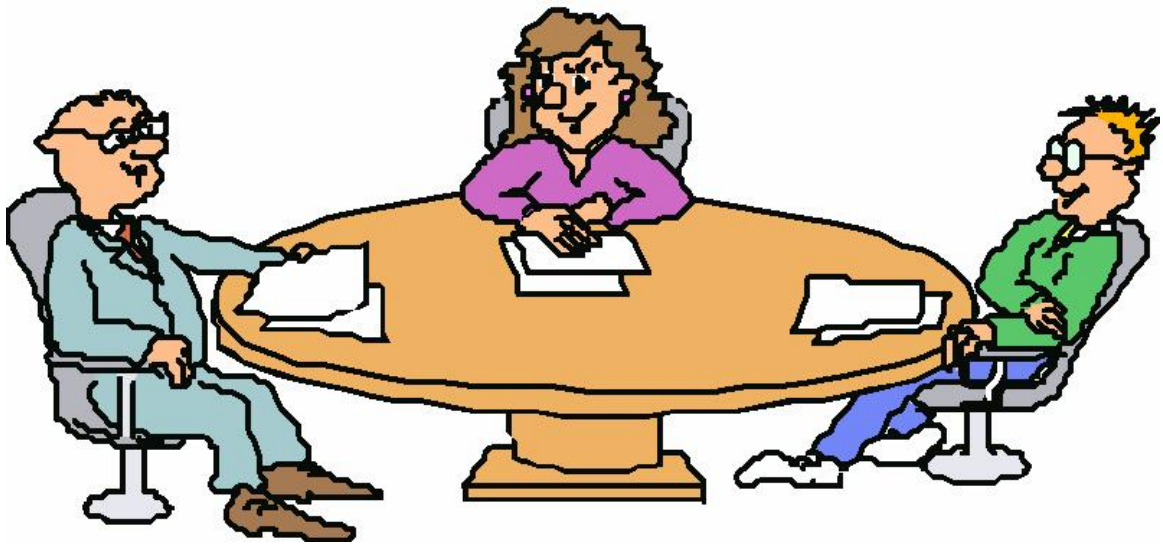
The IEP is reviewed at least once a year or more frequently if necessary. You or your child's teacher(s) may request reviews of the IEP at any time to consider changes in your child's program. The annual review IEP team reviews the previous IEP, your child's progress, and the appropriateness of the program placement, including designated instruction and services. All teachers who are working with your child should provide a written report to the IEP team. Changes in your child's program and services are made, as appropriate, and a new IEP is developed for the following year. If the IEP team determines that your child no longer needs special education services, a plan may be designed to assist your child with returning to the general education program full time.

You or your child's teacher(s) may request reviews of the IEP at any time to consider changes in your child's program.



STEP 7 – TRIENNIAL ASSESSMENT

Every three years, students in California who receive special education services must be re-evaluated to determine their continued need for special education. An IEP team meeting will be held following the assessment. When the assessment results are incorporated into an IEP, parents should also be prepared to present critical information. As with all review IEPs, the team will consider whether continued services are necessary.



WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AS A PARENT?



PARENT RIGHTS:

The law says you and your child have four major rights:

1. Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

This is the most fundamental and important right your disabled child has. FAPE means that your child, if eligible, must receive an education program specially designed to meet his or her unique learning needs. This program must be provided at no cost to you. If no appropriate public school program is available, a state approved private school program must be provided at public expense. To assure your child receives an appropriate education, state and federal laws require the school district to provide instructional services necessary to allow your disabled child to benefit from special education. These services include but are not limited to: adapted physical education, physical therapy, speech/language services, transportation, and adaptive equipment. Some of these services may be provided by other community agencies, thus creating a need for close communication and coordination among the school, agencies, and parents. The school district has primary responsibility for coordination of these services.

2. Placement in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

LRE for students with disabilities is placement in a setting which is as similar as possible to the one attended by general education peers without disabilities. However, the setting of choice for a disabled student may or may not be in a general education classroom. Classes and services in the public schools must be located in close proximity to those attended by students without disabilities, e.g., on a general school campus.

Inclusion in a general education classroom with the support of supplementary aids and services is an option that you may want to explore.

The array of placement options also includes designated instruction and services (DIS), the resource specialist program (RSP), special classes and nonpublic school. Remember, no placement is forever. As your child's learning needs change, his or her placement should also change.

As parents, you should carefully consider your goals for your child. You know your own child best. You are, therefore, the most important members of your child's team. Other team members should include teachers and specialists from within the school system, and may include experts from other agencies who work with your child. At least annually, the team designs a program that will meet your child's current needs.

3. Assessment Procedures

Educational assessment or evaluation is conducted to identify your child's learning needs, to determine whether your child requires special education services and, if so, to identify the services needed. Assessments must be conducted before your child receives services, and at least every three years following your child's initial assessment. However, you or your child's teacher(s) may request assessment sooner if you believe it is needed.

School districts may not use tests which discriminate by race, culture, or disability. For example, using purely auditory methods to test a deaf child who signs would be discriminatory. Assessments must be conducted by persons who are appropriately trained and/or credentialed.

Educational placement decisions cannot be based on the results of one test alone. The assessment must be comprehensive and must take into account your child's developmental and performance levels in several areas (e.g., social, intellectual, language).

The school district must inform you of your right to obtain another opinion from a qualified person. This is called an independent assessment. If you disagree with the district's assessment, an independent assessment may be obtained at district expense. However, the district also has the right to call for a due process hearing to show that its assessment is appropriate. If, as a result of the hearing, the district's assessment is found to be appropriate, you still have the right to an independent assessment at your own expense. The district must consider independent assessment findings in planning your child's services and placement.

Informed Consent

You must receive written notice whenever the school district plans:

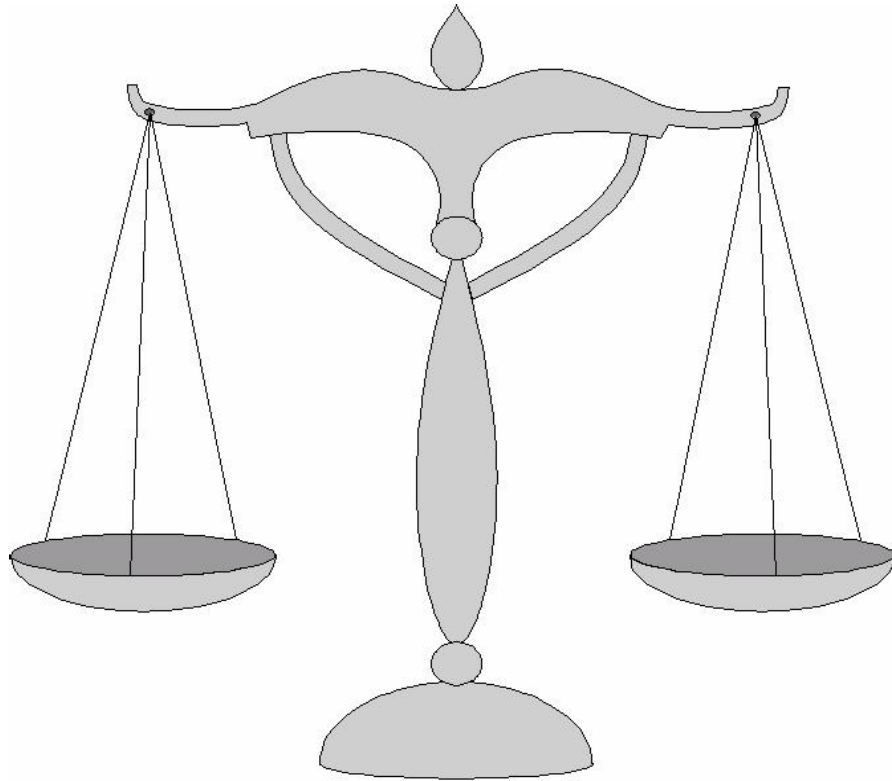
- ? To conduct a formal assessment of your child
- ? To change your child's eligibility and/or educational placement, including the designated instruction and services.

You must be notified in writing whenever the school district refuses your request:

- ? To initiate or change the eligibility and/or educational placement for your child.

Also, your written permission must be obtained before the school district conducts an assessment or changes your child's placement. You must be informed by the district

of your right to examine school records. You must receive written notice from the school district of procedural safeguards provided by law. The district provides this information in a document called ***Special Education Parent Rights and Procedural Safeguards***.





PROTECTIONS:

The law says you and your child have two basic protections:

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

When your child receives special education services, a written IEP must be developed and reviewed at least once each year at a meeting in which you have the right to participate. The provisions that require the involvement of parents were written into the law because legislators recognized that parents have a special insight into their children's needs, and that children benefit when parents and educators work together.

The IEP consists of your child's present levels of educational performance, eligibility, annual long-term goals and short-term objectives; designated instruction and service needs; placement information, date(s) when school services begin and end, and annual and three-year reassessment dates.

Due Process

Due Process has a special meaning for you. It is a legal term that refers to an orderly series of timely steps which protect the rights of each person – your child, you, and the school staff. It ensures that each child is treated fairly.

There are due process procedures for resolving differences. If you disagree with the district's decision(s) concerning some aspect of the referral, assessment or placement procedures, you may pursue due process. Due process includes the following procedures:

- 1) Conflict Resolution
- 2) Mediation
 - a) Prehearing Request Mediation
 - b) Mediation Following a Request for Hearing
- 3) Due Process Hearing
- 4) Complaints

1. Conflict Resolution

The first step in resolving a conflict between a parent and the district is immediate and open communication with the Special Education Department's Administrators, who may not be aware of a problem until they hear from you.

- a) Coordinators for
 - Infant:
 - Preschool:
 - Elementary:
 - Middle School:
 - High School:
 - Young Adult
 - Speech and Language:
 - Career Assessments/Planning:
 - Adaptive P.E.:
 - Home/Hospital Instruction:
 - Low Incidence (Blind/Visually Impaired and Deaf/Hard of Hearing):
 - Psychological Services:
- b) Director of Special Education

Call [510] 879-8223 to obtain individual names and phone numbers.

2. Mediation

- a) Prehearing Request Mediation

This step allows you and the district to meet with a state-level mediator without involving attorneys. The mediator attempts to assist the parties to reach a mutually acceptable agreement to resolve the issues. You may initiate this process by writing your request to:

Special Education Hearing Office
Institute for Administrative Justice
McGeorge School of Law
3200 Fifth Avenue

b) **Mediation Following a Request for Hearing**

If you request a hearing, your case will be assigned to a mediator unless you indicate that you wish to waive mediation. The mediation process is the same as described above, except both you and the district may utilize attorneys in the mediation conference.

3. Due Process Hearing

A hearing is a formal procedure before a hearing officer which includes documentary evidence and witnesses. The hearing officer makes a final decision on the issues submitted to him or her for resolution. You may request a hearing by writing to the Special Education Hearing Office at the address above. The school district also has the right to request a hearing. During the hearing procedures you and the district have the following rights:

- ✍ To obtain a due process hearing date within a specific time after a written request is received
- ✍ To be represented by an attorney
- ✍ To present evidence, question, cross-examine, and inquire
- ✍ To obtain a word-for-word record of the proceedings at the hearing
- ✍ To obtain a written report of the findings of the hearing and the decision reached
- ✍ To appeal the final administrative decision by the hearing officer in court.

4. Complaints

If you believe the district has violated a state or federal law or regulation, you may file a complaint. Complaints are resolved through the district's Uniform Complaint Procedures. These procedures are available from the Superintendent's Office. Complaints are filed by writing to the Director of Special Education at the district's Administration Building or to the Special Education Division at the California Department of Education.

Further information on parent rights and procedural safeguards is contained in a separate document produced by the district, ***Special Education Parent Rights and Procedural Safeguards***.



WHO CAN HELP ME?

If you have concerns about your child's education, you should first speak with your child's teacher(s). Often other personnel at the site may also be helpful, such as the school counselor and the principal. If these individuals are not able to resolve your concerns, support staff in the district office are available to assist you.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE 879 - 2708

OTHER RESOURCES

California Department of Education
Special Education Division
Parent Information Line
1-800-434-2465

National Parent Network on Disabilities
1727 King Street, Suite 305
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 684-6763

WHAT DO ALL THESE ACRONYMS MEAN?

AH	Aides to the Handicapped
APE	Adapted Physical Education
CAC	Community Advisory Committee
CBI	Community-Based Instruction
CCR	California Code of Regulations or Coordinated Compliance Review
CCS	California Children's Services
CH	Communicatively Handicapped
CPI	Crisis Prevention Institute
CTS	Career Transition Specialist
D/HH	Deaf and Hard of Hearing
DD	Developmentally Delayed
DIS	Designated Instruction and Service
EC	Education Code
ELD	English Language Development
IA	Instructional Assistants
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Program
IFSP	Individualized Family Service Plan
ISGI	Individual and Small Group Instruction
ITP	Individualized Transition Plan
IWEN	Individual with Exceptional Needs
JTPA	Job Training Partnership Act
LCI	Licensed Children's Institution
LD	Learning Disabilities or Learning Disabled
LEP	Limited English Proficient
LH	Learning Handicapped
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MIS	Management Information System
MR	Mental Retardation
NPA	Nonpublic Agency
NPS	Nonpublic School
OH	Orthopedically Handicapped
OHI	Other Health Impaired
OI	Orthopedically impaired
OT	Occupational Therapy
PH	Physically Handicapped
PL	Public Law
PT	Physical Therapy
ROP	Regional Occupational Program
RSP	Resource Specialist Program
SDC	Special Day Class

SDVE	Specially-Designed Vocational Education
SE	Special Education
SED	Seriously Emotionally Disturbed
SELPA	Special Education Local Plan Area
SH	Severely Handicapped
S/L	Speech and Language
SLD/A	Severe Language Disorder/Aphasia
SCT	Student Consultation Team
SST	Student Success Team
SYETP	Summer Youth Employment Training
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
TPP	Transition Partnership Program
Trans	Transition Partnership Program
VI	Visually Impaired