



IEP's—What You Need to Know...

Source: [U.S. Department of Education](#)

DID YOU KNOW



IDEA is a Federal Law which created and governs special education. It entitles eligible children with disabilities to the specially designed instruction and individualized services and supports they need to benefit from a free public education.

IDEA stands for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004.

As an ESE or special education substitute employee, you should be aware of what is known as an IEP (or Individualized Education Programs). IEP's are required by IDEA for students aged 3 -21 who have been determined to be eligible to receive special education services in public schools.

The content of an IEP is based on the individual needs of the student. It is very important that all educators know the key components of an IEP in order to understand their role in adhering to it.

While the law tells us what information must be included in the IEP, it does not specify what the IEP should look like. No one form or approach or appearance is required or even suggested. Each state may decide what its IEPs will look like. In some states individual school systems design their own IEP forms.

Thus, across the United States, many different IEP forms are used. What is important is that each form be as clear and as useful as possible, so that parents, educators, related service providers, administrators, and others can easily use the form to write and implement effective IEPs for their students with disabilities.

What is an IEP?

An IEP (Individualized Educational Program) is a student-specific, custom method of documenting the approach to tailor the educational needs of a public school student who has been identified as having a disability requiring special education. You may think of it as a plan. Each public school child who receives special education and related services must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Each IEP must be designed for one stu-

dent and must be a truly individualized document. 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. The IEP is the cornerstone of a quality education for each child with a disability.

Contents of the IEP

By law, the IEP must include certain information about the child and the educational program designed to meet his or her unique needs. In a nutshell, this information is:

- ◆ **Current performance.** The IEP must state how the child is currently doing in school (known as *present levels of educational performance*). This information usually comes from the evaluation results such as classroom tests and assignments, individual tests given to decide eligibility for services or during

reevaluation, and observations made by parents, teachers, related service providers, and other school staff. The statement about "current performance" includes how the child's disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general curriculum.

- ◆ **Annual goals.** These are goals that the child can reasonably accomplish in a year. The goals are broken down into short-term objectives or benchmarks. Goals may be academic, address social or behavioral needs, relate to physical needs, or address other educational needs. The goals must be measurable-meaning that it must be possible to measure whether the student has achieved the goals.



➤ What Should an IEP Contain? (continued)

- ◆ **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 school personnel—such as training or professional development—that will be provided to assist the child.
- ◆ **Participation with nondisabled children.** 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.
- ◆ **Participation in state and district-wide tests.** Most states and districts give achievement tests to children in certain grades or age groups. The IEP must state what modifications in the administration of these tests the child will need. 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.
- ◆ **Dates and places.** The IEP must state when services will begin, how often they will be provided, where they will be provided, and how long they will last.
- ◆ **Transition service needs.** Beginning when the child is age 14 (or younger, if appropriate), the IEP must address (within the applicable parts of the IEP) the courses he or she needs to take to reach his or her post-school goals. A statement of transition services needs must also be included in each of the child's subsequent IEPs.
- ◆ **Needed transition services.** Beginning when the child is age 16 (or younger, if appropriate), the IEP must state what transition services are needed to help the child prepare for leaving school.
- ◆ **Age of majority.** Beginning at least one year before the child reaches the **age of majority**, 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. (This statement would be needed only in states that transfer rights at the age of majority.)
- ◆ **Measuring progress.** The IEP must state how the child's progress will be measured and how parents will be informed of that progress.



Special Education Assignment Expectations

Depending upon the assignment and/or your qualifications, you may be serving as the general education teacher and have paraprofessionals to assist you, or you may be a paraprofessional yourself assisting the general education teacher.

In the paraprofessional role, you may be going from classroom to classroom working with different grade levels and students. Or you may be assigned to assist a specific student individually.

Special education teachers often support instruction inside the general education (inclusion) classroom; they work with small groups and/or individual students inside and outside of the classroom.

- Expect to be in many places throughout the day and working in many different settings. Be flexible!
- Expect to be responsible for collateral duties such as lunch/recess duty, emergency drill duty, etc. Look for something posted in the room or in your sub plans that explain the procedures for extra duties.
- You may be expected to work with multiple teachers, in multiple subject areas and across multiple grade levels.
- Take some time to familiarize yourself with the school layout so you don't get lost as you race through the building on a tight schedule. If a school map is not included in the sub plans, ask in the main office for one.
- You may be expected to implement a structured intervention plan in reading or math. If there is a teacher's guide left in your materials, be sure to familiarize yourself with it before you meet the students. Don't expect to be able to fake it just because it looks scripted!

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