

Army Reserve Child, Youth & School Services

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION

WHAT IS THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (IDEA)?

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) is a federal law that governs how state and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to children with disabilities. It addresses the educational needs of children with disabilities from birth to age 21 in cases that involve specified categories of disability.

IDEA clearly states that parents can request an evaluation at any time to determine if their child has a disability and needs special education services. When parents request an evaluation for their child, a multidisciplinary team will be convened to examine the evidence and information that may suggest a disability or limitation. If evidence exists indicating that there is not a disability, parents will receive a written refusal to conduct the evaluation. If a disability is suspected, the parent will be asked to sign consent and an evaluation will be conducted.

PLEASE EXPLAIN FAPE AND LRE

School districts are required to provide a *free appropriate public education* (FAPE) in the *least restrictive environment* (LRE) for children with learning disabilities and other educational disabilities. The spirit of the LRE is to ensure that children are not unnecessarily removed from the regular classroom or isolated from other non-disabled children of their age.

WHAT IS AN INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)?

The IEP is a written document that outlines special Services designed to meet a child's individual learning needs. The IEP is created through a team effort and reviewed every year. It is not a contract, but it does guarantee the necessary supports and services to be provided.

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CYSS Mission: To support readiness and quality of life by reducing the conflict between military mission requirements and parental responsibilities



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WHO IS THE IEP TEAM?

Team members who write a child's IEP generally include:

- The parent(s) who can share valuable insights and information about the child's strengths and needs
- General education teacher(s) who can share information about classroom expectations and the child's performance
- Special education teacher who is certified in educating children with special needs.
- Representative(s) of the school who is knowledgeable about special education services and can commit resources
- Individuals who can interpret evaluations or have experience or knowledge of the child. This is usually specialized educational staff or a private provider hired by the family such as a physical therapist or speech therapist
- Representatives from transition service agencies when transition services are being discussed
- The child when appropriate and whenever transition is discussed (typically beginning at age 14)

The IEP team considers ways to educate the child with students without disabilities to the maximum to the extent possible. Special education is a set of services, not a special place. For many students, the general education classroom is the appropriate setting, but depending upon the student's needs, a range of options is available, including special education classes.

HOW SHOULD PARENTS PREPARE FOR AN IEP MEETING?

To begin, parents need to be willing and open when discussing their child's strengths, interests, and preferences. Parents should identify any concerns for the child's education, such as behavior, learning, or communication, and establish priorities to be considered.

Parents should not hesitate to ask questions and seek clarification. In many professions, people talk in jargon. Since understanding the discussion is essential, it is proper to request that participants explain unfamiliar vocabulary. It is important to stay focused and positive. It is hard to develop an IEP when emotions interfere with the process. An exceptional resource for Army Reserve Families regarding special needs is Specialized Training of Military Parents (STOMP) www.stompproject.org.

WHAT ARE IEP GOALS?

Goals represent what the IEP team members think a child will be able to do in a year's time. Goals must be written so the teacher can monitor progress by using data. The specially designed instruction used to achieve the goals should be research-based.



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HOW ARE GOALS DEVELOPED?

The IEP team develops goals based on the student's educational needs. Goals should help with progress in the general curriculum and may address other concerns, such as language development, behavior or social skills. Observations from parents and teachers, as well as evaluations, help determine areas of need. The school's standards and benchmarks can also serve as a reference point in setting goals. It is important that the child understands the goals because the more he/she is involved and aware of the goals, the greater the chance of achieving them. As the child gets older, he/she should participate in the IEP meeting and be involved in developing goals.

HOW CAN PARENTS HELP MAKE A SMOOTH TRANSITION TO A TO A NEW SCHOOL FOR A CHILD WITH AN IEP?

When registering, parents need to provide a copy of the student's most current IEP along with contact information for the IEP team leader. Also carry other records that describe your child's needs, such as a 504 plan. The official transfer of records between school districts can take time and students with special needs should never be placed at a disadvantage by delays in services when entering a new school.

ARE ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS?

Yes. These activities can highlight their interests and strengths and expose them to various career paths, while providing fun interactions with peers, increasing skills, addressing different learning styles, and providing a unique combination of therapy, education, and confidence-building for children who need opportunities to explore and build success. Examples of enrichment activities include culinary lessons, dance classes, debate team, robotics, swimming, music, and clubs which focus on drama, science, engineering, or other areas of interest.



Sources: Heartland Area Education Agency (<http://www.heartlandaea.org>) | Iowa Department of Education (<http://educateiowa.gov/>) | United States Department of Education (<http://www.ed.gov>)



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