

Navigating the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Process

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Objectives

At the end of this session, you will be able to:

- **Understand how an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is developed and implemented**
- **Understand your role in developing your child's IEP**
- **Understand how to develop self-advocacy in your child through the IEP process**



The IEP Meeting

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The IEP: Questions & Experiences

Take a moment to share your thoughts on the following questions.

- o **What do you find difficult to understand in the IEP document?**
- o **How do you feel during IEP meetings at your school- like an outsider or a meaningful participant?**
- o **What are your questions about your child's IEP and/or the services they receive?**

The IEP Team



Your Role in the IEP Meeting

You are an **ESSENTIAL** member of your child's IEP team!



- You are the expert on your child, so share information about home life, your child's strengths, what they need help with, and what they enjoy.
- Share your family values as they relate to your child's adult goals – What do you envision your child doing after high school? Where will he/she live?
- Feel free to ask any questions to school personnel about your child's learning progress and the services they are receiving.

Preparing for the IEP Meeting

- o You have the right to bring anyone to an IEP meeting who will be beneficial to your child's education.
- o A therapist, doctor, family member, or close friend who has knowledge of your child's needs and/or the IEP process may attend a meeting with you.
- o If you feel overwhelmed by the information you should gather, or questions you should ask in the meeting, bring someone to help you.



Preparing for the IEP meeting

- o Review the components of your child's current IEP and consider each section for your child.
- o Write down questions you have for the team.
- o Gather information about your child that will be helpful at the meeting, such as reports from school, your observations, or doctors' reports.
- o Know your legal rights (see Resources section).
- o You have the right to disagree with the contents of the IEP. Plan how to handle any disagreements you foresee with the school.



Preparing for the IEP meeting

- o Once a student reaches the age of 14 ½ the IEP team must consider a student's future education and career goals as well as what they will need to be independent after high school.
- o You can help design a meaningful IEP for your child by thinking of your child's strengths, challenges, and needs prior to the meeting.



Preparing for the IEP meeting

Take a moment to look through the “IEP Planning Form for Parents” and the “Parent Transition Survey”.

- What questions do you have about the topics in these documents?
- How do you think these may or may not be helpful during an IEP meeting?

Participating in the IEP meeting

- During the meeting, each participant will report their observations, data, and recommendations.
- **TAKE NOTES & ASK QUESTIONS!**
- **Both you and your child should be given a chance to express your views, goals, and recommendations. These should be incorporated into the IEP.**
- Listen actively, even if you hear something you don't like.
- **Try to keep things focused on the child's needs and encourage everyone to love your child!**

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/iep.bollero.hearts.htm>

Language

Under the federal law IDEA, school systems must take the necessary steps to give parents/guardians the opportunity to understand the proceedings at an IEP team meeting. This includes:

“...arranging for an interpreter for parents with deafness or whose native language is other than English.”

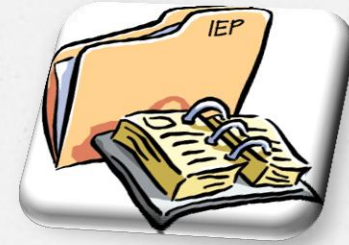
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Sign Language



Finalizing the IEP

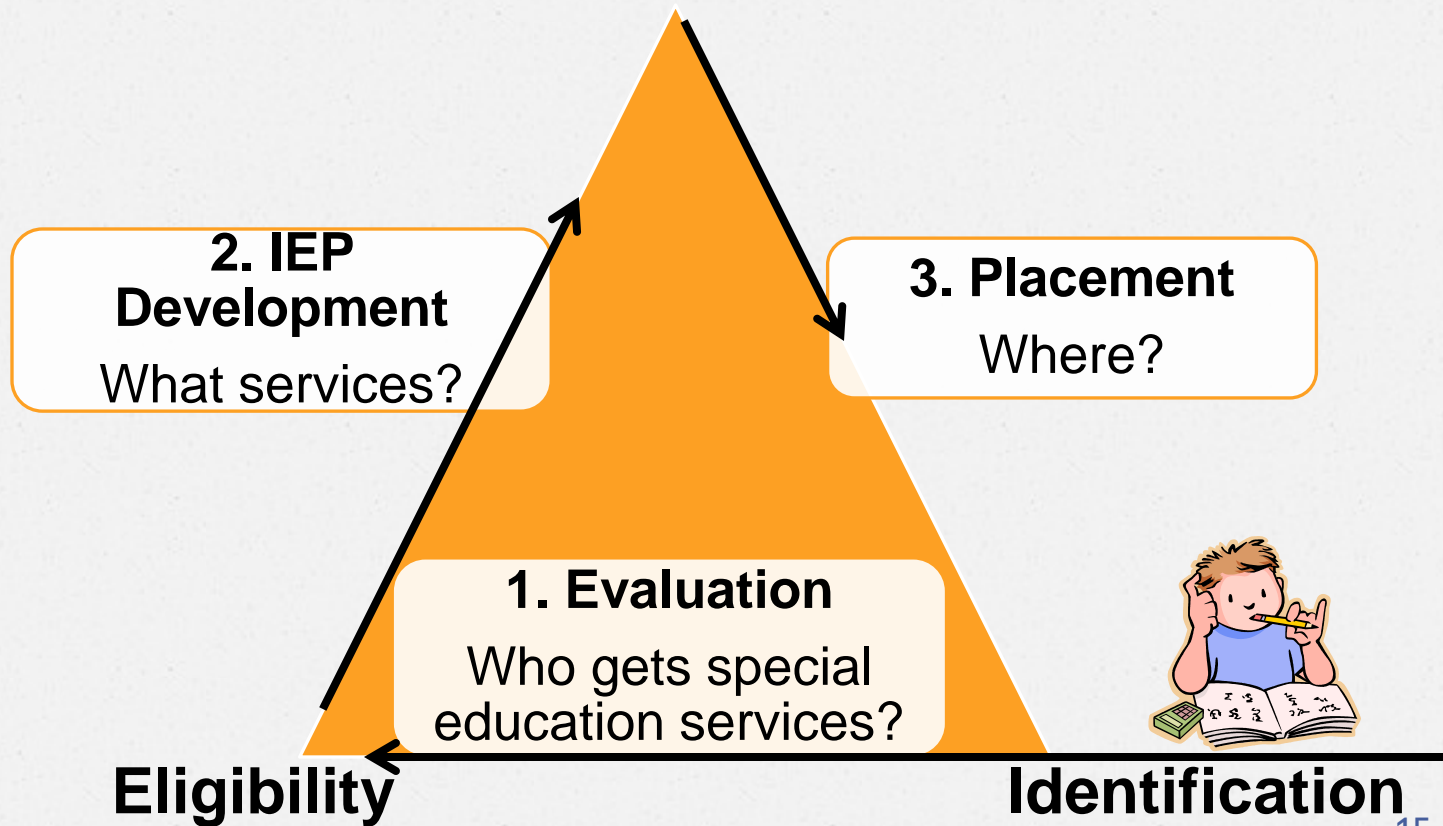


- o You must agree to the educational plan developed for your child before the school starts services.
- o It may take more than one meeting to complete the IEP.
- o Make sure you read and understand everything in the IEP.
- o The IEP, including the Transition Plan, can be revised at any time throughout the year at your request and/or with your permission.

Developing the IEP

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Understanding the Development and Components of the IEP



Evaluation

- o Purpose 1: to determine eligibility
 - o Does a child have a disability?
- o Purpose 2: to determine a child's need for special education services
 - o Developmental
 - o Functional
 - o Academic
- o An evaluation must occur at least every 3 years once a child is given an IEP

Key Components of the IEP

The first 1-2 pages of your child's IEP should include the following sections:

1. Student Identification Information
2. Disability Category
3. Purpose of Conference
4. IEP Team (with signatures)
5. Procedural Safeguards (your legal rights – you should be given a hard copy of this)
6. Language

Present Levels of Performance

Section 7 of your child's IEP is the foundation of the educational plan that will be developed for your child. It should include:

- **General strengths** – what does your child do well? Strengths should be academic as well as functional.
- **Academic needs** – where is the child struggling? Reading long words? Writing essays? Math problem-solving?
- **Learning style information**- how does your child learn best? In small groups? By working with his hands?
- **Assessment results** – evaluation results, state test scores, district test scores

**Continue through Section 7 of your child's IEP.
Does your child's IEP include:**

- **Developmental and functional needs** – does your child have behavioral concerns? Difficulties with attention and/or organization?
- **Communication needs** - speech support needed?
- **Information regarding supports and strategies used in educational settings?**
- **Medical concerns**
- **Language and cultural considerations** - This should be completed for all students who are learning English as a second language
- **Parent concerns** - While your input should be integrated throughout the IEP, this is a place specifically for your comments.

Present Levels of Performance: Examples

- Results of standardized testing using the Woodcock-Johnson Revised (WJ-R) show Mario's basic reading skills are average for his age and at a beginning-4th grade level (standard score = 89). His basic writing skills are at a 3.7 grade level (standard score = 81), which still falls within the average range for his age.
- David's performance in basic reading and writing is significantly below his intellectual ability. David makes errors when he reads and has trouble decoding long words, or words with multiple syllables.
- David's reading comprehension skills are a relative strength. He often uses context cues and picture cues to help him understand what he is reading. David is able to summarize the main idea and key points of a story without assistance.

Annual IEP Goals

Annual IEP goals are “statements that describe what a child with a disability can reasonably be expected to accomplish (e.g., master some skill or knowledge) within a twelve month period in the child’s special education program.”



Annual IEP Goals

Goals should be SMART!

- **Specific**
 - Who? What? Where?
- **Measurable**
 - How will goal be measured?
- **Action-Oriented**
 - Action words to describe what?
- **Realistic & Relevant**
 - Will your child be able to achieve it?
- **Time-bound**
 - By when will the child achieve the goal?



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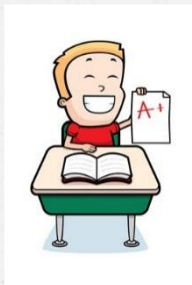
How SMART are these annual goals?



Alex will improve his attitude toward school this year by 50%.



Ariana will become a better reader by the end of the year.



Darren will be 80% successful in general education classes this year.

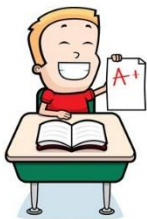
SMART Goals



Alex will have no more than 5 unexcused absences this year.



After receiving individualized instruction through the Wilson Reading System, Ariana will be able to read a passage written at the third grade level with 90% accuracy.



With accommodations and specialized support, Darren will maintain a B average in his general education classes this year.

Annual IEP Goals

Look at Section 11: Specialized Instruction in your child's IEP.

- o Are all the goals SMART goals?**
- o Why/why not?**
- o Is there anything you would change?**
- o What questions do you have about your child's IEP goals?**

Accommodations & Modifications

Using the IEP PLANNING FORM.....

- o **Highlight accommodations & modifications your child needs to be successful in school**
- o **Think about, why is it needed and how will it help?**
- o **Turn and talk to someone next to you**

IEP

Assessment Results



Present Levels of Performance



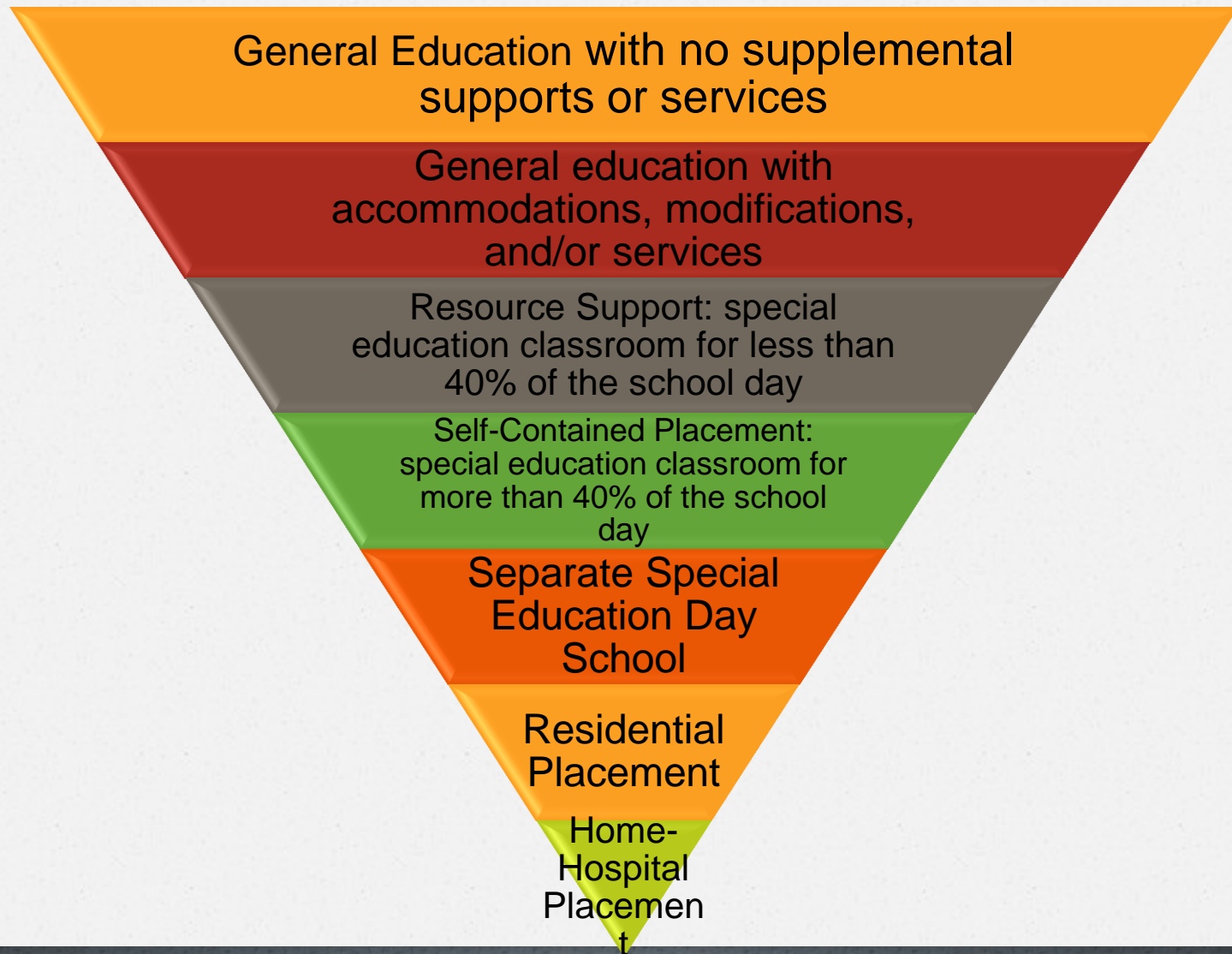
IEP Goals, Accommodations & Modifications



Services & Placement

Implementing the IEP: Placement and Services

The Placement Continuum in Illinois



Example



Assessment:

Results of standardized testing using the Woodcock-Johnson Revised (WJ-R) show Ariana's basic reading skills are below average for her age and at a beginning-2nd grade level.



Present Level of Performance:

Ariana's performance in basic reading and writing is significantly below her intellectual ability. Ariana makes errors when she reads and has trouble decoding long words, or words with multiple syllables.



IEP Goal/Accommodations:

After receiving individualized instruction through the Wilson Reading System, Ariana will be able to read a passage written at the third grade level with 90% accuracy.



Placement/Services:

Ariana will receive individualized instruction in a resource special education classroom 45 minutes a day. The remainder of her reading and writing instruction will take place in a co-taught inclusion classroom with a special education and general education teacher.

The Importance of Documentation

- o Understanding the IEP is very important as these documents will travel with the student to college, the workplace, and community agencies after high school.
- o Make sure you have the following documents in a safe place:
 - o Current IEP & Progress Reports
 - o Eligibility paperwork
 - o Psychological Evaluation
 - o Social Security Card
 - o Medical Records
 - o Report Cards & Progress Reports

Additional Resources



Center for Capacity Building on Minorities with Disabilities Research:

This center is located at the University of Illinois at Chicago in the Department of Disability and Human Development. The focus of the center is research and advocacy for individuals with disabilities. The center specializes in secondary transition for youth with disabilities.

<http://ccbmdr.ahslabs.uic.edu/>



Center for Parent Information and Resources:

This website is a product of the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. It provides a wealth of information related to disabilities, resources, and services.

<http://www.parentcenterhub.org>



Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER):

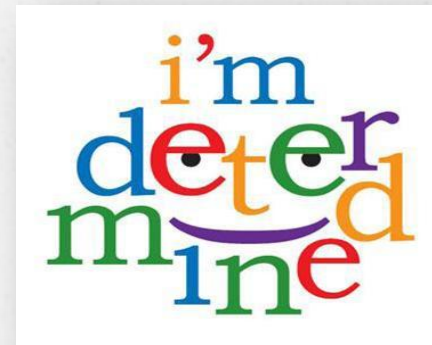
This center was created by parents of children with disabilities to help other parents feel confident in their role as an advocate.

<http://www.pacer.org/>



Autism Speaks is an advocacy organization for people with autism. The website provides toolkits to guide families through many aspects of life with autism.

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/>



I'm Determined is a wonderful website filled with information about how individuals with disabilities can become determined to help themselves. This site has specific resources for parents and students about becoming their own advocate.

<http://www.imdetermined.org/>



Family Resource Center on Disability:

Offers information and training related to special educational rights for parents of students with disabilities.

<http://www.frcd.org/>



Wrightslaw:

Is a legal website focused on education and advocacy for students with disabilities. This comprehensive website is useful for schools, families, attorneys, and community advocates.

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/>



National Center *for* Learning Disabilities
The power to hope, to learn, and to succeed

National Center for Learning Disabilities:

Aims to enhance the quality of life for individuals with learning disabilities. The center works with parents to increase the long-term success of individuals with learning disabilities.

<http://www.nclld.org/parents-child-disabilities>



LD Online is a website offering resources related to learning disabilities and ADHD. It includes sections for parents, educators, and kids.

<http://www.ldonline.org/>

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Transition Coalition:

Transition Coalition provides one of the most comprehensive websites for information on transition by University of Kansas.

<http://transitioncoalition.org/>



National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center:

NSTTAC is the nation's technical assistance center for transition. This center is funded by the U.S. Department of Education to support states, districts, schools, and other transition stakeholders in evidenced-based practices in transition.

<http://www.nstattac.org/>