

HANDOUT: IDEA & IEP—Individualized Education Program

This principle corresponds directly to the central purpose of the law—to ensure that an appropriate education is available for each student with disabilities.. The law requires this education to be appropriate and individualized. Thus, in practice, this principle is manifested concretely as the Individualized Education Program, or IEP, which is a document of great importance in the life of each student with disabilities. Each such student must have an IEP designed to meet his or her unique individual needs. Thus:

The term “individualized education program” or “IEP” means a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, written, and, as appropriate, revised in accordance with Section 614(d) of IDEA.

The law is clear about the information the IEP must contain, who develops the IEP, and the public agency's obligation to provide the special education and related services identified in the IEP. To this end, each child's IEP contains statements about

- The child's present levels of educational performance, including how the child's disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general curriculum;
- Measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives;
- The special education and related services, and supplementary aids and services to be provided to, or on behalf of, the child;
- The program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided for the child to, among other things, advance appropriately toward meeting his or her annual goals, be involved in and progress in the general curriculum, and participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities;
- An explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will *not* participate with nondisabled students in the regular class and in extracurricular and nonacademic activities;
- Any individual modifications to be made in the administration of state and district-wide assessment programs of student achievement, or how the student will be assessed alternatively;
- The projected date for the beginning of services and modifications, and the anticipated frequency, location, and duration of those services and modifications;
- The transition service needs of the child, beginning at age 14 and updated annually thereafter;
- The needed transition services of the child, beginning at age 16 (or younger, when appropriate);
- At least one year before he or she reaches the age of majority under state law, the child being informed of the rights, if any, that will transfer to the child upon reaching the age of majority;
- How the child's progress toward the annual goals will be measured and how the child's parents will be kept informed regularly of that progress. (Notification must

be at least as often as the reports sent to parents about a nondisabled child's progress.)

The beauty of the IEP is that it is developed by an informed team of the following individuals:

- The parents of the child;
- At least one regular education teacher of the child (if the child is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment);
- At least one special education teacher or, where appropriate, at least one special education provider of the child;
- A representative of the local education agency who is

—qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities;

—knowledgeable about the general curriculum; and

—knowledgeable about the availability of the LEA's resources;

- An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results (this may be a person already mentioned above);
- At the discretion of the parents or the LEA, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services' personnel as appropriate; and
- The child with the disability, whenever appropriate.

Drawing upon the child's current evaluation information, the IEP team should design an educational program to address a child's individualized educational needs. The IEP, among other components, lists the services that the school will provide to, or on behalf of, the student. The law requires that, at a minimum, the IEP is reviewed and, as needed, revised at least once a year. However, it can be revised at any time, if the child is not making expected progress, or making more rapid progress, or if something unexpected arises.

The IEP is both the cornerstone and jewel of the special education process.

Adapted from www.nichcy.org, the website of the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities