

# Your Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Guide: Where do you begin?

## What is Special Education?

Special Education is instruction that is specifically designed to meet the unique needs of children who have disabilities. Special Education and related services are provided in public schools at no cost to the parents and can include special instruction in the classroom, at home, in hospitals or in other settings. One of the most important parts of the Special Education process is creating a plan for your child's education. The entire IEP process is a way for you and the school to discuss your child's needs and to create a plan to meet those needs.



## Commonly Used Terms & What They Mean

- **Individualized Education Plan (IEP):** The IEP is a written document that describes the education plan for a student with a disability. It sets reasonable learning goals for a child and states the services that the school district will provide the child.
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** IDEA is a federal law. Under IDEA, states are responsible for meeting the special needs of eligible children with disabilities.
- **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** LRE means that a student with a disability must have the opportunity to be educated with their typical peers, to the greatest extent possible.

## IEP Eligibility

- **A referral:** is a written request needed for an evaluation given to the school district. A referral can be made and agencies concerned with the welfare of student, including the NJ Department of Education. A referral must be addressed by the school district within 20 calendar days.
- **An evaluation:** is the process used to determine whether your child has a disability. This process includes a review of relevant data, and the individual administration of tests, assessments and observations of your child. An evaluation is needed when you, the Child Study Team (CST) and your child's teacher meet and decide that your child may have a disability.

## Read

- New Jersey Department of Education Parental Rights in Special Education (PRISE): [tinyurl.com/yc5494az](http://tinyurl.com/yc5494az)
- New Jersey Special Education Advocacy Guide: [tinyurl.com/yc7bhm69](http://tinyurl.com/yc7bhm69)
- New Jersey Department of Education Office of Special Education Website: [www.nj.gov/education/specialed/](http://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/)
- Transition Planning: [planningforadulthood.org](http://planningforadulthood.org)
- IEP Go Bag: [bit.ly/iepgobag](http://bit.ly/iepgobag)

\*Type all links exactly as seen including any capital and lowercase letters, and numbers.\*

## Timeline

- After your child is determined eligible for special education services, a meeting will be held to develop your child's IEP. The IEP should describe how your child currently performs and your child's specific instructional needs. It will include detailed and measurable annual goals and short-term objectives or benchmarks.
- The following people must attend the IEP meeting, but not limited to:
  - Student, if appropriate
  - Parent
  - General education teacher
  - Special education teacher
  - At least one Child Study Team member
  - Case manager
  - School district representative

## Your Rights

**You have the right to:**

- Copies of your child's IEP.
- Bring others with you to the meetings (must inform school prior to the meeting)
- Tape record IEP meetings if you inform the other CST members orally or in writing, prior to the meeting.
- IEP must be implemented within 90 days after receiving your consent of the IEP plan (applies to first evaluation).
- Have the IEP implemented as soon as possible following an IEP meeting.
- Have the IEP reviewed at least annually, but you can request an IEP review meeting at any time throughout the year.
- Have extended school year (ESY) services considered by the IEP team.