

What Is an IEP?



An IEP is an Individualized Education Program for a child age 3 through 21 who has been diagnosed with disabilities or developmental delays. IEPs provide a roadmap for special education services. This is especially important for preschoolers, who may be receiving special education services in a variety of settings, such as public preschool classrooms, Head Start programs, or private childcare centers.

Who is involved in IEPs?

- Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are created by a team. Families, teachers, child care providers, and specialists, such as speech and language therapists, are involved in the IEP process.
- Families are an important part of the IEP team! Families know their child best and can contribute important information about their child during meetings.
- Everyone on the IEP team works together to improve the education of the child with disabilities or delays.

How is an IEP created?

- First, an educational team assesses a child and determines whether the child is eligible for special education services. A child is eligible if the assessment reveals a disability or developmental delay.
- If the child is eligible, the team, which includes the family, meets to create an IEP for the child. This document is used to guide the child's educational services and supports within their educational setting.
- The IEP team meets annually, or more often if needed, to review the child's progress toward goals and to make any needed changes to goals or services. New annual goals are written each year.

What does an IEP look like?

- The IEP is a document that lists educational goals for the child. It describes the services that the child will receive, such as speech or physical therapy. It also describes accommodations that the child will receive, such as materials in Braille or adapted seating.
- The IEP is based on the child's individual strengths and challenges.
- Just like children, no two IEPs are alike.

Tips for parents

- Talk with your child's teacher or someone from your local school district if you have questions or need more information about the IEP.
- Celebrate your child's progress toward their educational goals!

For related Web resources, see "What Is an IEP?" at <https://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/>

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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