

Understanding Individualized Education Programs (IEP)

The IEP is the foundation for your child's education, and you are a very important member of the team that develops it. In Michigan, the IEP is a written document for student with disabilities, between the ages of 3 and 26 years old, who receive special education programs and related services. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal law that governs special education across the country. IDEA defines the purpose the IEP. Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE) are the rules that define how Michigan implements special education laws. The purpose of an IEP is to identify each student's needs, develop reasonable learning goals, and document the services the school district will provide to help the student achieve these goals.

The IEP team works together to write an Individualized Education Program that provides an eligible child a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is ongoing. There is an IEP Team Meeting required at least annually to review and revise the IEP document.

Who Attends the IEP Meeting? (Note: one person can fulfill multiple roles)

You, as Parent(s)

School District Representative — This person must also be qualified to provide or supervise special education services and knows about the general education curriculum (the same curriculum taught to children who do not have disabilities) and the resources available to the school.

General Education Teacher —at least one general education teacher if your child is (or may be) participating in the general education class.

Special Education Teacher —at least one of your child's special education teachers or, if appropriate, at least one special education provider who works with your child.

Evaluation Personnel —someone who knows about your child's evaluation, what

the evaluation results were, and what the results mean in terms of instruction. This could be a school psychologist, an administrator, or one of your child's teachers.

Your Child —if the IEP team will be talking about how to prepare your child for life after high school (called transition planning), your child must be invited to the meeting. Otherwise, deciding when and how your child will participate in the IEP meeting is a decision you and your child can make. Students are encouraged to take part in developing their own IEPs.

Others with knowledge or expertise about your child — in addition to the people listed above you or the school can invite other people the IEP meeting.

Four Cornerstones of the IEP

Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

Current picture of your child right now. The PLAAFP includes information on all areas of development where your child may need support. Areas to consider include:

- Academic skills—math, reading, writing
- Daily living or self-help skills—dressing, eating, using the bathroom
- Social skills—making friends
- Behavior
- Sensory skills—hearing, seeing
- Communication skills—talking
- Mobility—getting around in school and the community
- Vocational skills—working

A well written present level section will describe:

- Your child's strengths and weakness
- What helps or hinders their learning
- Objective data from current evaluations
- How your child's disability impacts their ability to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum

Goals and Objectives

The annual goals section of the IEP builds upon your child's PLAAFP. The present level identifies what your child needs. The goals should be written to address those needs. The goals define what skill or behavior your child will learn in the next 12 months. Goals are not limited to academic needs. If your child has social, emotional, or behavioral needs, then goals to meet those needs would be written in the IEP.

A well-written goal should be (a) positive, and (b) describe a skill that can be seen and measured.

Goals must be clearly written and measurable. We need to understand what skill or behavior is being taught, in what matter or at what level, in what setting or under what conditions, and by what time. When we have all that information, we are able to meaningfully monitor the student's progress toward the goal.

Supplementary Aids

Supplementary aids and services are developed to meet your child's unique needs and are provided in regular education classes, other education-related settings, and in school sponsored extracurricular and non-academic settings, to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate.

Types of Supplementary Aids:

1. Accommodations and / or modifications - adaptations, accommodations, and modifications need to be individualized for students, based upon their needs and strengths

Accommodation: Adjustment is provided, but learning expectation stays the same. It changes *HOW* the student learns.

Modification: Adjustment is provided that changes the learning expectation. It changes *WHAT* the student learns.

Common areas of adaptations and examples:

Scheduling – extra time to complete assignments or tests, rest period

Setting – working in a small group, tests in low distraction environment

Materials – copies of teacher lecture notes, audiobooks, braille, large print

Instruction – 1:1 peer / tutor, breaking assignments down into steps

Student response – typing, oral answers, video essays

2. Universal Supports – If the student requires a universal support to participate in and make progress in the general education curriculum must be included in the IEP as part of the offer of FAPE.

Special Education and Related Services

It is the IEP team's responsibility to review all of the evaluation information, identify any related services your child needs, and include them in the IEP. Each of the services your child needs is written down in the IEP. The IEP must include how often your child will receive the service, how long the sessions will last, where the service will be provided, and when the service will start and end.

Related services can include, but are not limited to, any of the following:

Assistive Technology	Occupational Therapy	Counseling
Physical Therapy	Orientation and Mobility Services	School Health Services and School Nurse Services
Audiology	Parent Counseling/Training	Social Work Services
Counseling Services	Psychological Services	Schools Speech-Language Pathology
Early Identification	Recreation	Transportation
Interpreting Services	Rehabilitation	
Medical Services		