



Special Education: What Do Parents Need to Know?

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- Minnesota's parent training and information center since 1978
- Parents helping parents
- Simon Technology Center
- Count Me In[®] Puppets
- Coalition of disability groups

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What Is Special Education?

Special education is:

- Specially designed instruction
- Available at no cost to parents
- Designed to meet the unique needs of an eligible child with a disability
- Provided in the most typical setting appropriate for the child

Special education is not a place.

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What Is Special Education?

- Minnesota: Children from birth to age 3 may also be eligible for special education. Contact PACER or your school district for more information.
- IEP services help the child make meaningful educational progress
- School must provide all services written on IEP

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Why Are Parents Included?

- The law gives you this right.
- Only you have an in-depth, long-term, daily relationship with your child.
- You are the only permanent member of the special education team.
- Research and experience show that special education is more effective when parents are involved.
- When parents are involved, children do better and schools become better.

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How Are Parents Involved?

As a parent, you have the right to:

- Participate at special education team meetings
- Read your child's school records
- Use dispute resolution methods to resolve disagreements
- Agree or disagree with services and decisions

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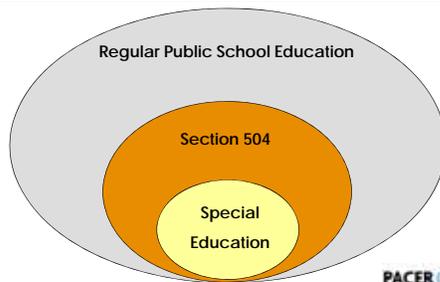
How Can I Participate Effectively?

- Understand your rights
- Prepare for and attend meetings
- Understand and ask questions
- Put things in writing
- Recognize different roles you and school staff play
- Exchange information in your native language

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How Do Special Education and Regular Education Fit Together?



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Section 504

Students who are eligible for Section 504:

- Have a Section 504 Plan that is usually in writing
- Do not have an IEP

Contact PACER or your school district for more information on Section 504



How Does the Special Education Process Work?

PLACEMENT



SERVICES



EDUCATIONAL NEEDS



PRESENT LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE



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What Do I Need to Know about Evaluation?

Your child is evaluated for special education to:

- Make educational decisions, including eligibility for services
- See if there's a disability and a need for special education and related services
- Understand your child's needs and strengths

There are three types of evaluation

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What Is an Appropriate Evaluation?

An appropriate evaluation:

- Is done in child's native language
- Uses a variety of tools and strategies
- Does not discriminate
- Uses standardized tests valid for this purpose as much as possible
- Is administered by trained professionals

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What Do I Need to Know about the IEP Team Meeting?

IEP team members include:

- Parents
- Special education teacher
- Regular education teacher
- District representative
- Person who can explain evaluation

The team also may include:

- The child
- Others

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What Do I Need to Know about Developing the IEP?

The IEP team must discuss:

- Your child's strengths and abilities
- Your concerns for your child
- Evaluation results
- What your child needs in order to learn
- School services
- Special factors

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What Do I Need to Know about Developing the IEP?

Measurable annual goals will:

- Name the skill or behavior that needs to change
- Report your child's current level in this skill or behavior
- State what your child can reasonably achieve in one year
- Tell how progress will be measured

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Example

Goal: Student will **increase** written language skills **from** writing only phrases **to** writing complete simple sentences **as recorded** in teacher's records

Objectives: In Minnesota, each goal must have at least two objectives or steps to accomplish the goal

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What Do I Need to Know about Developing the IEP?

The IEP will also describe:

- Progress measurement
- Services and supports
- Dates and places for services
- Transition
- Age of majority
- State and district tests

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Transition

- In Minnesota, special education transition to adulthood evaluation and services begin during the 9th grade (or sooner if needed)
- At age of majority (18 in Minnesota) most students take on all rights their parents had in special education

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What Do I Need to Know about the Placement Process?

Special education can be provided in lots of places.

FIRST: The team determines appropriate IEP goals and services based on your child's needs.

THEN: The team will discuss where the services will be provided in the least restrictive environment.

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IEP Summary

The purpose of special education is to ensure that children with disabilities have a special education program designed to meet their unique needs and to prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. (from IDEA 601(d)(1)(A))

Ask yourself: "Is this IEP an appropriate step toward a productive and independent life for my child?"

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If You Disagree with the IEP

- If parents disagree with the IEP, they must check "no" and return the IEP consent form to the school. Then the school will work with you to resolve the disagreement.
- Not signing the IEP consent form is the same as saying "yes" unless it's the child's first IEP.

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What If We Disagree?

- Meet with school staff
- Conciliation
- Mediation
- Facilitated IEP
- Due process hearing and resolution session
- Complaint

Due process rights provide ways to resolve disagreements



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What if We Disagree?

- Methods of resolving disagrees are NOT necessarily done in this order
- Mediation requires a neutral mediator not employed by the school
- State complaint can be filed with MN Department of Education if school does not follow IEP or special education laws

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Resources

Learn more about special education or your rights:

PACER Center, 952-838-9000
www.PACER.org
pacer@pacer.org
 Toll-free in Minnesota, 800-53PACER

Minnesota Department of Education
<http://education.state.mn.us>

U.S. Department of Education
<http://IDEA.ed.gov>

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