

Your Guide To An IEP That Works



- **Family Driven**
- **Non-Profit 501(c)3**

Family Driven: What makes FND unique is that the majority of our Board of Directors, all of our Management Staff and all of our Program Staff are parents or family members of persons with disabilities.

When family members call FND, they not only receive the expertise and knowledge of a professional, but also the compassion and empathy of someone who has walked (and continues to walk) in their shoes.

We do NOT:

Act As Attorneys

We DO:

- ♥ Provide Support
- ♥ Provide Information
- ♥ Help Identify Options

Act as Attorneys: We don't represent families, and we don't give legal advice.

Support: FND has been the statewide Parent to Parent since 1985, and the value of families getting support by networking with other families is built into everything we do. We often get calls from parents or other family members who just need to talk – and we're there to listen.

Information: Altogether, FND logs over 15,000 calls a year, most of them from parents, family members, or professionals who are looking for information. We have a large database of resources in Florida, and a library filled with disability-related information. Regardless of the question, our staff will go the extra mile to find an answer.

- **Identify Options:** Our philosophy at FND is that it is not our role to tell families what to do. It is our role, however, to inform families of what their options are – and encourage them to make their own decisions about what is right for their family.

The Principles of IDEIA

- **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**
- **Appropriate evaluation**
- **IEP**
- **Parent & student participation**
- **Least Restrictive Environment**
- **Procedural safeguards**

These six principals are included within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, known commonly as IDEA. The Act itself defines each principal, and provides strict guidelines for states to follow in implementing the provisions of the law. IDEA was reauthorized in 2004 and many changes have been implemented as a result. All of the content of this workshop is aligned with the 2004 changes. Today, we'll be focusing on the Individualized Education Program – or as it is referred to here in Florida – the Individualized Education Plan or the I.E.P.

Exceptional Student Education

Referral



Evaluation



Eligibility



IEP



Placement

Students with disabilities who qualify under IDEA receive specially designed instruction and related services through this process. The process starts when someone suspects that a child may have a disability. Pre-referral activities begin, or a referral for evaluation is made.

At this point, the IEP process begins...

and the IEP team determines appropriate placement for the child.

As you can see, there are steps before and after you get to the actual IEP. We'll be discussing those steps briefly, but will be mainly concentrating on the IEP part of the Exceptional Student Education process. Once the referral is made, then the evaluation takes place. The evaluation determines that the child IS eligible for specially designed instruction under IDEA.

Referral

Anyone who has knowledge of the child and suspects that the child may have a disability may make a referral.

Evaluation takes place if:

- If response to interventions (RTI) or Pre-referral activities are unsuccessful, then a referral is made.
- Parent provides written request and consent

**FL RULES
6A-6.0331 (3)**

The first step in the process begins when someone suspects that a child may have a disability. This step includes identification and pre-referral activities.

Referral begins by a written request being made for a formal evaluation.

Before a referral is made for a student suspected of having a disability, school personnel will usually try strategies and interventions called, “pre-referral activities.”

If the pre-referral activities don’t solve the problems that the child was having, then the referral for evaluation is made.

If, during pre-referral activities, the parents of the child request an evaluation in writing, then the school personnel would make the referral for evaluation and do the evaluation and the pre-referral activities at the same time.

Evaluation

requires consent and the results help the team to determine...

- **Category of disability**
- **Whether the child needs specially designed instruction and related services**
- **The present levels of academic achievement and related developmental needs of the child**
- **Whether any accommodations or modifications are needed**

...whether the child has a disability that falls under an IDEA category.

To qualify under IDEA, the child must also NEED specially designed instruction and related services.

The results of the evaluation will also indicate the present levels of performance and educational needs of the child, and...

...whether any accommodations or modifications are needed

During the evaluation process, the school district must use at least two strategies and appropriate assessment tools designed to measure the area that is being tested to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information, including information provided by the parent.

The evaluation is the cornerstone or *foundation* of the IEP process. The results of the evaluation help the IEP team with future decisions.

Eligibility

Disability Categories - Educational Needs

Individual Education Program / Plan (IEP)

It's a meeting...

It's a plan...

It's a program...

It's a document...

It's a process...

The term, "IEP" is used to describe several different parts of the IEP process.

The IEP is a unique program of specially designed instruction and related services necessary for the child to benefit from a Free Appropriate Public Education.

The IEP is a plan. In federal language, the "P" in IEP stands for "program," but here in Florida, we still call it a plan.

The IEP is a meeting. Parents and educators say, "I have an IEP to go to in the morning," and they are referring to the team meeting during which the program and plan for the child's education is developed.

The IEP is a document. You might hear someone say, "Here is a copy of the IEP," and they are referring to the written documentation of the plan developed by the team. Because IDEA requires so many different areas to be addressed within the IEP meeting, the details are captured within an IEP form. Most counties in Florida have this form computerized and school personnel develop a draft IEP before the IEP meeting. The IEP is a process, and this process is very carefully outlined in federal law.

Individual Education Program / Plan (IEP)

**From IDEA 2004, an IEP is:
“a written statement for each child with
a disability that is developed, reviewed,
and revised in accordance with section
614 (d).”**

Why is section 614(d) important to know about? Because IDEA is a procedural law; it lays out eight specific topic areas that must be discussed, agreed upon, and documented.

IDEIA requires that an IEP include:

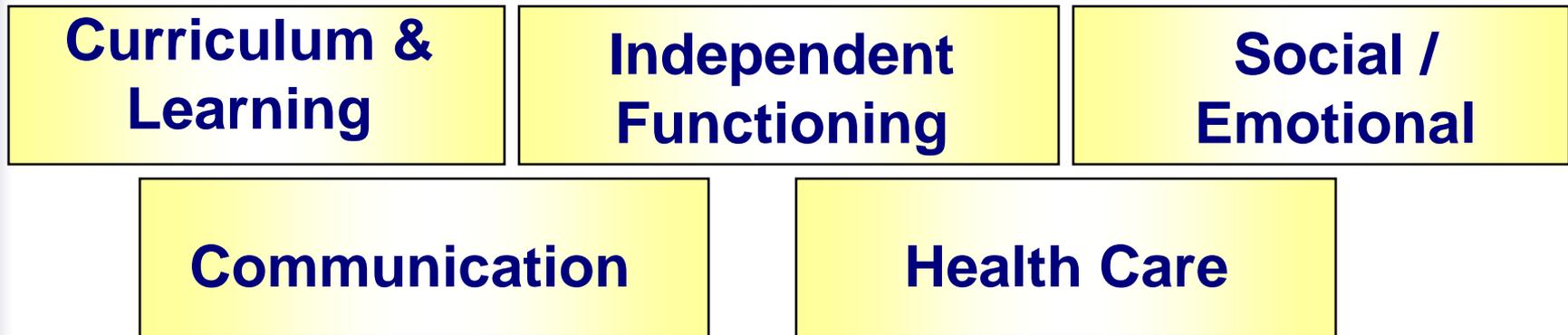
1.) A statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance

During the Evaluation step of the Exceptional Student Education process, assessments were done to give data to the team to determine the child's present levels of academic achievement and developmental needs.

IDEA requires a statement of the present level of academic achievement and functional performance – to be developed and documented during the IEP process, using the results of the assessments given during Evaluation and additional input from the team.

Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

Domains:



The required “statement” is actually a series of statements, and these statements should relate to different areas called domains. Domains include: curriculum and learning; independent functioning; social and emotional; communication; and health care.

Under the Social/Emotional domain, any effects of the child’s disability that result in behaviors that impede the child’s ability to learn need to be clearly defined in the Present Level statement. It is very important to document the connection between the child’s disability and their behavior. By clearly stating that connection in the Present Level section of the IEP, documentation exists that may be critical during a manifestation determination, should one ever occur.

Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

must include a description of how the disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general curriculum.

Remember that for an IEP meeting to be taking place, the child has already been determined to have a disability that falls under an IDEA category.

Now that his or her disability has been established, the Present Level section of the IEP document must include information about how that disability affects the child's ability to participate and progress in the general curriculum.

General curriculum is based on the Sunshine State Standards which are the guidelines that identify what a child is expected to learn in each grade level, in order to be promoted into the next grade level. For children with disabilities in preschool, the Present Level section must describe, as appropriate, how the child's disability affects their participation in appropriate activities. This part of the IEP process is extremely important – it is the basic foundation upon which the plan is formed, and should be very specific and detailed.

Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

Domain
Based on
Effects
Priority Needs

In a Present Level statement, the form itself may break the statement into four parts:
The domain for which the present level is written;
The data that the statement is based upon;
The effects of the student's disability on their progress; and
The priority needs identified by the IEP team.
The team determines what the priority educational need is.

Writing the Present Level Statement

Before the IEP Meeting:

- Ask for a draft of the Present Level Statement
- Fill out a Positive Student Profile

At the IEP Meeting:

- Bring a written list of abilities, strengths, and areas of difficulty to the IEP
- Give input on what your child is doing and can do NOW
- Ask for a summary of what was discussed and decided and copies of all documentation

Before the IEP Meeting;

Draft Present Level Statement. Ask for a copy of the draft IEP. While the school is not required to prepare a draft IEP, most schools and school districts do prepare a draft in advance of the IEP meeting. Positive student profile. A positive student profile is a brief history of a child, from the families perspective.

At the IEP Meeting:

Written list. Document the family's input in advance and share it with the rest of the team. Give input. School personnel see only what your child is doing or can do at school – which may be very different from what they are doing at home. The parents' input is crucial to developing an accurate statement.

IDEIA requires that an IEP include:

2.) A statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals

The second of eight topic areas to be included within the IEP is measurable annual goals. Every plan needs goals; without vision and direction, a plan is without structure and purpose.

Goals must:

- meet the child's needs and enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and
- meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from his or her disability.

Goals should:

- identify **skills** the child will gain
- address all **needs** identified in the Present Level statement

Development of goals should include:

Parental Input

A goal should be directly related to any skill needs identified within the Present Level statement, and should identify what skill or skills the child will gain.

IDEA clearly acknowledges, encourages, and promotes the importance of parental participation in the development of the IEP. The goals, although they may be *drafted* by school personnel, should be developed with input from the parents.

The goals should be positive, specific, and measurable.

The Present Level Statement should have addressed all the domains. During goal development, all domains should be considered as well (except for Health Care – this would be addressed with services, not goals).

Not every domain may need a goal – every child is unique, and if their academic achievement and functional performance are right on target, then they do not need any goals within that domain.

However, every domain should be discussed, and the outcomes of those discussions should be documented within the IEP.

Writing Goals

- **Meet as a family to discuss priorities.**
- **Identify areas for goals by looking at the domains.**
- **Review current goals & objectives.**
- **Request a draft of proposed goals in advance.**
- **If appropriate, review Sunshine State Standards for your child's grade level to identify areas of need.**
- **Assist in writing goals that identify **skills** your child will learn.**

Meet as a family and Identify areas. Before the IEP meeting, discuss areas of need and brainstorm suggestions for goals. Reviewing the domains will help in this process.

Review current goals. If a goal has been met or is about to be met, it may be time to raise the expectation of performance.

Request draft of proposed goals. Requesting a draft of the proposed goals helps a family to prepare for the upcoming meeting. Often, one of the “stressors” about going to a meeting is not knowing what to expect.

Sunshine State Standards. This tip may not apply if the child is not on track for a standard diploma. If he/she is, reviewing the expectations will help in identifying areas of need that should be addressed during the IEP.

Assist in writing goals. Review draft goals and make suggestions for goal language that identifies skills that your child will learn.

IDEIA requires that an IEP include:

- 3.) A description of how the child's progress toward meeting annual goals will be measured and when periodic reports on progress will be provided**

IDEA has always satisfied this provision by requiring objectives and benchmarks...

Objectives & Benchmarks

- **IDEIA 2004 – removed requirement, except for students who take alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards**
- **Florida Implementation – objectives and benchmarks to measure, track, and report progress. Is only for those students receiving alternate assessments.**

IDEA 2004 removed that requirement, with just that one exception.

In Florida, objectives and benchmarks will continue to be included in IEPs. Florida will only provide objectives and benchmarks for those students receiving alternate assessments .

Objectives and benchmarks should be:

- positive - achievable - unique to the child - observable and -measurable

Writing Objectives or Benchmarks

Arrange skills in a sequence

- **Modify the condition (increase difficulty)**
- **Modify performance criteria (increase expectation)**

Objectives are measurable steps that divide goals into separate skills.

Benchmarks describe the amount of progress the child is expected to make within a specified period.

There are two basic strategies for developing objectives or benchmarks. One is to arrange skills in a sequence, setting up steps that increase in difficulty or expectation, that lead to the successful accomplishment of the goal.

Another sequential strategy would be to set the performance criteria lower and then increase it by steps.

Periodic Reports

Progress on each goal

Specific plan for each child

- **Monthly?**
- **Concurrent with report cards?**

The IEP must also include a statement that clearly explains when and how periodic reports will be provided.

Periodic reports should report progress on each goal, by detailing the student's current status on their specific objectives and benchmarks.

There is no standard plan for reporting on the progress for children with disabilities. The IEP meeting should include discussion about reporting that is based upon the child's specific goals, objectives, and benchmarks.

IDEIA requires that an IEP include:

4.) A statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel

IDEA 2004 requires that the level of supplementary aids and services are based on peer-reviewed research to the extent possible and must be designed to aid the student:

- to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals;
- to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; and
- to be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and non-disabled children in the activities.

Statement of: Special Education

- Specially designed instruction
- Provided by a qualified ESE teacher

Examples:

- Instruction in Braille
- Instruction in Organizational Strategies
- Instruction in Reading Comprehension Skills

By federal definition, the term “special education” means specially designed instruction, which is provided at no cost to parents to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. Special education includes instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings, and also includes instruction in physical education.

Statement of: Related Services

Definition under IDEIA

“Developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as may be required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education.”

A related service is never a stand-alone goal, a related service supports a goal.

Related services are identified to support achieving an IEP goal.

As the IEP is being developed, review the goals, objectives, and benchmarks to help identify those developmental, corrective, or supportive services that will assist the child to achieve their Goals.

A related service must also help the child benefit from special education.

A Related Service would never stand alone as a Goal. They always have to relate to and support an IEP Goal.

IDEA lists examples of related services and acknowledge that the list is none-exhaustive – related services can include any service to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education.

Statement of: Supplementary Aids & Services

**Aids and services that support a child to
be educated with their nondisabled
peers.**

This statement is different from the related services statement in that this identifies aids and services that specifically support the teaching of a child in the regular education environment.

Statement of: Program Modifications

- **instructional methods and materials**
- **assignments and classroom assessments**
 - **time demands and scheduling**
- **program and course requirements**

Up to this point we have been talking about the needs of the student. This statement addresses to advance toward attaining annual goals

- to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities
- to be educated and participate with other students with disabilities and with nondisabled students in activities

Definition: Accommodations vs. Modifications

Accommodations

Change the setting or delivery without changing core curriculum; still teaches to the Sunshine State Standards

Modifications

Change the content of curriculum or alter what is being measured

These two words are often used interchangeably. To provide better and more individualized support to students, the following definitions have been used:

Accommodations do not change or alter what is being measured and are considered changes in the way a test (assessment) is given or taken (for example, different test setting, timing or scheduling changes, translation of directions, or use of assistive technology).

Modifications definitely change or alter what is being measured and are considered substantial changes in the way a test (assessment) is given or taken and (e.g. extended time on a *timed* test for reading fluency, spell checker on a spelling test, calculator on test of computation of *basic four operations*).

Statement of: Supports for School Personnel

- **Services, materials, or special equipment**
- **Regular teacher, special education teacher, or other school personnel**
- **To assist a student with disabilities to be involved and progress in the general curriculum**

Support may include specific training or specific staff development activities to ensure that school personnel have the knowledge, information, skills, and materials needed to help the student. Support may also include consultant services, collaborative teaching, or assistance from a paraprofessional or teacher aide. Special equipment or materials, such as a braille writer, may also be needed by school personnel to provide modifications needed by the student.

IDEIA requires that an IEP include:

5.) An explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular class and in activities

The IEP must include specifics about the placement of the child, whether they will be in a fully inclusive classroom, whether they will be pulled out of that classroom for special education instruction, or if they will be in an ESE class or other setting without non-disabled children full-time.

Since every child is different, it will be the IEP team that determines which placement will be most effective for the child. The “extent” is usually stated as a percentage, for example, “Joey will spend less than 10% of his time not participating with non-disabled children.”

Placement

Least Restrictive Environment

“To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are not disabled.”

The last step in the Special Education process is Placement, and two of the basic principles of IDEA are “Free Appropriate Public Education” or FAPE, and “Least Restrictive Environment” (LRE).

The LRE principle is intended to ensure that a child with a disability is served in a setting where he or she can be educated successfully.

Even though IDEA does not require regular education placement for every disabled student, it does assume that the first placement option considered for each student would be regular education with appropriate supplementary aids and services.

Factors to consider when determining the regular education placement of a child include:

- if the child is a harm to himself or others;
- if his or her behavior is disruptive to impede the learning of others; or
- if the curriculum were to be modified beyond recognition.

Removal from an inclusive setting with non-disabled peers should only occur when education with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

IDEIA requires that an IEP include:

6.) a statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child on State and district wide assessments; and

IDEIA requires that an IEP include:

if the IEP Team determines that the child shall take an alternate assessment on a State or district wide assessment, a statement of:

IDEIA requires that an IEP include:

- **why the child cannot participate in the regular assessment; and**
- **why the particular alternate assessment selected is appropriate for the child**

The majority of children in Special Education are able to take regular assessments with accommodations. The IEP must include a list of those accommodations.

Any testing accommodations including accommodations for taking the FCAT should be those that are used on a regular basis in the classroom.

For those few who are unable to take regular assessments, the IEP must document why and give an explanation of the reasons the selected alternative assessment is appropriate for the child.

IDEIA requires that an IEP include:

7.) The projected date for the beginning of the services described and the anticipated frequency, location, and duration of those services and modifications.

For example, Marty's IEP would reflect that her counseling sessions would begin on October 11th, they will be weekly, in a resource room, for 30 minutes.

Initiation date is the actual date when services begin.

Duration date is the anticipated date services will end.

Frequency reflects how often the services will be provided.. For example: Daily

Amount reflects the quantity of service to be provided.

For example: The frequency is daily, the amount is 15 minutes.

Location reflects where the service will be provided.

Some examples might include:: Regular class, resource room, school campus

IDEIA requires that an IEP include:

8.) Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child is 16, and updated annually thereafter...

Remember that these provisions are from IDEIA and states do have leeway to implement rules that expand on IDEIA. Florida has chosen to implement this provision differently. We will discuss Florida's timeframes after going over the Federal language

When a student reaches transition age, there are three new provisions that will be required in her IEP...

IDEIA requires that an IEP include:

- a.) appropriate measurable goals based upon transition assessments which relate to:**
- **training and education**
 - **employment and**
 - **independent living skills**

The child's functional levels and interests will be determined by transition assessments, which include student input, parental input, teacher observation, and other relevant data. The analysis of these assessments will be used to develop an individual Post-School Outcome Statement. Transition goals which address the three stated areas are then developed to assist the student to achieve the stated outcome.

IDEIA requires that an IEP include:

b.) a list of transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals, and...

‘Transition services’ are a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability. These services are designed to help the student achieve their stated post-school outcome. They should promote movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.

When creating a list of transition services, they must be based on the individual student’s needs, taking into account the student’s preferences and interests.

Transition services may include instruction, related services, community experiences, and if appropriate, developing daily living skills utilizing the functional vocational evaluation. This is the time that the team should identify additional agencies that are likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services for the student.

IDEIA requires that an IEP include:

c.) beginning not later than 1 year before the child reaches the age of majority (18):

a statement that the child has been informed of the rights that will transfer to them when they turn 18

In Florida, the age of majority is 18. Just before students turn 17, they must be informed of the rights that will transfer to them when they turn 18. The IEP must include a statement confirming that the student was informed.

This notice must be provided to both the individual and the parents.

If a child has, through guardianship procedures, been determined to be “incompetent,” then this provision does not apply.

Florida’s statutes include a special guardianship for individuals with developmental disabilities called “guardian advocate,” which, while it does not include a “competency” hearing, can state that the person does not have the ability to provide informed consent with respect to their educational program.

At age 14 - **in Florida**, IEPs will continue to include:

- a statement of whether the student is pursuing a course of study leading to a standard diploma or a special diploma
- a statement of the student's desired post-school outcome
- a statement of the student's transition service needs
- consideration of instruction or the provision of information in the area of self-determination

Florida chose to start transition planning at age 14. When students are 14, their IEP meetings will focus on what services they will need in place by the time they reach 16.

The IEP at age 14 will include:

A statement of whether the student is pursuing a course of study leading to a standard diploma or a special diploma

A statement of the student's desired post-school outcome

Transition Planning

- **Talk to your child about their hopes and dreams**
- **Think of creative ways to help them achieve those dreams**
- **Make a list of life skills that you know your child will need to work on to reach their goals**
- **Ask about agency participation in the IEP**

IDEIA also requires that an IEP include these Special Factors:

- Behavior
- Limited proficiency in English
- Blind or visually impaired
- Communication needs
- Deaf or hard of hearing
- Assistive technology

In addition to the contents we just reviewed, these areas must be considered by every IEP team.

As stated earlier during this workshop, it is very important to document the connection between the child's disability and their behavior. The development of goals and services related to behavior are additional documentation of that connection.

In addition, Florida rules require that an IEP include:

A statement of whether extended school year services are necessary

- **Failure to meet projected goals**
- **Demonstrated regression**
- **Long recoupment time**
- **Critical learning cycle is disrupted**

ESY is a decision made by the IEP Team to educate a child beyond the typical school year, at no cost to parents. Eligibility for ESY should be determined by the IEP Team on an individual basis.

ESY does not mean “summer school.” ESY addresses any break in instruction that results in a significant period of recoupment.

All students, with or without disabilities, regress over summer vacation. In determining whether a child with a disability is eligible for ESY, the IEP team should compare the child to his/her non-disabled peers; will the child take longer to recoup?

The Special Education Cycle

- Consent
- Evaluation
- Written IEP
- Placement
- Annual IEP review*
- 3 year re-evaluation
- Possible change of placement or service

- All these parts of the cycle are leading up to 1st IEP
- The IEP team determines placement
- An IEP is effective for only 1 year, but there is a possibility that Florida may be offering a 3-year IEP option at some point in the future. Parents would still have the choice to continue with the annual IEP schedule.
- Every time an IEP is reviewed, the placement or services can be changed by the team.

Critical IEP Team Members

- **Parents** – must be invited
- **Student** – if transition services are to be discussed, they must be invited
- **ESE teacher and/or consultant**
- **Provider** - such as therapist or specialist

- Parents - Although parents must be invited, if they choose not to attend, the meeting may be held without them.
- Student - Parents may choose to bring the child at any age “if appropriate.”
- Consultant - Children who are fully included in regular education classes often have an ESE consultant available to them.
- Provider - one example of a specialist is a Visual Instruction Specialist for a child that is visually impaired.

Some or all team members may be excused with parental informed consent, parent and teacher can meet and make changes to the IEP after the initial meeting.

Parental Participation

- Is critical – parents have information about their child that is important to share
- Is not required – an IEP meeting can take place without the parents present

***A parent's signature only
verifies attendance.***

Parents need to be invited to attend the IEP meeting, however if attempts to invite the parent have been made and documented, the school district staff can hold the IEP meeting and make decisions without the parent present.

Critical IEP Team Members

- **Regular Education teacher** – if the student is or may be participating in an inclusive setting
- **School system representative** – who is knowledgeable about and able to commit resources
- **An individual who can interpret evaluation results**
- **Representatives from other agencies** – who may be providing transition services
- **Interpreter** – if needed
- **Other individuals** - who have knowledge or special expertise about the child

Regular Education teacher

School system representative – Although funding is not an issue, given that services identified as needed by the team *must* be provided, the school system rep is there to “sign off” as the district’s agreement to fund the services.

Individual who can interpret evaluation results

This can include private tutors, private providers, additional family members, or a friend.

(continued)

Critical IEP Team Members

- **Regular Education teacher** – if the student is or may be participating in an inclusive setting
- **School system representative** – who is knowledgeable about and able to commit resources
- **An individual who can interpret evaluation results**
- **Representatives from other agencies** – who may be providing transition services
- **Interpreter** – if needed
- **Other individuals** - who have knowledge or special expertise about the child

Representatives from other agencies – When the student is 14, the team must begin identifying needs for transition. At 16 the team identifies transition services, which would bring transition providers to the IEP table.

Interpreter

Other individuals – The parent can also invite and request other individuals to attend the IEP meeting.

Alternative Participation

IDEA 2004 - for administrative, placement, or IEP meetings:

- “Such as video conferences or conference calls”
- Parents
- School / District Personnel
- By agreement

IDEA 2004 includes new alternatives for participation in administrative placement or IEP meetings.

This provision applies to parents. For example, if a child’s father cannot attend because he is out of town, he could participate by a conference call.

It also applies to school personnel. If the school psychologist was unable to an IEP meeting, he or she could participate by video conference.

All instances of alternative participation must be agreed upon by the Team.

Participating in the IEP

- **Meet as a family to discuss priorities**
- **Write a list of concerns & questions**
- **Organize past copies of documents**
- **Talk to teacher(s) and/or therapist(s)**
- **Consider inviting another family member or a friend to attend the meeting with you.**
- **Share your hopes and dreams**

Meet as a family and **Write a list** – Many families have shared with us the benefits of creating a list of questions or concerns. How many times have you gone to a Doctor’s appointment, and on your way home you realized that there were a couple of questions that you meant to ask?

Organize past copies – Spend some time going over past IEP’s, as well as the most current one, so that the information is fresh. Going over past IEP’s may bring questions to mind. Make sure to write them down.

Talk to teacher(s) – Sometime before the IEP meeting, parents can visit the classroom and discuss priorities or areas of concern with school personnel.

Inviting others – IDEA provides families with the option to invite others who “have knowledge or special expertise about the child.”

Share hopes and dreams.

Participating in the IEP

- **Take notes and/or tape record**
- **Do not agree to what you do not understand**
- **Ask questions**
- **If disagreement occurs, suggest moving to a different area and returning later**
- **Seek solutions and work collaboratively**

Take notes – If the parent needs a recording in order to fully understand and participate in the process, they can request to record, but should make the request to the participants in advance. For example, “My husband won’t be able to be there, and he will need the tape to participate in decision-making.”

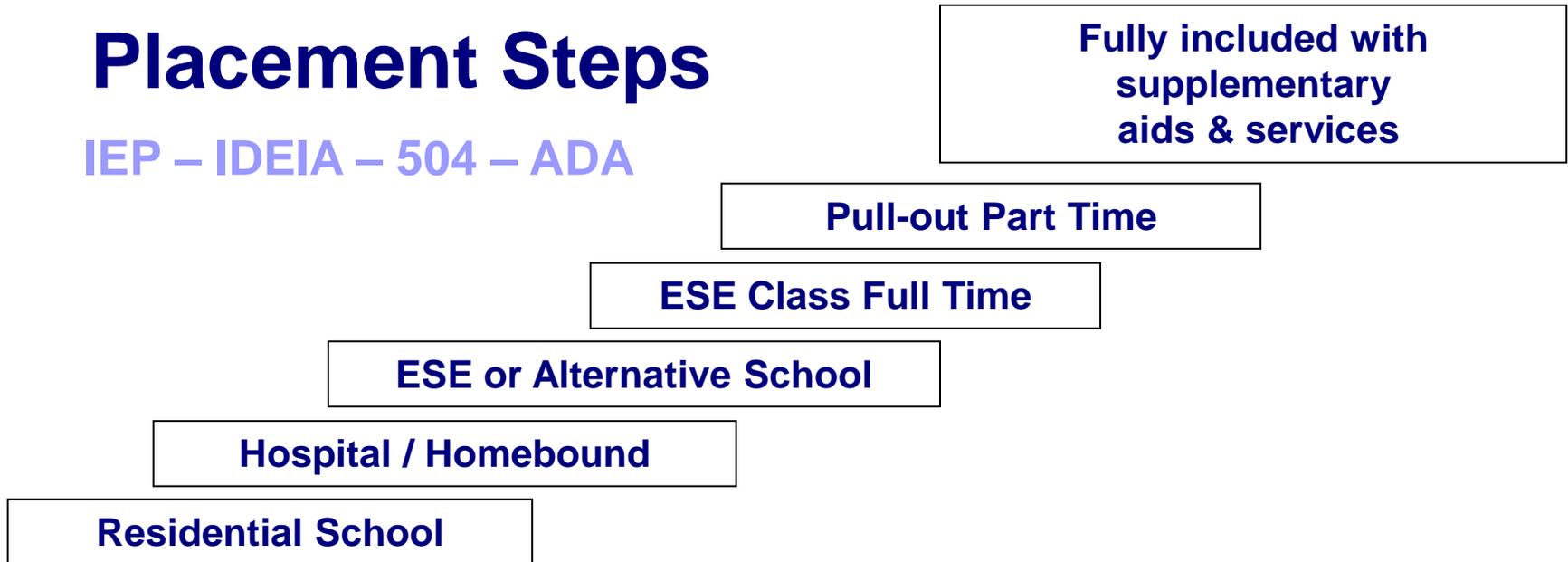
Do not agree and **Ask questions** – Parents are strongly encouraged to ask questions, including those that they identified while they were preparing for the meeting.

If disagreement occurs – Agreed-upon portions of the IEP can be implemented, and areas of disagreement can be revisited at a subsequent meeting.

Seek solutions – The best results for the child are achieved when the team works collaboratively.

Placement Steps

IEP – IDEIA – 504 – ADA



The goal is to provide the child with an appropriate education that is also free. This graphic illustrates that there is a range of available placements.

Since every child is different, it will be the IEP team that determines which placement will be most effective for the child. Notice that the first step is the least restrictive of all the options and the last step is the most restrictive.

Four Elements of a GOOD IEP

- 1. Careful planning
- 2. Clear writing
- 3. Complete understanding
- 4. Ongoing monitoring

The IEP is not ...

- a lesson plan
- a contract for outcomes

The IEP is ...

- legal and binding
- a living document

The IEP is not a contract for outcomes, but...

... it is a legal and binding agreement to provide services.

For example, an IEP does not guarantee that a child's skills will improve, but that the listed services will be provided to support the child in reaching their goals.

The IEP is never "finished". As a child progresses or their needs change, the IEP will be updated and changed.

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For more information please contact:

Family Network on Disabilities

2196 Main St., Suite K

Dunedin, FL 34698

(727) 523-1130

(800) 825-5736

fnd@fndusa.org

www.fndusa.org

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