

Special Education IEP TEAM Meeting Terms and Definitions

From the desk of Liza O'Connell

The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) determines who is eligible for special education services – a student between the ages of 3 and 21 - who has an identified disability which makes the student unable to access the general curriculum without specially designed instruction or related services. It guarantees a “Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)” to those students and prescribes the process for determination of eligibility and services.

Special education eligibility is bound by the IDEA, but under the law, the Individualized Education Programming (IEP) TEAM has the flexibility to determine if a child qualifies for services. To qualify, a child must have a disability that has an adverse effect on a child's educational performance, AND require specialized services in order to progress in school.

The following list contains special education terms, definitions, and acronyms commonly used during the IEP TEAM meeting process.

IEP TEAM Meeting Terms and Definitions

Early Intervention Services (E.I.) - Early Intervention is a process of providing evaluation and services to young children, birth to three years of age, who are found to be at risk given developmental concerns due to biological, medical or environmental factors. The purpose of early intervention is to lessen the effects of a disability or delay and services are designed to identify and meet a child's needs in five developmental areas, including: cognitive development, physical development, social or emotional development, and adaptive development. Early intervention programs and services may occur in a variety of settings, with a heavy emphasis on the "natural environment".

Child Find - Child Find is a component of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that requires states to identify, locate and evaluate all children with disabilities, aged birth to 21, who are in need of early intervention or special education services. The process of identifying children who are at risk is ongoing throughout the year through Preschool Screening and referrals from early Intervention.

Evaluation - To be eligible for special education, a child must be evaluated in accordance with state and federal regulations, determined to have one or more of 13 specific disability categories. Any assessment of a child must include a variety of tests and measures to determine if a child has a disability, is failing to make educational progress and therefore, eligible to receive specialized services.

Re-evaluation - A comprehensive assessment process, required every three years, to measure progress over time and to reconsider eligibility for special education.

Standardized Assessments - Assessment instruments that include precise instruments for administering and scoring, and meet certain validity and reliability criteria.

Independent Evaluation - Parents/guardians have the right to obtain an independent evaluation, separate from the school district, to assess their child. The school district is not obligated to fund these types of evaluations unless there is disagreement between parent and the school based team.

F.A.P.E. - An acronym for a Free and Appropriate Public Education, addressing special education and related services provide at public expense and in conformation with federal and state regulatory requirements to meet the individual educational needs of students with disabilities, in the least restrictive environment.

L.R.E. - An acronym for Least Restrictive Environment, referring to a federal mandate that students with special education needs are offered programs to promote maximum interaction with general education students as close to home as possible, including an educational setting that lets an exceptional student participate as much as possible in the regular classroom while still meeting the student's needs.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP) - A written plan, designed to provide specialized services and interventions to students with identified disabilities.

Amendment - A small change, revision, clarification, and/or addition made to an IEP.

Extended School Year - A summer program for student with special needs whose skills will substantially regress if not extended through the summer months. Skills generally maintained the summer include but are not limited to self-sufficiency, socialization, communication, and academics.

Instructional Objectives - Included on a child's IEP as a means of measuring progress toward a Goal., specifically, objectives include a series or intermediate steps or training activities that will bring a student from his or her current level of functioning to the accomplishment of an annual goal.

Accommodations - Accommodations are adaptations made to a child's learning environment that do NOT substantially change the instructional level, content and performance criteria of the curriculum at hand.

Modifications - Modifications are changes that substantially change the instructional level, including content and performance criteria, that all a student equal access to learning opportunities and equal opportunity to demonstrate knowledge.

