

# ***What is Special Education? An IEP Bootcamp for Parents and Caregivers***

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# Learning Objectives

*In this session, participants will:*

- Understand the Evaluation/Re-Evaluation Process
- Identify the critical components of an IEP
- Develop understanding of Least Restrictive Environment
  - Continuum of Services
  - Placement Decisions
- Learn valuable skills to increase parental involvement in your child's special education planning

# The Secret Language of IEPs

**IDEA- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act-** a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities.

**EDC-**Eligibility Determination Conference

**MDC-**Multidisciplinary Conference

**FAPE-**Free and Appropriate Public Education

**LRE-** Least Restrictive Environment

**Rtl-** Response to Intervention

**PLAAFP-** Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance

**FBA-** Functional Behavioral Assessment

**BIP-** Behavior Intervention Plan

# Steps in the IEP Process

- **Identification**
  - Child Find
  - Request for evaluation
- **Domain Meeting**
  - Determines whether or not the district will proceed with an evaluation.
  - If an evaluation is indicated, determines which assessments will be administered and by whom.
- **Evaluation**
  - Case Study
  - Responsiveness to Intervention (RTI)
  - Multidisciplinary Conference (MDC)/ Eligibility Determination Conference (EDC)

# Referral Process

The *referral* process for special education begins when a parent or staff member asks the school district to evaluate a student to determine if the student qualifies to receive special education services.

The *date of referral* is the date of written parental request for an evaluation. Screening procedures are NOT considered an evaluation.

*Within 14 school days* of receiving a written request, the school district will decide whether or not an evaluation is warranted, then provide parents with paperwork to provide formal written consent or with a letter describing why an evaluation is not warranted.

A request for an evaluation is made by the parent to determine the child's eligibility for special education.

14 school days

**Step 2: Decision to Proceed**  
At this stage, the district meets with the parent to determine whether an evaluation should proceed. If yes, the district needs to determine what domains will be evaluated and will request the parent's consent to do the evaluation.

Timeline does not start until parent signs consent

**Step 3: Consent to Evaluate**

The evaluation cannot proceed until the parent has provided informed written consent for the district to begin the evaluation. Timelines for completing the evaluation do not start until consent has been given by the parent.

**Step 4: Evaluation**

During a period of up to 60 school days, district personnel can take the steps needed to complete the evaluation. If any part of the evaluation has been written in final form, it may be shared with the parent.

60 school days  
(Step 5 must occur by the 60th day)

**Step 5: Eligibility Conference & IEP**

By the end of the 60th school day, the evaluation team must meet with the parent to decide if the child is eligible for special education. If yes, an IEP team must then meet with the parent to develop the IEP for the student.

Initial Placement does not occur until parent signs consent

**Step 6: Consent for Placement**

Before the special education services can begin, the parent must provide written informed consent to allow the district to proceed with the placement. Placement may begin no sooner than 10 days after the parent consents, unless the parent gives permission for it to start sooner.

# Parental Involvement in the Referral Process

***Be an active participant in your child's education by:***

- Contacting your child's teacher if you are concerned about your child's progress in school.
- Taking note of both your child's strengths and needs.
- Participating in discussions or meetings with school personnel to decide if your child is eligible to receive special education services.
- Attending and being prepared to actively participate in the Eligibility Determination Conference (EDC) meetings.

# Parental Involvement in the Referral Process, *continued*

## ***Be an active participant in your child's education by:***

- Asking questions if you do not understand terms, language, or the referral process.
- Sharing letters or reports from doctors or therapists that can help the school consider the needs of your child.
- Starting a file to keep important papers you receive from school regarding your child's progress in school, referencing meetings, or email communications.

# Case Study Evaluation

Once an evaluation is deemed necessary and parents have signed consent, the educational team has 60 days to complete the evaluation and conduct and eligibility conference. This process is also called a domain meeting.

In preparing for an evaluation, the school district must assess the child in all areas of suspected disability including some or all of the following:

- academic achievement
- cognitive/intellectual functioning
- health
- vision/hearing
- social and emotional status
- communication
- functional performance
- motor abilities

All testing must be completed by qualified professionals, using a variety of reliable and valid testing measures which may include standardized testing, interviews, observations and checklists.

# Who's around the table?

Parents (may bring others with knowledge or expertise about the child, or an advocate)

Special Education Teacher

General Education Teacher

School Psychologist

Any professional who conducted evaluations

District Representative (LEA-Local Educational Authority)

Student (if appropriate-must be invited if 14.5 years or older)

Parents must agree in writing to dismiss a member of a team



# Eligibility Determination Conference (EDC)

The eligibility conference is a meeting wherein the results of all of the evaluation components are discussed to determine special education eligibility as determined by IDEA.

For a child to be eligible for special education services, the disability **MUST** have an adverse effect on the child's educational performance. Students may qualify under more than one category.

The category of disability alone does determine where a student will go to school and what kind of services they need.

# Meaningful Parent Participation during the EDC Meeting

## Share your:

- child's strengths, interests and needs
- vision for your child's future (transition planning)
- perspective as the foremost "expert" on your child
- **Ask questions to understand others' perspectives and listen to their answers**
- **Ask teammates for input and insight based upon their areas of expertise**



# What to expect at an Eligibility Determination Conference (EDC)

- Parents will receive draft copies of all evaluation reports prior to the meeting
  - Expect the meeting to last 1.5 to 2 hours
  - Team reviews evaluation reports
  - Areas of need and strength are identified
  - Team determines if the student is eligible for special education services
  - The disability must have an educational impact
  - If child is eligible, an IEP is developed
  - If child is not eligible, the district must justify their refusal.

# Eligibility Categories (as determined by IDEA)

- Autism
- Cognitive Disability (Intellectual Disability)
- Deaf-Blindness
- Deafness
- Hearing Impairment
- Developmental Delay (aged 3-9 years old)
- Emotional Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impaired
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment

# Initial Consent for Special Education

Initial consent is required to provide special education services. This is called the Initial Provision of Special Education Services.

After ***initial*** eligibility is determined, parents must provide written consent to allow the school district to provide special education supports and services to their child as determined by the team on the new IEP.

- Only one parent signature is required (depends of JPA)
- A lack of consent means that NO special education services are provided and the child is not eligible for special education
- This is ONLY time that a parent must agree and sign off on services
- At any other IEP meeting, parents have 10 days to either:
  - Call another IEP meeting
  - File for Due Process

When the sun sets on the 10th day, ( if no other action is taken) the IEP shall rise like a Phoenix and shall become law!

Goal of every IEP meeting is for schools and parents to collaborate in order to use data to make appropriate educational decisions for children.



# **Meaningful Parent Participation:**

## ***Preparing for an IEP Meeting***

- Review the most recent IEP, progress reports, work samples, and other school records
- Review drafted goals and present levels of functioning prior to meeting
- Prepare to share ideas for drafted goals based on present level of performance and your vision for your child
- Discuss what information will be shared at the meeting with your spouse or child's mother/father/guardian
- Inquire with your child's school how long they have scheduled the IEP team meeting

# Next Step...*The IEP*

A written plan that guides the delivery of special education and related services for a child with a disability.

An IEP is a right that is granted by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

## An IEP:

Is developed at least annually and is designed *collaboratively* by a multidisciplinary *team* that includes parental input. Is predicated on assessment data that determines:

- Eligibility
- Services
- Contains measurable goals and objectives that related to the Common Core and State Learning Standards.
- Secures your child's rights under IDEA.
- Must convey an educational benefit.

**An IEP is NOT a parent/teacher conference!**

# Major Components of an Individual Education Plan

An IEP MUST contain:

- Parental input
- Present Levels of Performance
- How disability impacts performance
  - Data
  - Discrepancy from peers (RTI)

Annual goals

- Correlate to standards
- Academic and functional
- *SMART*
  - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely

## Major Components of an Individual Education Plan (cont'd)

- Objectives and benchmarks
- How and when progress will be measured.
- Goals drive placement
- Special education services
  - Type
  - Minutes
- Related Services
  - Type
  - Minutes
  - Supplementary aids and services

# Transition Planning

- IEP must include a transition plan for all students ages 14 1/2 and older.
- Postsecondary goals
  - Strengths
  - Preferences
  - Interests
- Vocational and Postsecondary Assessment
- Coordinated Transition services
  - Instruction
  - related services
  - participation in the community
- Development of employment and other post-secondary life goals
  - Acquisition of daily living skills
- Referral to postsecondary agencies for housing, day program, employment

# Related Services

- ★ Social Work/Counseling
- ★ Speech and Language
- ★ Occupational Therapy
- ★ Physical Therapy
- ★ Adaptive PE
- ★ Assistive Technology
- ★ Nursing/Health Services
- ★ Others as determined by the team



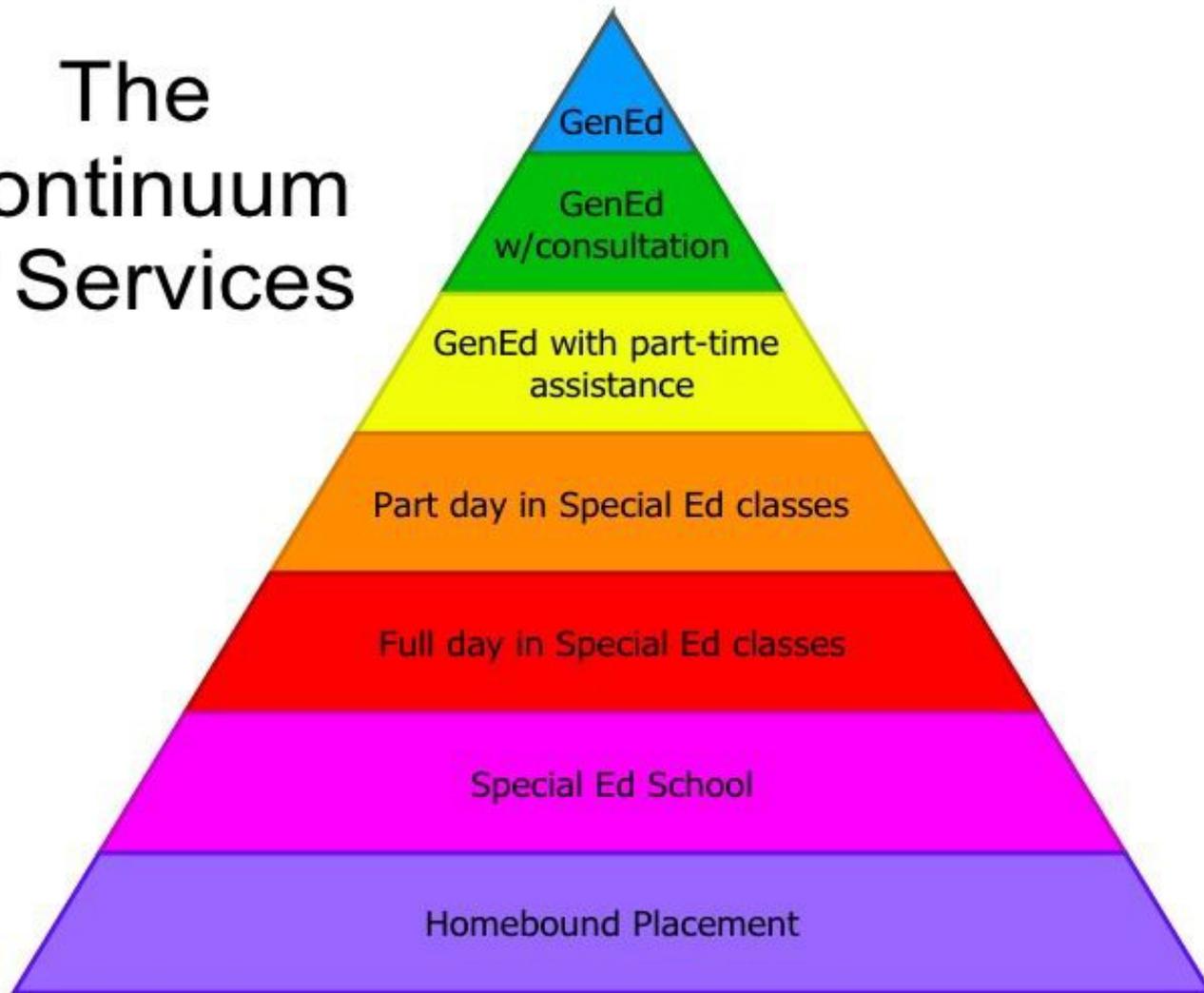
# Special Education Placement

Special Education is NOT a place,  
classroom or school

Special education is the practice of  
educating students with qualifying  
disabilities with individualized instruction  
based on specific deficits in their Least  
Restrictive Environment.



# The Continuum of Services



# **Meaningful Parent Participation:**

## ***After an IEP Meeting***

- Get to know the names and responsibilities of all those working with your child.
- Develop an ongoing working relationship with those persons who are responsible for providing services to your child. Get to know the names and responsibilities of all those working with your child.
- Ask for and provide communication that is both positive information as well as expresses any concerns.

# Parental Rights

- Request an evaluation for special education services.

- Note: RTI cannot be used as an excuse to refuse or delay an evaluation.

- Have all parental concerns listed in the IEP.

- Request a new IEP meeting be held within 30 days of written request, when an IEP is already in place.

- Participate in the IEP meeting and have opinions heard and noted.

- Bring any person with knowledge or expertise to the IEP meeting.

- Bring an advocate to the IEP meeting.

- Review and receive copies of the child's educational records.

# Parental Rights, *continued*

- Consent, refuse to consent, or revoke consent for special education services.

- Receive prior written notice when the school district proposes a change in placement or refuses a parent's request.

- Ask for an independent educational evaluation at district expense when they disagree with the district's

assessment. (However, the district is not obligated to provide one)

- File complaints

- File for Due Process

  - File in writing

  - Specific timelines

  - Resolution Process and Mediation

  - Stay put

  - Hearing

  - Attorney

Rights should be given to parents at every IEP meeting

# Special Education Forms that Require Parent Signature & Purpose

Form	Purpose
Notice of Conference Recommendation Form	Summarizes and notifies the parent/guardian of any recommendations made at the conference(s).
Consent for Initial Provision of Special Education and Related Services	Used to obtain a parent/guardian's voluntary written consent when a student has been determined eligible for special education and related services, an IEP has been developed, and the student has been recommended for initial special education services.
Excusal of an Individualized Education Program Team Member	Provides the written documentation for the excusal of one of the required team members.
Notification of Transfer of Rights Due to Age of Majority	Provides the parent/guardian and student notice of the transfer of rights when the student reaches the age of majority (18 years of age).
Conference Summary Report (Sign-In)	Provides purpose of meeting, summary of student information (i.e. name, grade, disability, etc), and serves as an attendance/sign-in for meeting participants
Eligibility Determination Form (Specific Learning Disability)	Provides the parent/guardian with criteria to determine that a student is eligible for special education under the specific learning disability category.

# Seven Norms of Collaboration

- 1) Pausing
- 2) Paraphrasing
- 3) Inquiry
- 4) Probing
- 5) Ideas on the table
- 6) Paying attention
- 7) Presuming positive intentions

R. Garmston & B. Wellman. (2009). *The Adaptive School: A Sourcebook for Developing Collaborative Groups* (pp. 31-38) Massachusetts: Christopher-Gordon Publishers

# Meaningful Parent Participation Tips

- Remain professional and rational
- Take a break if necessary
- Request to reconvene on another date if necessary
- Disagreement happens, even with the most collaborative teams.

*Strive to resolve your disagreements through open dialogue.*

# Resources:

## **Illinois State Board of Education**

<http://www.isbe.net/spec-ed/html/parents.htm>

## **One Place for Special Needs**

<http://www.oneplaceforspecialneeds.com/>

## **Disability Scoop**

<https://www.disabilityscoop.com/>

## **Illinois Council for Exceptional Children**

<http://illinoiscec.org/>