

Help Me Understand My IEP!

A Guide for Students



Phone: (907) 565-1002

Email: akpa@dlcak.org

www.dlcak.org

What is an IEP?

IEP stands for **individualized education plan (IEP)**. It helps students who learn differently because of a disability reach their goals. Some students need a little extra help with reading, writing, listening, or other things – and the IEP tells your teachers how to help you. Your IEP makes sure you get the help you need at school.

Why do I need an IEP?

You may need an IEP for different reasons.

1. **IT'S THE LAW!** The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) makes sure that students with disabilities get the special education services they need to be successful. Everybody deserves to learn.
2. You have a disability that affects how you learn. Some examples of a disability that might affect your learning are ADHD, autism, learning disability, blindness, etc. Each person is unique, just like your disability so this is different for each person.
3. You need special supports to learn and to be successful in school.

What is an IEP meeting?

An IEP meeting is all about you. This is when people who support you at school come together to talk about how you are doing and how to help you learn better. This meeting is not about you getting in trouble, it's a meeting to make sure you are getting the right support so you can do your best.

Your IEP team meets at least once a year to update your IEP.

Who is on my team?

Your IEP team is made up of people that care about your success at school. Your team will include:

- YOU – Your voice is important. If you are in middle or high school, you should be invited to your IEP meeting.
- Your Parents or Guardians
- At least one of your General Education teachers
- At least one of your Special Education teachers
- A School Representative – This could be a principal, a case manager, or somebody from the district.

- Some other people that might be there, if they are needed:
 - School Psychologist
 - Speech Therapist – if you get help with speech or language
 - Occupational Therapist – if you get occupational therapy
 - Physical Therapist – if you get physical therapy
 - Interpreter – if your family speaks a different language
 - Anybody else your family invites

What are the different parts of my IEP?

1. **Present Levels of Performance** - This section talks about how you are doing right now in school. It will include things you are good at and other things that may be difficult for you.
2. **Accommodations and Modifications** – This is where your teachers can read about things that help you learn better. This section includes how the school and teachers can adapt, adjust, or change the environment, instruction, or services for you so that your disability does not affect your learning. Some examples are using a calculator, extended time on assignments, sitting in a quiet spot, shortened assignments, etc. These are all based on your special needs.
3. **Annual Goals** – These are things that you are working on this year. Goals will be in areas where you need extra support. Teachers and other school staff members will help you reach your goals.
4. **Transition Plan** – If you are 16 years old or older, you and your teachers will talk about what your plans are after you finish high school. This includes college, trade school, jobs, or learning to live on your own.
5. **Services** – These are the special help or teaching that you get. These services may be from a special education teacher, a general education teacher, or a paraprofessional. It also says where and how often you will receive the extra help.
6. **Related Services** – This area includes special supports that you might need. Not everyone has related services. These services include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, blind/vision services, etc.

What if the school is not following my IEP?

If you are not getting the help you are supposed to – it's OKAY TO SPEAK UP. Here are some ideas of what you can do:

1. Talk to a trusted adult. This can be a teacher, a counselor, your parent or guardian, or anybody else that you trust. You can say something like:

“I’m supposed to get _____ in my IEP, but it’s not happening.”

2. Ask to talk about your IEP. This is called an IEP Meeting or Amendment. You can ask a trusted adult to help set this up for you.
3. Keep speaking up. You can respectfully remind people about what’s in your plan. Remember this is a **LEGAL DOCUMENT**. This means that schools must follow your IEP.

Why should I care about my IEP?

It is important that your voice is heard. The more you understand about your IEP, the more power you have over your own education. It is the school’s legal responsibility to make sure you get the support you need to be successful at school.

You can be your own **self-advocate**. This is a skill you will need your whole life. Being a self-advocate means speaking up for yourself and letting people know what works best for you and what doesn’t work for you.

Terms to Know

TERM	DEFINTION
Accommodations	Changes that make learning easier for you without changing what you are expected to learn.
Advocate	A person who speaks up to make sure you get the help and support you need.
Annual Goals	Things you are working on in your IEP with the help of teachers and other staff members.
FAPE	Free and Appropriate Education – The legal right for you to get a free education that fits your needs.
General Education Classroom	A regular classroom where all students learn together.
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Act – The law that says students with disabilities have the right to special education and services so they can learn and grow like everyone else.
IEP	Individualized Education Plan – This is a plan made just for you that explains the help you need at school to accomplish your learning goals. This is a legal document.
IEP Meeting	A meeting with your IEP team to talk about your needs and update your IEP. You will have at least one IEP meeting per year.
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	The idea that you should be in the General Education Classroom as much as possible with the right supports.
Modifications	Changes to what you are expected to learn or do in school.

Progress Reports	Updates on how you are doing on your Annual Goals. You will receive progress reports four times a year.
Related Services	These services include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, and other specialized services.
Self-Advocate	When you respectfully speak up for yourself and let others know what works best for you in school.
Special Education Classroom	A smaller class with extra support and is taught by a special education teacher.
Transition Plan	A part of your IEP that helps you get ready for life after high school.