PARENT INFORMATION SERIES
Special Education Services in Maryland:
The Individualized Education Program (IEP)
INTRODUCTION

A Parent’s Guide to Special Education Services in Maryland is part of Maryland’s Birth through 21 Parent Information Series, a collection of publications designed to support families in the special education system of services in Maryland. This booklet will discuss each section of the IEP and help families to fully participate in the process to develop, review, and revise their child’s IEP.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Parent Participation In The Special Education Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>What the Law States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Individualized Education Program (IEP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>A Checklist for Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>What If I Have Questions or Need Help?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information visit us at [www.marylandpublicschools.org](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org)
Parent involvement in their child’s education leads to greater success. This is especially important when it comes to children who are eligible for special education. Special education can be more effective when parents have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children, work collaboratively and partner with the school.

The drafters of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the law that governs special education, wrote “that education of children with disabilities can be more effective by... strengthening the role and responsibility of parents and ensuring that families... have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home” (PL 108-446 (5)(B)). It is important that parents and families are active partners in the education of their children.

Throughout the special education process, parents are required members of the team that makes decisions about the education of their child. Parents know their child best and have valuable information to share with other members of their child’s team.

The team will work together to develop a program designed to meet “the unique needs of the student” and help them to be successful in the school setting.
An IEP is a written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting in accordance with 34 CFR §§300.320-300.324, and that must include:

- A statement of the child’s present levels of academic achievement and functional performance;
- A statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals;
- A description of how the child’s progress toward meeting the annual goals will be measured and when periodic reports on the progress the child is making toward meeting the annual goals will be provided;
- 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 that will be provided;
- An explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular class and why;
- A statement of individual appropriate accommodations;
- If the IEP team determines the child will participate in the alternate assessment instead of the regular assessment, a statement of why the assessment is appropriate for the child;
- Transition services updated annually beginning at age 14; and
- Statement of transfer of rights at the age of majority.

WHO IS A PARENT? 34 CFR §300.30

Parent means

- A biological or adoptive parent of a child;
- A foster parent, unless State law, regulations, or contractual obligations with a State or local entity prohibit a foster parent from acting as a parent;
- A guardian generally authorized to act as the child’s parent. Or authorized to make educational decisions for the child (but not the State if the child is a ward of the State);
- A guardian generally authorized to act as the child’s parent. Or authorized to make educational decisions for the child (but not the State if the child is a ward of the State);
- An individual acting in the place of a biological or adoptive parent (including a grandparent, stepparent, or other relative) with whom the child lives, or an individual who is responsible for the child’s welfare; or
- A surrogate parent who has been appointed in accordance with §300.519 or section 639(a)(5) of the Act.
The Individualized Education Program (IEP)

The Maryland online IEP (MOIEP) is a constantly evolving tool for Local Education and Public Agencies to use to ensure consistency in implementation with federal and state regulations. Input from community partners and experts in the field is sought when making improvements to the forms. Every effort is made to make the IEP family friendly first and foremost!

THE IEP SECTION BY SECTION

Student and Family Information

It is critical that the information on this page is accurate. Parents should review it carefully and make sure that their address, email, and telephone number are accurate. The information often comes from other databases within the school system and may require a whole systems update.

The Individualized Education Program (IEP)
Eligibility Information

The next section focuses on your child’s initial and continued eligibility for special education services. Dates for initial consent for evaluation, initial eligibility, eligibility category, and the basis for that decision is part of this section. Your child’s eligibility category may change with re-evaluation.

Participation In District/Statewide Assessments and Graduation Information

Students may graduate with a high school diploma or a certificate of program completion. Graduation requirements must be explained to parents yearly as a part of the IEP process. This is important because the type of state assessment the student participates in each year will inform whether they will meet certain graduation requirements. Parental consent is required if the IEP team has determined a student will participate in a state assessment that makes it unlikely for a student to earn a diploma (known as the Alternate Assessment). For more information about this topic, refer to Technical Assistance Bulletins 19-07, Improving Outcomes for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities and 17-02, Parental Consent Under Maryland Law.
Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP): Part I

The Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) is the foundation for the entire IEP. You must know where the student is to know where you want them to go. This section of the IEP contains multiple sources of data depending on the area reflected. There should be a section for each area of impact, including health, academics, social/emotional, behavior, motor, communication, transition, and any other area that will need to be worked on during the school day. Each area of impact will be addressed by a goal, supplementary aid and service, or accommodation on the IEP, except for a health PLAAFP, which may be addressed through a Health Plan, services, or be informational as the health condition may impact the student during the school day but it isn’t regularly addressed in the school setting. Academic PLAAFPs must include a student’s grade level performance in all areas of reading, mathematics, and written language.

Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance: Part II

There are three parts to this section: (1) parental input; (2) student’s strengths, interests, personal accomplishments, and attributes outside of the school setting; and (3) the impact statement. Parental input is often provided before the meeting, in writing, and should be reviewed during the meeting. Parents also provide input during the meeting. This should also be captured in this section.

It is important that the IEP team members know something about your child outside of academics. For example, what do they do outside of school? Have they won any awards? Do they follow a specific sports team? Do they have any strong interests that can guide transition activities? All of this can be used for motivation, but also to get to know your child and develop a relationship with them.

The impact statement is an important part of the IEP. The impact statement should be comprehensive and link the data in the PLAAFP to how the student’s disability is affecting them in the classroom. For example, if a student has difficulty with math calculation, it may impact their ability to calculate math facts accurately in math class and perhaps chemistry and physics.
Secondary Transition Services

From the day a child begins school they are preparing for the next stage. Whether it is for college, career, or community, everything the student learns from the beginning of their school career prepares them for what path they will take and how they will contribute when they transition from school. In Maryland, the formal transition process begins at age 14. The IEP includes several sections dedicated to secondary transition; Student Preferences/Interests/Skills, Transition Activities, Course of Study, Agency Linkages. Please refer to the Family Guide for Secondary Transition for more detailed information.

Special Considerations

The Special Considerations section documents several critical components of your child’s educational program:

- Communication needs;
- Assistive Technology needs;
- Services for students who are blind or visually impaired;
- Services for students who are deaf or hearing impaired;
- Behavioral needs, including the use of restraint or seclusion; and
- Services for students who are English Learners.

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<td>(If yes, describe the specific needs.)</td>
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<th>Req</th>
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<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>No</td>
<td>Additional data:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ The student requires AT device(s) and requires AT service(s).</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Services may address other needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ The student requires AT device(s) but does not require AT service(s).</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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Instructional and Assessment Accessibility Features

This section of the IEP has several subsections. First, there are accessibility features, which are available to ALL students. For students with an IEP, however, if the features are part of their IEP they must be provided, not just be available. Therefore, the IEP team must consider each one and determine whether they are a required component of the student’s educational program. Some accessibility features must be identified in advance to prepare the student and staff.

The next subsection contains presentation accommodations that can only be used for students with IEPs or Section 504 Plans. These accommodations must be supported by needs reflected in the student’s PLAAFP, and are used during instruction, classroom assessments, and on state assessments.

The next subsection contains response accommodations that can only be used for students with IEPs or Section 504 Plans. Some of these accommodations have strict requirements as to when they can be included on an IEP. For example, a calculation device on a calculation section of an assessment, or a human reader on a literacy assessment. These accommodations must be supported by needs reflected in the student’s PLAAFP, and used during instruction, classroom assessments, and on state assessments.

The final subsection contains timing accommodations. These accommodations must be also supported by needs reflected in the student’s PLAAFP, and used during instruction, classroom assessments, and on state assessments.

Some of the wording of the accommodations may not be clear or mean exactly what you would think. Ask for an explanation to be sure.

Remember: These supports should be used both during instruction and assessments.
Supplementary Aids, Services, Program Modifications And Supports

This section of the IEP includes essential components of specialized instruction. Here is where instruction is modified to meet the unique needs of your student. The supports in this section include:

- Instructional supports;
- Program Modifications;
- Social/Behavioral Supports;
- Physical/Environmental Supports; and
- School Personnel/Parental Supports.

For each supplementary aid, service, program modification, and support, the team must identify the location and a description of the manner in which each will be implemented. Additional information is required for the School Personnel/Parental Supports section.

This section also requires that the team determine the frequency of the implementation, the providers, and the duration of the supports.

"When parents share their vision statement it allows them the opportunity to share personal information about the child’s hopes for the future. This information provides valuable insight and allows the IEP team to see that student as more than a diagnosis or label."

Wendy Taylor
Extended School Year

Not all students are eligible for Extended School Year (ESY) services. ESY is not summer school and students do not receive credits during ESY services. Students who are eligible for ESY are those that will have their progress during the next school year jeopardized because of the significant regression over breaks that occurred during the current school year and the length of time it took the student to return to where they were before the break. Eligibility for ESY is a data driven decision. The IEP team will determine whether your student is eligible for services. The goal of ESY is to maintain skills, not to advance them, so that when the next school year begins, the student is able to build on their current skills.

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**Extended School Year (ESY)**

The IEP team should determine if any of the factors below will significantly jeopardize the student’s ability to receive some benefit from the student’s educational program during the regular school year. If the student does not receive ESY services, ESY services are the individualized extension of specific special education and related services that are provided beyond the normal school year of the public agency, in accordance with the IEP, at no cost to the parents.

☐ ESY Decision Deferred

When considering ESY, answer YES or NO and document the decision:

1. Does the student’s IEP include annual goals related to critical life skills?  ☐ YES  ☐ NO
   Discussion to support decision: _____________________________

2a. Is there a likely chance of substantial regression of critical life skills caused by the normal school break and a failure to recover those lost skills in a time?  ☐ YES  ☐ NO
   Discussion to support decision: _____________________________

2b. Is the student demonstrating a degree of progress toward mastery of IEP goals related to critical life skills?  ☐ YES  ☐ NO
   Discussion to support decision: _____________________________

2. Is there a presence of emerging skills or breakthrough opportunities?  ☐ YES  ☐ NO
   Discussion to support decision: _____________________________

3. Are there significant interfering behaviors?  ☐ YES  ☐ NO
   Discussion to support decision: _____________________________

Eligibility for Extended School Year services is a data driven decision made by the IEP team.
Annual Goals

Annual goals are based on the student need areas identified in the PLAAFP. Goals are priority areas that enable the student to narrow the gap between their performance and grade level standards. Goals are individualized and include 5 component parts: (1) the conditions under which the goal will be implemented and measured; (2) the measurable action or behavior; (3) the timeframe the goals will be worked on; (4) the method of measurement; and (5) the criteria to demonstrate mastery. Each goal will include a set of objectives that also include these components. The IEP team will also determine how frequently progress on the annual goals will be reported to the family. If the student is not making sufficient progress to achieve the goal within the marking period, the IEP team must meet to discuss what factors are impacting the student’s progress and make the necessary adjustments to the goal or the student’s educational program, as appropriate. Progress on objectives is important, however, it is only progress on annual goals that is reported to the family.

IEP teams should have high expectations for the student and create goals that are ambitious and challenging enough for the student to make meaningful progress.
The specially designed instruction and related services your student receives are guided by their PLAAFPs.

**Services**

The team will determine the services your student needs, including specially designed instruction and related services, to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Services can be provided inside of the general education setting or in a separate setting. The team will also decide who will provide those services, whether it is a special educator, general educator, instructional assistant, related service provider another individual, or a combination of staff members, and the duration of the services.

**Least Restrictive Environment**

One of the mandates of the IDEA is for students to be educated with their nondisabled peers to the greatest extent possible. This is called being in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Research has shown that there are many benefits to all students by being educated in an inclusive setting. The benefits can be social, academic, emotional, physical, behavioral, and have other positive effects. Inclusion helps all students grow. If the IEP team determines that a student must be removed from the general education setting for any amount of time, they must justify that decision and consider the potential harm to the student from the removal. The basis for the decision to remove the student from the general education setting is guided by the student’s needs as reflected in the PLAAFP.

The MSDE supports the full continuum of learning environments to meet the individual needs of all students. If you need assistance in understanding any part of your student’s IEP, contact the Family Support Team at 410-767-0255.
Glossary of Terms

Accessibility Features
Supports that are available to all students during instruction and assessment, but when included on an IEP must be provided for the student.

Extended School Year (ESY)
Services offered beyond the regular school year or day that enable the student to maintain skills and prevent significant regression that will jeopardize their progress for the upcoming school year.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
Children eligible for special education are entitled to a Free Appropriate Public Education. That means services and supports that meet their unique needs that are provided free of charge.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)
This is a written plan that outlines the services and specialized instruction the child will receive.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
Pertains to the extent to which the student will be educated with their nondisabled peers.

Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)
The building blocks of the IEP. Data collected from multiple sources that reflect the student’s strengths and needs that will guide their educational program.

Special Education
Specially designed instruction and related services that are designed to meet the unique needs of the student.
CAN YOU ANSWER “YES” TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS?
Understanding Maryland’s IEP process is critical to the partnership you will have with your student’s school. If you cannot answer “yes” to any one of the questions below, your student’s case manager or Local Family Support Services Coordinator can help!

The Special Education Process
- Do I understand the special education process in Maryland—including referral, evaluation, IEP development, progress reporting, annual review, timelines, parental rights/procedural safeguards?
- Do I understand the evaluation process and how eligibility is determined?
- Do I understand my role in the evaluation process?
- Did I know that I can share my concerns and priorities in planning for my child’s evaluation?
- Do I understand that I have to provide written consent for the evaluation?
- After the evaluation process, do I understand my role in developing the IEP?
- Do I understand why my child is eligible for and how my child can benefit from special education and related services?
- If my child was found NOT eligible for special education services, do I understand why?
- If my child was found NOT eligible for special education services, do I know what other resources may be available to my child, if needed?

The Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Do I understand the purpose of the IEP?
- Do I understand my role on the IEP team?
- Do I know the timelines for completing and reviewing the IEP? Do I understand I can request an IEP review at any time?
Do I understand the IEP goals for my child, and the specially designed instruction and services that will be used to achieve the goals?

Do I understand how the goals can help prepare my child become college, community, and career ready?

Do I know when the services will begin, how often and where they will be provided, and for how long?

Do I understand that I have to provide written consent on the initial IEP for services to begin?

Do I know that I can decline all IEP services?

Do I know how progress will be determined?

Parental Involvement: Participating Fully in the IEP Process

If I need information shared in my native language or through a mode of communication such as sign language, has the local IEP team met my need?

Do I understand how I can help my child to learn by collaborating with the school?

Do I know what to do if I have a concern about my child’s educational program?

Do I know about advocacy and family support programs and how to access them?

Do I know how educational information is shared and how my child’s records are kept confidential?

Do I save documents and notes that are important to my child’s educational program? Documents that include:

- Current and past IEPs
- Medical evaluation reports
- Evaluation reports
- Parental Rights/Procedural Safeguards Notice
- Signed release of information forms
- Notes from teachers
- Communications from service providers
- Notes from IEP team meetings
- Notes from telephone conversations

Do I know that Maryland has a statewide network of Family Support Services (FSS) coordinators? FSS coordinators are available to assist families of children with disabilities by:

- Answering questions about early intervention and special education services
- Supporting families in planning for transition
- Providing more information about resolving disagreements
**What if I Have Questions or Need Help?**

**LOCAL FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES COORDINATORS**

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<tr>
<th>LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM</th>
<th>AGES BIRTH TO 5</th>
<th>AGES 5 TO 21</th>
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<td>Allegany</td>
<td>240-920-6829</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anne Arundel</td>
<td>410-424-3270</td>
<td>410-424-3258</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baltimore City</td>
<td>410-396-1666</td>
<td>443-642-3848</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baltimore County</td>
<td>443-809-9696</td>
<td>443-809-5443</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calvert</td>
<td>443-550-8406</td>
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<td>Caroline</td>
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<td>Charles</td>
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<td>Somerset</td>
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<td>Maryland State Department of Education</td>
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