

Making Sense of IEP Acronyms and Terms

IEP meetings can feel like learning a new language while making important decisions about your child. This guide explains common acronyms and terms so you can follow the conversation, ask questions, and participate with confidence.



THE LAWS AND YOUR CHILD'S RIGHTS

504	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act A disability civil rights law. A 504 plan documents supports and services a student needs for access to education.
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education The education and services an eligible child must receive to meet their needs, at no cost to the family.
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act The federal law covering student education records, including rights to access records and protections for their privacy.
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act The federal law governing special education and related services for eligible children.
IEP	Individualized Education Program Your child's written plan for special education, goals, services, and supports.
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment Educating a child alongside peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate, with needed supports.

INSIDE YOUR CHILD'S IEP

AT	Assistive Technology Devices and services that support your child's functioning, access, and participation.
ESY	Extended School Year Special education and related services beyond the usual school year when needed to provide FAPE.
PLAAFP	Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance Your child's current skills, strengths, needs, and how their disability affects learning and participation.
RS	Related Services Services, such as therapies or transportation, needed to help your child benefit from special education.
SAS	Supplementary Aids and Services Extra supports that help your child learn and participate alongside peers without disabilities.
SDI	Specially Designed Instruction Teaching adapted in its content, methods, or delivery to meet your child's unique needs.

You may also see PLP or PLOP used for "present levels." Your district may use different abbreviations for the same part of the IEP.

EVALUATIONS DECISIONS AND PARENT RIGHTS

IEE	Independent Educational Evaluation An evaluation by a qualified professional outside the school system. Parents who disagree with a school evaluation may request one at public expense, subject to IDEA rules.
LEA	Local Educational Agency Usually the school district responsible for providing educational services.
PSN	Procedural Safeguards Notice A document explaining special education rights and options for resolving disagreements.
PWN	Prior Written Notice The school's written explanation when it proposes or refuses certain changes involving identification, evaluation, placement, or FAPE.
SEA	State Educational Agency The state agency responsible for education. In Colorado, this is CDE.

Helpful question: "Can you explain the decision, the information used to make it, and where I can find it in writing?"

LEARNING AND BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS

BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan A plan describing strategies to prevent difficulties, teach skills, and guide adults' responses to behavior.
FBA	Functional Behavioral Assessment An assessment that looks at what happens before and after a behavior and what purpose it may serve.
MDR	Manifestation Determination Review A review required for certain disciplinary changes in placement to determine whether behavior was connected to the child's disability or a failure to implement the IEP.
MTSS	Multi-Tiered System of Supports A school framework that provides different levels of academic and behavioral support and tracks how students respond.
PBIS	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports A framework for teaching and supporting behavior at schoolwide, group, and individual levels.
RTI	Response to Intervention An approach that provides targeted instruction and monitors progress to understand what support a student needs.

Important: RTI cannot be used to delay or deny an evaluation when a child is suspected of having a disability.

SERVICES COMMUNICATION AND SPECIALISTS

AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication Ways to support or replace speech, including gestures, signs, picture boards, and communication devices.
O&M	Orientation and Mobility Instruction that helps students with visual impairments navigate safely and independently.
OT	Occupational Therapy Supports participation in school activities, such as writing, using materials, and daily routines.
PT	Physical Therapy Supports movement, mobility, and physical access at school.
SLP	Speech-Language Pathologist A professional who evaluates and supports speech, language, and communication.
TVI	Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments A specialist who supports access to learning for students with visual impairments.

School services are based on what a child needs to access education and benefit from special education. They may differ from services received outside school.

EARLY INTERVENTION AND PLANNING AHEAD

EI	Early Intervention Developmental services for eligible infants and toddlers and their families, generally from birth through age 2 under IDEA.
IFSP	Individualized Family Service Plan The written plan guiding early intervention services, including child and family outcomes.
SOP	Summary of Performance A summary of academic achievement and functional performance, with recommendations, provided when IDEA eligibility ends because of graduation with a regular diploma or reaching the age limit.

Transition services help students prepare for life after high school, including further education, employment, and independent living when appropriate.

ELIGIBILITY CATEGORIES

ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder.
DB	Deaf-Blindness
DD	Developmental Delay. Age limits vary by state.
ED/SED	Emotional Disturbance / Serious Emotional Disability. Terminology varies by state.
HI/DHH	Hearing Impairment, including deafness / Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Terminology varies.
ID	Intellectual Disability
MD	Multiple Disabilities
OHI	Other Health Impairment
OI	Orthopedic Impairment
SLD	Specific Learning Disability
SLI	Speech or Language Impairment
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
VI	Visual Impairment, including blindness

A medical diagnosis and school eligibility are different determinations. An IEP should address the child's identified educational needs, including needs that are not typically associated with their eligibility category.

IMPORTANT TERMS

ACCOMMODATIONS:

Change how a student accesses information or shows learning, without changing the learning expectations. Examples include extra time or accessible materials.

ANNUAL GOALS:

Measurable skills the IEP is designed to help your child build over the year.

CHILD FIND:

The school system's responsibility to identify, locate, and evaluate children who may have disabilities and need special education.

MODIFICATIONS:

Change what a student is expected to learn or demonstrate, such as changing the complexity of an assignment.

PLACEMENT:

Your child's educational setting and arrangement for receiving services. It involves more than the name of a school or classroom.

PROGRESS MONITORING:

Collecting information to check whether your child is making progress and whether supports need to change.

REEVALUATION:

A review of your child's needs and continued eligibility that may include existing information and new assessments.