



School-Based Services

What are school-based services?

There are different levels of intervention that a teacher and school can provide to your child.

1. Informal plan.
2. Response to intervention (RTI). A teacher in a regular classroom can make a plan with you about how to help your child learn. This kind of informal plan is between just you and the teacher and is not overseen by anyone. This can be a good option if your child has only a few special educational needs or if your teacher is very motivated. If an informal plan is not working or anytime you or your child's teacher is worried, you can request a more formal way of getting extra help.
3. Section 504 plan. This is a more structured plan of extra help provided *in the regular classroom*, like special seating or extra time for tests. It is known as a Section 504 plan after the federal law that is in place. The Committee on Special Education (CSE) decides on a plan that uses school-supported resources.
4. Individualized Education Program (IEP). This is a more comprehensive plan for children who need help *outside of a regular classroom* (like in a resource room or a special education classroom). Individualized Education Programs are required for children in special education.

How can my child get an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

To get a Section 504 plan or an IEP for your child, you or a teacher at your child's school must make a written request. Your pediatrician can help you make this request by getting together information about your child or by helping you write a letter.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is covered by Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which gives funding to schools to make IEPs for children with disabilities. If a child has ASD and it affects his functioning in school, he may qualify for school-based services. The school team and the family need to agree on what services your child should get in the IEP. Some children with ASD have fewer academic needs, and school districts may want the child to have a Section 504 plan instead of an IEP.

What services will my child get in the IEP?

A team of specialists in the school district will test your child to see which services might help her. If your child has enough delays in learning, she will be eligible for an IEP. The team—with your family—will write an IEP to help your child reach goals for the school year. The goal of an IEP is to give services in the “least restrictive environment” as much as possible. This means that your child should learn with typically developing children as much as she can.

Your child may have extra help in a typical class; have services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, or behavioral supports during the school day; or attend all or part of the day in a specialized classroom, depending on her needs. As part of the IEP, your child may get other services such as transportation and social work.

You should help make goals for the coming academic year and work with the educational team in writing the IEP. It is important for the school district to give your family an interpreter if you need one to be part of the IEP process.

If you do not agree with IEP recommendations, you have the right to request a second opinion. You also have the right to take legal action against your child's school district if you feel the district is not following federal education law. The IEP is looked at yearly and may change as your child's needs change.

An IEP must include

- The child's performance in school
- Yearly goals
- Special education and other services
- How your child will be included with children who do not have disabilities
- How your child will have statewide and district-wide assessments
- Dates and locations—when services and changes will start, how often and where services will happen, and how long services will last
- Transition goals and services for when your child moves on or when her needs change
- Measures of progress—how school staff will make sure your child meets goals



What services will my child get in the IEP? (continued)

If you feel unsure about your child's program for any reason, you have the right to take someone you trust with you to the IEP meeting. This could be anyone, from someone you know who is a teacher, to someone from a local parent-to-parent or parent support group, to a formal educational advocate.

Do I pay for school-based services?

All children have a right to a free public education that meets their own learning needs. This means that children with disabilities can receive the education they need at no cost to their families. Students with developmental disabilities can have educational programs and services until they are 21 years old.

Resources

American Academy of Pediatrics HealthyChildren.org:
www.HealthyChildren.org

Autism Speaks Family Services. *Individualized Education Program (IEP): Summary, Process and Practical Tips*. New York, NY: Autism Speaks; 2017. https://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/gp_iep_guide.pdf. Accessed May 21, 2019

Federation for Children with Special Needs: www.fcsn.org

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center:
www.nectac.org

Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights Center:
www.pacer.org

Understood.org "The Difference Between IEPs and 504 Plans": www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/504-plan/the-difference-between-ieps-and-504-plans

Wrightslaw (national information about IDEA, special education law, and families' rights): www.wrightslaw.com

