

# TATS TALKS WITH FAMILIES

## ABOUT PRE-K

### FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES



### *What does the law say?*



IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act) 2004 is the federal legislation that mandates states to provide services to children with disabilities. Part B (section 619) specifically addresses children who are 3 to 5 years old.

The law includes:

- A free appropriate public education (FAPE) for children 3 years of age or older who have been found eligible for IDEA, Part B services by an evaluation team of professionals
- An evaluation of the child, which should be given in the child's native language
- An Individual Educational Plan (IEP) that must be in place before services begin
- Serving children with disabilities in classrooms with children their same age who do not have disabilities, when appropriate
- Parental rights, which include decisions about evaluations, goals for your child, the child's placement, and the development and implementation of your child's IEP

For more information about Florida's law, access the following Web site:

<http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/1b-stats.pdf> (p. 238).

### *Why should I send my child to a preschool program?*

- Children learn skills that become the foundation for future educational activities, such as reading, writing, and math.
- Children develop important social skills, such as learning to play, share, take turns, and make friends with other children.
- Children with disabilities who are enrolled in preschool programs with children who do not have disabilities improve their language, communication, and social skills.

**Part C of IDEA** is a federal program that assists states in operating a comprehensive statewide program of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities, from birth until their third birthday, and their families. In Florida, the Part C program is called Early Steps.

For more information, access the following Web site:

[http://www.cms-kids.com/families/early\\_steps/](http://www.cms-kids.com/families/early_steps/)



This TATS Talks gives you some highlights of preschool programming for children with disabilities in Florida, an overview of the law, the development of an Individual Educational Plan (IEP), and the family's role on the IEP team. Other helpful resources and links for more information on topics are also included.





IDEA says that, as much as is possible and appropriate for the child, preschool children with disabilities should be provided education and related services with children who do not have disabilities (the least restrictive environment — LRE). This means that young children with disabilities may have a preschool experience in a variety of different places.

### *What is an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and what is my role on an IEP team?*

- An IEP is a plan designed and tailored to meet the unique educational needs of your child identified during the evaluation process. It lists your child's goals, strengths, and how your child learns.
- IEPs are developed by a team of people. Parents are considered to be full and equal members of the IEP team. Parents are crucial members of the team because they have unique knowledge of their child's strengths and needs.

### *What are my rights (Procedural Safeguards)?*

Parents are entitled to information about their rights under IDEA. These rights, or *Procedural Safeguards*, are intended to ensure that parents have the opportunity to be a partner in the educational decisions made regarding their child.

Parents have the right to be involved in meetings that discuss the evaluation, eligibility, the development of the IEP, and educational placement of their child. They also have the right to ask questions, dispute decisions, and request changes to the plan, as do all members of the IEP team.

In order to fully participate in developing their child's IEP, parents must be knowledgeable about their child's specific disabilities, their rights under federal and state law, and the policies and procedures of their local school district. The school district must ensure that parents understand what is being discussed during the IEP team meetings. This assurance may include arranging for an interpreter to be present during the meeting. For more information about parents' rights, access the following Web site: <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/procedural.pdf>

Children who have been evaluated and found eligible for exceptional student education (ESE) may require accommodations and modifications. The IEP team, including parents, looks at the child's present level of performance and educational needs and decides if accommodations and modifications are needed.





## What Are Accommodations and Modifications?

*Accommodations* are tools and procedures that provide equal access to instruction and assessment for children with disabilities. Providing accommodations may involve using many kinds of techniques, support systems, and strategies to support children's development and learning. Some examples of accommodations for children in preschool are:

- Instructional methods and materials (using markers instead of crayons or adding knobs to puzzle pieces)
- Learning environment (adding adaptive or special furniture)
- Time demands and scheduling (allowing extra time for activities; flexible, or more frequent breaks during activities)
- Special communication systems (using FM systems to enhance sound; using picture exchange system to facilitate communication)

Changing, lowering, or reducing learning expectations is usually referred to as a *modification*. The IEP team decides if curriculum modifications are needed for a child with a disability. Preschool modifications may include:

- Completion of part of the curriculum or some of its activities
- Alternate curriculum goals
- Alternate assessments



**Accommodations are made to the *way* children learn and *how* they are assessed.**



**Modifications are changes made to *what* children are expected to learn.**

For more information, access the following Web site:

<http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/ac-mod-parents.pdf>

DOE Publication ESE 10753: Accommodations and Modifications — What Parents Need to Know; Revised 2003

### Resource for Families

The Florida Diagnostic and Learning and Resources System (FDLRS) Parent Services provides information, training, and support to families and school districts in order to promote effective parent participation in the education of children who are exceptional and/or have special needs.

For more information on Parent Services in your area, go to the FDLRS Web site at: <http://www.paec.org/fdlrsweb/>

## Helpful Resources

*What are some acronyms that I may need to know?*

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
APD	Agency for Persons with Disabilities
CARD	Center for Autism and Related Disabilities
CMS	Children's Medical Services
DBS	Division of Blind Services
DD	Developmental Delay
DOE	Department of Education
DOH	Department of Health
ELC	Early Learning Coalition
ESE	Exceptional Student Education
ESY	Extended School Year
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FDLRS	Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
FIN	Florida Inclusion Network
FTE	Full Time Equivalency
IDEA	IDEA 2004 — Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act
IEP	Individual Educational Plan
IFSP	Individualized Family Support Plan
LEA	Local Education Agency
LES	Local Early Steps
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
NECTAC	National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center
NICHCY	National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities
PRE-K	Prekindergarten
TATS	Technical Assistance and Training System
VPK	Voluntary Prekindergarten



*Here are some helpful communication tips:*

- Speak openly and honestly.
- Communicate positively whenever possible.
- Listen carefully with total attention to the speaker.
- Gather additional information to clarify issues.
- Give concrete examples of observations to explain a situation.
- Focus on one issue at a time.
- Validate the other person's perception by saying "I understand your concern" or "I heard you say..."
- To avoid divisiveness, use words such as: *we*, *us*, and *our* instead of *you*, *I*, *yours*, and *mine*.
- Consider the impact of your tone of voice and body language.
- Put your questions in writing and bring to meetings.

### *Useful Web site Links:*

#### **Beach Center on Disability**

Includes information on Family and Professional Partnerships and links to other sites.

<http://www.beachcenter.org>

#### **National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)**

National information and referral center providing information on disabilities and disability-related issues. This site is available in Spanish as well as English. <http://www.nichcy.org>

#### **PACER Center-Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights**

Extensive links and information on family involvement in school and the education system. This site is available in Spanish, Hmong, and Somali, as well as English.

<http://www.pacer.org>

Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS)  
4000 Central Florida Blvd.  
UCF-Teaching Academy, Suite 403  
Orlando, FL 32816-1250

Tel: (407) 823-3058  
Fax: (407) 823-1360  
E-mail: [tats@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:tats@mail.ucf.edu)  
Web site: [www.tats.ucf.edu](http://www.tats.ucf.edu)

