

TATS TALKS WITH FAMILIES

ABOUT THE IEP PROCESS

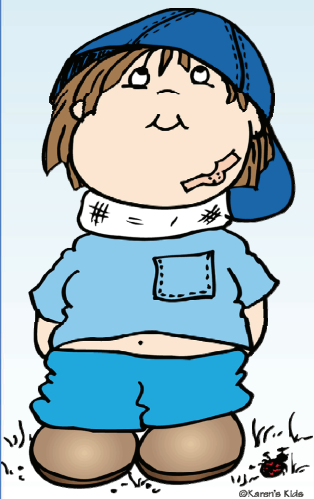


If your child is 3 years old or older and is eligible for special education services, an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) is developed by a team of individuals within 30 calendar days of determining eligibility. You are an important part of that team. The work of the IEP team is to decide what services and supports your child may need in order to succeed in the prekindergarten (Pre-K) program.

What is an IEP?

An **IEP** is the document developed at an IEP team meeting. The plan is designed to meet the educational needs of your child and assist your child's teachers and other staff in understanding how to support your child's development and in learning to identify:

- Your child's strengths
- Areas of developmental or educational concern
- Goals for your child
- How your child learns best
- How your child demonstrates that learning



What is included in my child's IEP?

An IEP for your Pre-K child contains many parts:

- What your child knows and is able to do now
- How your child's disability affects participation in activities
- Goals for your child to achieve
- Special education services and supports needed by your child
- Accommodations, modifications, and/or supports to help your child participate in programs and activities with children without disabilities
- Dates the services and supports will begin, where they will occur, and how long they will last
- How your child's progress will be measured



This TATS Talks explains the IEP process, the IEP team, and parents' role on that team. It includes tips on how to prepare for an IEP meeting and some resources and links for more information about the IEP process.





Who is on my child's IEP team?

Your child's IEP team includes the following members:

- You—the parent(s) or guardian(s)
- At least one regular education teacher if your child is, or may be, participating in the regular education program
- At least one special education teacher of your child, or where appropriate, at least one special education provider of your child.
- A person from the school district who can provide or supervise the special instruction your child may need and is knowledgeable about the general curriculum and the availability of district resources
- Someone, such as a school psychologist, who can explain the results of evaluations and what they mean for your child's classroom instruction
- Other people invited by you or the school because they know your child or have knowledge or special expertise regarding your child (This may include a friend or an advocate; or, if your child was served in Early Steps (Part C), the Early Steps Service Coordinator may be invited to the first IEP meeting).

Related Services and Supplementary Aids and Services

In order to ensure your child reaches his goals and participates with children who do not have disabilities in a regular education setting, extra help, in addition to special education services, may be provided. This extra help is known as *related services and supplementary aids and services* and, if they are needed, are listed on the IEP. Examples include: help in areas such as speech therapy to help a child with communication or physical therapy to help a child with movement. Children may also sometimes need extra aids and services, such as adaptive materials and equipment, assistive technology, or a one-on-one classroom aide.



Special education and related services and supplementary aids and services enable your child to:

- Advance toward attaining the annual goals on his or her IEP
- Be involved and make progress in a regular education setting, including extracurricular and other nonacademic activities
- Be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and nondisabled children

Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it.

- Marian Wright Edelman

Procedural Safeguards

Procedural safeguards ensure that parents have the opportunity to be a partner in the educational decisions made regarding their child. Two of these safeguards are mediation and due process.

Mediation is a voluntary process that allows parents and school districts to resolve disagreements involving any matter under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Mediation is conducted by a qualified and impartial mediator. Most disagreements can be resolved using mediation.

If mediation isn't successful, **due process** may occur. Due process is a formal set of procedures outlined in IDEA to resolve disagreements. A due process hearing may be part of this procedure.

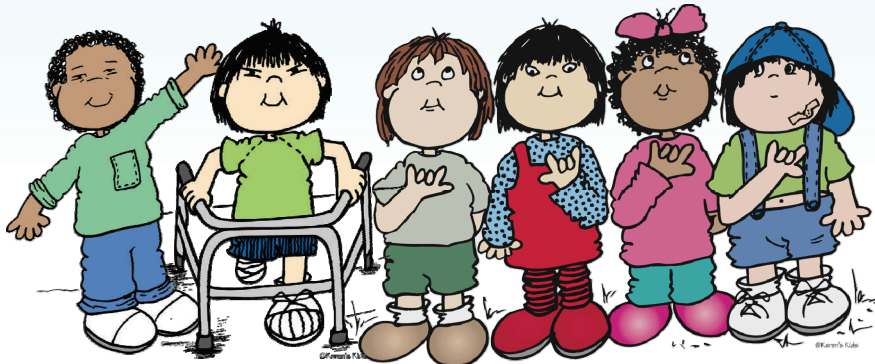


What are the role and the rights of parents on the IEP team?

- Attend the IEP meeting. Families must be invited to the IEP meeting early enough to make sure that one or both parents can attend and participate.
- Participate as full and equal members with the professionals on the IEP team.
- Partner with schools and school staff in developing, reviewing, and revising the IEP for their child. (Florida Administrative Code)
- As a member of the IEP team, families have the right to ask questions, dispute points, and request changes to the plan.
- Provide critical information to the team, including their concerns for the education of their child, and participate in discussions about their child's needs since they know their child's strengths and needs and all the qualities that make their child unique.
- In order to ensure that your family understands everything that occurs at IEP team meetings, the school must provide an interpreter/translator for parents or guardians who are deaf or whose native language is not English.



In order to fully participate in developing their child's IEP, families need to know about their child's disability, what their rights are under federal and state law, and the policies and procedures of the local school district. Your school should provide you with a copy of this information. You may also obtain information on your rights and responsibilities from parent information centers. These are listed in the Web site Links on the last page of this TATS Talks.



What is the link between the IEP and services for my child?

Your child's placement in a special education program is decided by the IEP team. As a member of that team, you must give written consent before your school district provides special education and related services for your child for the first time. After you give permission, your child can begin to receive services.

If you are not comfortable with some of the goals and services on the IEP, you can take some time to think about it. You can discuss your concerns with other members of the IEP team and try to work out an agreement about the content. If you are satisfied, you may then give written consent for the school to implement the IEP. If the issue cannot be resolved, you may ask for mediation and/or a due process hearing. Information on how to do this is available from the school or from the Florida Department of Education at the following Web site: <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/resolution.asp>

Keep in mind, your child's services will only begin once you have given written consent.

Once consent is given and your child begins receiving services, you may request a meeting at any time to talk about progress toward reaching the IEP goals. This meeting is a good time to address satisfaction, concerns, questions, and/or changing activities or goals in the IEP.

Have a positive attitude. You are a key member of the IEP team and the most important advocate for your child.



How Can I Get Ready for my Child's IEP Meeting?

Here are some suggestions to help you get ready for the meeting:

- ◆ Ask the school for copies of your child's school records and evaluations and read them carefully.
- ◆ Prepare a list of any questions you may have.
- ◆ Ask the school for a copy of a blank IEP form so you can become familiar with it.
- ◆ Let the school know in advance if you need an interpreter/translator during the meeting.
- ◆ Let the school know in advance if you need to change the meeting time or place.
- ◆ Let the school know if you plan to invite any individuals to the meeting who can provide helpful information about your child (a relative, friend, child's teacher) or provide support for you (a friend, another parent, or advocate).
- ◆ List information that tells the IEP team about your child. Below are examples you may want to share. Include a favorite picture of your child to go along with this information.



My child likes to be called:

The people who live at home with us are:

We speak this language in our home:

My child's favorite toys to play with/activities are:

My child is good at doing the following things:

I would really like my child to learn to do the following things:

When my child gets upset, what works best to help calm him/her is:

My child may need the following kind of help:

- * In the bathroom
- * Getting dressed
- * Eating
- * Walking, sitting, standing, etc.

My child communicates in the following ways when he is:

- * Angry
- * Tired
- * Sick
- * Happy

Adapted from **"Getting to Know Me."** To download this document, go to:
<http://www.floridatransitionproject.ucf.edu/>

Useful Web site Links:

Family Network on Disabilities

The State Parent Training and Information Center for South and North Florida (800) 825-5736
<http://www.fndfl.org>

Parent to Parent of Miami, Inc.

The Community Parent Resource Center providing training and information in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties (305) 271-9797 <http://www.ptopmiami.org/>

Project AWARE

The Parent Training and Information Center for Central Florida (888) 612-9273 <http://www.cflparents.org/>

The Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers (the ALLIANCE)

Look under "Publications" – "Handouts" for more in-depth information about special education, related services, the IEP process, IEP goals, written notice, and informed consent.
<http://www.taalliance.org/>

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY)

A Parent's Guide: Developing Your Child's IEP is a good resource for understanding the IEP process and the IEP document.

<http://www.nichcy.org/InformationResources/Documents/NICHCY%20PUBS/pa12.pdf>

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