



Educational Champion Training

MODULE 8:

Special Education and Accommodations

Why Focus on Special Education and Accommodations?



- Studies show that between **25-50%** of all children and youth in out-of-home foster care will receive special education services at some point in their education.
- If a child is **currently receiving or being assessed for special education services**, it is crucial for his/her educational champion to understand and be involved in this process.

Understand what “special education” means – and what it doesn’t mean.



- Special education is a free program of **services and supports for children with disabilities**, provided by the school district.
- Special education services must be designed to address each child’s **individual differences and needs**.
- Needing special education services does not mean that the child is not smart. The services are designed to help each child learn in a way that is helpful to him/her.

What are the steps in the special education process?



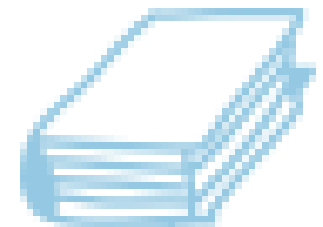
- **SCHOOL-AGE STUDENTS:**

- STEP 1: Pre-referral intervention services
- STEP 2: Referral for evaluations/ assessments
- STEP 3: Evaluations
- STEP 4: IEP Meeting & Eligibility Determination
- STEP 5: IEP Implemented – placement and services provided

How quickly does this process move?



- There are specific timelines affecting the entire IEP process.
- Most importantly, if you are the Ed Rights Holder, **submit all requests in writing** so that timelines can be tracked and requests can be documented.



How a student qualifies for special education services.



Under federal and state law, to qualify for special education services, the child's must have **a disability that affects his/ her educational performance, and must fit into one of these categories of disabilities:**

- **Specific Learning Disability;**
- **Speech or Language Impairment;**
- **Other Health Impairment (i.e. ADHD);**
- **Emotional Disturbance;**
- **Mental Retardation;**
- **Hearing Impairment;**
- **Hearing and Visual Impairment;**
- **Orthopedic Impairment;**
- **Autism; and**
- **Traumatic Brain Injury**



What is an IEP?



- An IEP (or an “Individualized Education Program”) is a written education plan created by the school district, teachers, other professionals, parents, caregivers, and sometimes the child.
- An IEP includes:
 - A summary of how the child is doing in school,
 - School-related goals for the child for the next school year, and
 - Information about the services and supports the district will provide to help the child meet those goals.
- IEP meetings should be **held every year** and new evaluations should be **conducted every 3 years**.

If you are the Ed Rights Holder – How to prepare before the IEP meeting.



- Let the school know if you need an interpreter for the meeting.
- Let the school know if there are specific days/times that work best for you.
- **Review the child's school records**, including **the last IEP** (if there is one).
- **Make a list of questions you want to ask**, information you would like to share, or things you would like school staff to discuss, so these things will be easier to remember at the meeting.

If you are the Ed Rights Holder – How to advocate at an IEP meeting.



- **Be prepared to participate.** Read through any recent progress reports, report cards, letters from the teacher or evaluations **before the meeting.**
- Talk about the child's strengths and needs.
- Take notes during the meeting.
- **Stay calm and confident.** You are an important member of the IEP team!
- Don't be afraid to **ask questions and speak up at the IEP meeting** if something is not clear.
- Be sure the IEP includes **meaningful, measurable and individualized goals** that the child can work towards.

If you are the Ed Rights Holder – What to do after an IEP meeting.



- Review the IEP document **carefully before you decide whether to sign it.** Think about whether you feel it will provide the help that your child needs to succeed in school.
- **If you agree with the IEP, sign it and return it to the school.**
- Check back with the school to make sure that the IEP is being followed, and that it is reviewed at least once every year.

If you are the Ed Rights Holder – What if you don't agree with the IEP?



- If you don't agree with the IEP, talk with the school to see if it can be changed so that you will feel comfortable with it. If you and the school cannot agree, you can file an appeal.
- If you disagree with the IEP services being offered, be sure to tell the Adult & Child educational advocate. The advocate might be able to help, or you might want to consider getting an attorney to help you.

Additional considerations if you are the child's Education Rights Holder.



- If you hold ed rights, **ONLY you can consent** to the child's IEP recommendations.
- If you hold ed rights, you will play a **VERY important role at every IEP meeting.**
- Ask to receive **copies of the child's school records**, including a copy of the last IEP.
- If it has been more than 1 year since the last IEP was written, request an IEP review meeting.

If the child already receives special education services, be aware of the following important tips.



- If you are the child's education rights holder or if the education rights holder says it is okay for you to attend, **be sure to attend every IEP meeting** so that you can offer your support and insight.
- Ask the school if they have prepared any reports for the meeting. If so, ask to receive copies of the reports before the meeting so that you can review them.

Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP)



- If the child needs help managing serious behavior issues that affect his/her learning, consider whether the child might benefit from a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP).
- A BIP is developed when the student exhibits **a serious behavior problem** that significantly interferes with the implementation of the goals and objectives of the IEP.

If the child doesn't qualify for special education services, consider some other tools for helping a child with special needs.



What is a 504 Accommodation Plan?

- A “504 Plan” is developed if a child does not qualify for special ed services/ IEP, but s/he has a physical or mental impairment that makes it hard for him/her to take care of himself/herself, eat, walk, see, speak, hear, learn, or work.
- I.E.: asthma, allergies, diabetes, ADD or ADHD.
- Depending on the child’s needs, accommodations might include things like:
 - Additional reading time,
 - No penalties for spelling,
 - Taking medication during the school day.
- A child may have both an IEP and a 504 plan or just one type of plan.

What if the child is under the age of 5?



- If the child is under the age of 5 and has special education needs, the child may qualify for “early intervention services.”
- For children under age 3, assessment and services are provided through the Indiana Department of Education (Head Start).
- Between ages 3 and 5, early intervention services are provided by the school district where the child resides.

Consider getting input from other adults involved in the child's life.



Especially if the child does not live with you right now, you may want to ask other adults in the child's life for support and feedback.

- **EXAMPLES:**

- If you are not the child's care giver, you may want to ask the child's caregiver for his or her thoughts about the child's school performance.
- Or, ask the caregiver to attend an IEP meeting. Check with the social worker for advice about reaching out to the child's caregiver.

Special education rules are complicated – you should never be afraid to ask for help!



- Don't hesitate to ask the **Court, a social worker, Adult & Child staff, or your attorney** if you have questions about your right to advocate for the child!
- There are also education attorneys that specialize in advocating for students at IEP meetings.



My Goals:



What I will do:

How often I will do this:

Resources.



This PowerPoint, Tip Sheets, Mentoring Modules, and supporting materials can be found at: www.foster-ed.org.

If you have questions about the materials, please contact: info@fostered.org.

Other Resources:

- *Special Education Factsheet*, written by the California Foster Youth Education Task Force, available at www.cfyetf.org/
- *Smart IEPs*, written and available at www.fetaweb.com
- *Special Education and Early Intervention Advocacy*, written by The Alliance for Children's Rights and available at kids-alliance.org
- *CAHSEE Exemptions for Eligible Students with Disabilities*, available at www.cde.ca.gov
- Sample IEPs, available at www.sfcasa.org