



# IEP Part 1: BASICS

Understanding IDEA and Special Education  
for our Students with Disabilities

Dorothy Weisenberger  
Care Parent Network

Adapted from Disability Rights Education Defense Fund: Parent Training and Information (PTI) Center for Alameda, Contra Costa & Yolo



# Outline

- **IDEA**
  - Summary, Purpose, & Intent
  - IDEA Core Principles -- FAPE
- **Special education process**
  - Assessment for Special Education & Timelines
  - Eligibility for Special Education & Services
  - IEP team and preparing for the IEP meeting
  - IEP goals, what is a PLOP?
  - What is LRE?
  - Multi Tiered System of Supports
  - Accommodations/Modifications
- **Questions?**



# IDEA

## Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

A federal education law.

- For students with at least one of 13 eligible categories of disability
  - who **ALSO** require specialized support and instruction to benefit from education.
- Provides a “special education” program
  - Individualized Education Program -- IEP
  - specialized instruction
    - related supportive services
- “**IEP**” must be individualized to meet a student’s unique needs.



# IDEA: Intent

- Provide access to the general education curriculum.
- Prepare students for their future.
- Strengthen the role and responsibility of parents.
- Ensure that special education is a service rather than a place.
- Provide appropriate instruction, services and supports in regular environments.



# IDEA: 6 Core Principles

1. Evaluation/Assessment
2. Free & Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
3. Individualized Education Program (IEP)
4. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
5. Parent (and student if appropriate) participation in the decision-making process
6. Procedural Safeguards



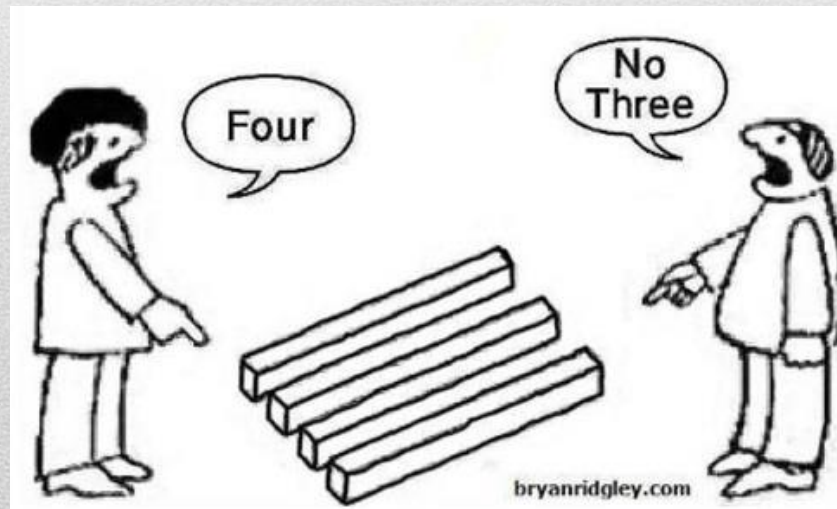


# IDEA envisions a team process.

Team: a group of people forming one side in a competitive game or sport.

**Team:** a group of people with a full set of complementary knowledge and skills required to complete a task, job or project.

## Conflict





# Your relationships with other team members are important.

## You and your student may work with

Teacher and service providers

**1 year** or more

School administrators and staff

**3- 6 years** or more

District administrators and staff

**13 - 21 years**

**Tip #1:** Do what you can to preserve working relationships.

**Tip #2:** See tip #1.



# Referral to Special Education

A pupil shall be referred for special education instruction and services only after the resources of the regular education program have been considered and, where appropriate, utilized.



# Referral for Special Education

- Anyone concerned about the student's educational needs can make a referral.
- WRITE a “Request for Assessment” letter\* to school principal, special education director (or both); cc others if needed.
- SAFEGUARD: If you ask verbally, the district is obligated to help you put your request in writing.
- Students must be comprehensively assessed “in all areas of suspected disability” to determine need for special education, **however...**
- Best to describe how your child is struggling\* rather than what disability you think they may have.

# Referral for Special Education



In **15 calendar days**, the district must respond with an “**Assessment Plan**” for your consent **OR Written Notice** stating why your student will not be assessed



Parent can take **15 more days** to review and ask questions regarding Assessment Plan.




If you consent, the district has **60 calendar days** to evaluate your child and hold an IEP meeting.

You may consent to all, part or none of the Assessment Plan.

# Assessment Rights

- Parent consent is required.
- Independent (outside) assessments must be considered by the IEP team.
- Assessment in child's language/mode of communication.
- Variety of tools & strategies must be used.
- Credentialed professionals.

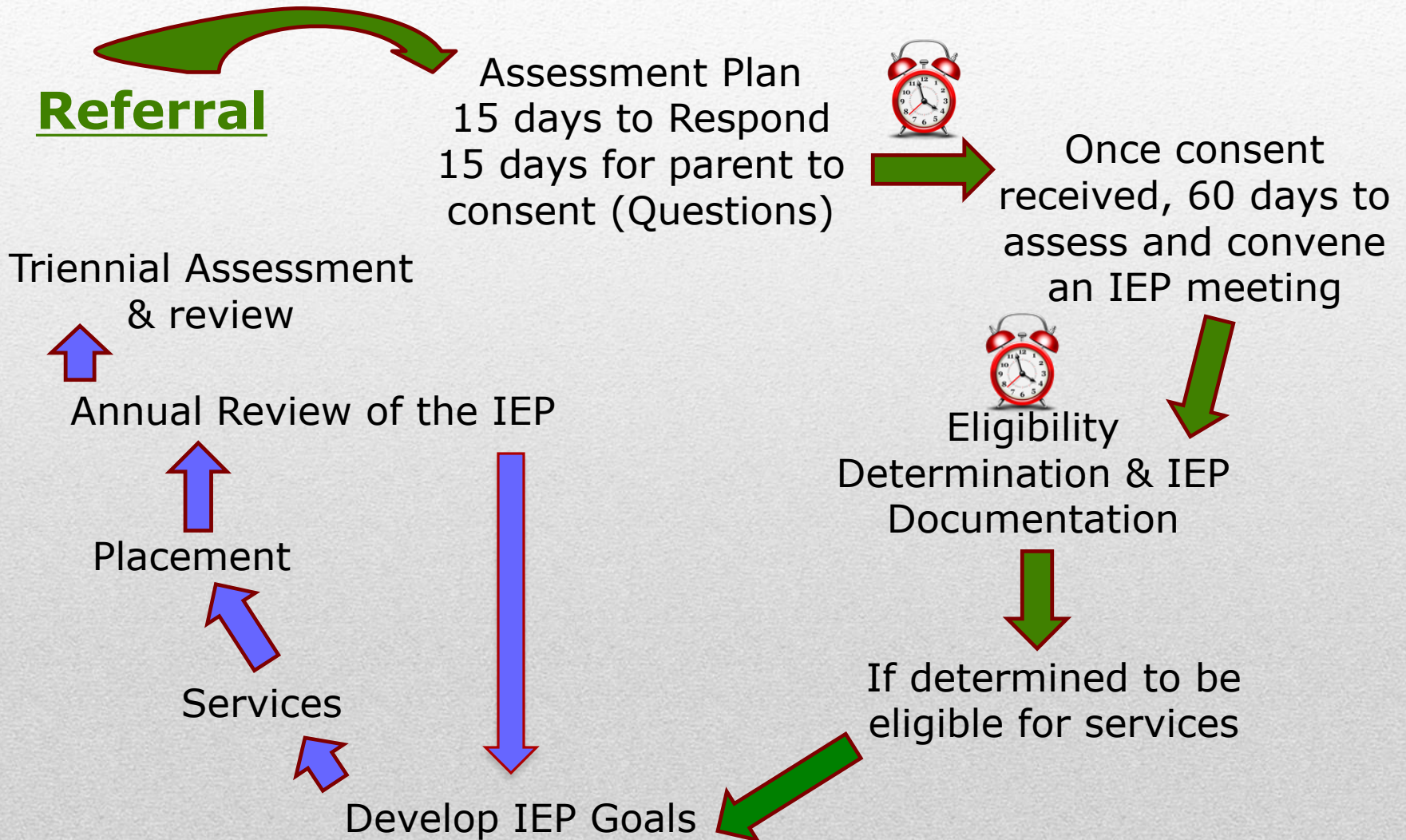


- Whether a student has a  **disability**
- Present level of educational functioning and needs
- If there is a need for specialized academic instruction and/or related services to benefit from education

## **IDEA Assessment:**

**To Determine Eligibility and Present Levels of Functioning**

# Cycle of Special Education



# IDEA: Eligibility (Age 3 up to age 22\*)

## Eligibility categories:

1. Autism
2. Deafness / HH
3. Deaf-Blindness
4. Hearing Impairment
5. Intellectual Disability
6. Multiple Disabilities
7. Orthopedic Impairment
8. Other Health Impairment
9. Serious Emotional Disturbance
10. Specific Learning Disabilities
11. Speech or Language Impairment
12. Traumatic Brain Injury
13. Visual Impairment / Blindness

AND who by reason of their disability needs special education and related services in order to benefit from their education.

Determined by the assessments!

\*Sooner if the student earns a high school diploma

# The IEP Meeting



## Members

- Parents
- General education teacher
- Special education teacher
- Administrator or designee (Representative of the Local Education Agency authorized to commit LEA resources)
- Individual who can interpret assessment results, if sharing assessment
- Others (i.e., agency representative)
- Student, when appropriate and always included in development of transition plan

# IEP Meeting: Preparation

- District must provide **WRITTEN NOTICE** of IEP meeting (date, time, & participants).
- Parents return the **WRITTEN NOTICE** with consent if able to attend.
- Let district know **ASAP** if you need another date/time.
- Let district know what team members you want present.

**Parents!**

Prepare to be an active participant  
in discussions





# Preparing for an IEP meeting: Helpful Hints

1. **Request** -- copies of all progress reports, assessments, etc. to be provided before the meeting so that you have time to review them.

2. **Write** --

- a short (one sentence) statement about what you see as the purpose for the meeting.
- topics that you want to have addressed at the meeting.
- statements about what you would like as the outcome(s) of the meeting



You can share with education case manager before meeting to help with developing the agenda.

# IEP: Team rules



- Translators as requested/needed.
- Others may attend at invitation of parent or district  
Expected to have knowledge of student.  
Person inviting has the right to determine appropriateness.
- A team member may be excused when the parent AND the school district consent to the excusal.
  - Parent must consent in writing.
  - Member submits in writing input to the development of the IEP prior to the meeting.
- A team member may be excused when her area is not being discussed or modified.
- Teams can meet by alternate ways: Speaker phone, video conference, etc.

# IEP: Team suggestions



## Be mindful of fostering relationships

Acknowledge ways that team members have helped your student.

Respect others' rights to express their opinions and to disagree with you.

Respect time constraints and try to keep the meeting focused on the agenda.

**Remember the value of “do overs”!**

Everyone has a bad day. Everyone deserves a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance.



# IEP: PLOP & Disability Impact

**Present Levels Of Performance includes  
academic AND functional performance\***

- How does disability affect student involvement and progress in the general curriculum?
- For Pre-K age children, how does disability affect participation in age-appropriate activities?

Educational performance is a BROAD term  
specifically selected by Congress.

**PLOP is NOT limited to academic performance only.**

# Special Education: Think of it this way!

Special Education is a **SERVICE**

-Service is provided through the IEP

-The purpose of service is to help student to make progress in the curriculum between the student's

- Present Level of Performance (PLOP) and
- the student's Expected Level of Performance.

# IEP: Big Questions

## Questions the IEP team MUST answer:

- Where is student now? Present Levels of Performance (**PLOP**)
- Where do we want student to end up? **GOALS/OBJECTIVES**
- How are we going to help student get there? **SERVICES & INSTRUCTION**
- How do we know if the student got there?  
**MEASUREMENT: What DATA will be collected to inform the team?**
- How and when progress will be reported to the parents?  
**COMMUNICATION & ACCOUNTABILITY**



# **IEP Part 2: GOALS ARE IMPORTANT**

The Importance of Having Measurable Goals  
in the IEP

Cherese LeBlanc  
Care Parent Network



# Let's Review

- **Special education process**
  - **LRE** means first consider general education among non-disabled peers
  - **IEP Team** makes decisions
  - **Timelines** important for accountability and compliance
  - **Assessments** should show Academic AND Functional Performance=  
Education
  - **Special Education is a SERVICE, not a placement**



# IEP Goals and Services

**Measurable goals are the key to appropriate services.**

- The purpose of service is to help student to make progress in the curriculum between the student's
  - Present Level of Performance (PLOP) and
  - the student's Expected Level of Performance.
  
- Recognizing SMART goals will benefit your child!

# IEP: Goals

**SPECIFIC:** clear descriptions of the knowledge and skills that will be taught and how the child's progress will be measured.

**MEASURABLE:** you can count or observe it.

**ACTION WORDS:** "child will be able to . . ."

**REALISTIC / RELEVANT:** to child's unique needs that result from the disability.

**TIME-LIMITED:** what does the child need to know and be able to do after 1 year of special education?



# What Does a SMART Goal Look Like?

“I want to get to work on time.”

OR

“I won’t be late to work anymore.”

# What Does a SMART Goal Look Like?

- Is it SPECIFIC?
- Is it MEASURABLE?
- Where's the ACTION?
- Is it REALISTIC/RELEVANT?
- BY WHEN will it happen (is it TIME-LIMITED)?

**Tip #1:** Frame the goal positively.

**Tip #2:** Make sure goals are realistically challenging and have an appropriate expectation for achievement.

**Tip #3:** Have measurable “objectives”, they are like “mini-goals”.

# What Does an IEP Goal Look Like?

Here's an example...

## Functional Academic Goal

Using a level 3 prompt and their SGD, \_\_\_ will express needs to appropriate individuals/peers using phrases such as “I want,” “I need,” and “I have” in a variety of activities to include, PE, classroom work, lunch/restroom, with 90% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials by 10/19, as measured by weekly frequency reporting from direct staff observations.

## Short-Term Objectives

Using a level 3 prompt, \_\_\_ will express need to appropriate ... using phrases ... in a structured PE activity (\_\_\_ Says), with 90% accuracy in 2 out of 5 trials by 1/19.

Using a level 3 prompt, \_\_\_ will ... in classroom activities, with 90% accuracy in 3 out of 5 trials by 3/19.

Using a level 4 prompt, \_\_\_ will ... in lunch/restroom, with 90% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials by 5/19.

# Writing IEP Goals

Drafting goals is an important skill that takes practice.

Let's practice writing some goals!\*

We will re-group and share.

\*see Care Parent Network IEP Worksheet

# IEP Goals Summary

- Understanding how goals are written will help you advocate for your child.
- You are an important member of your child's IEP team: you have a say in the areas of need that should be addressed in the education setting.



# IEP: Placement



- The set of goals, services, supports, accommodations/modifications, and specialized teaching determine **placement**.
- **Placement is the last consideration** for an IEP team, after all issues are addressed because placement is driven by needs, goals and services.
- Where can the services occur in order to meet the student's needs and work toward student's goals?
  - Appropriate placement is one in which the student has a reasonable expectation of achieving the IEP goals in one year.



# IEP: Least Restrictive Environment

## Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

The **extent** to which the student will and will not learn and participate in an educational environment along with peers without disabilities

with justification of those decisions.

- **Extent** is usually expressed as a percentage of school day.
- IDEA has a **strong** presumption that students with disabilities will be included with peers without disabilities in general education settings at home (neighborhood) school.
- Supports and services should protect LRE.

# Continuum of Educational Environments



Full time in general education classroom with necessary supports & services

Time divided between general education classroom with necessary supports & services and special education classroom

Full time in special education classroom located at school with peers in general education.

Full time at special education school separate from peers  
In general education.

Full time at a special facility (day or residential placement)



Extent of time not in  
general education setting  
increases

# IEP and Program Options

- IDEA says IEP must be written to address the **specific and unique needs** of each student with a disability who requires specialized academic instruction.
- Districts often create programs that deliver specific evidence-based practices, similar service delivery, or instructional strategies.
- For young children, developmental and educational needs may be interchangeable.

# Accommodations & Modifications

Students may receive services, accommodations and modifications for **“equal access”** to educational opportunities afforded all students.

**Accommodations** are program adjustments made to remove disability-related barriers to full participation in school. Accommodations promote access to the general education curriculum but don't change grade level of instruction or expectations.

**“leveling the playing field”**

**Modifications** change grade level of instruction and what the student is expected to learn.

Modifications are made to meet the student's identified educational needs while still promoting access to the general education curriculum.

**“changing the rules of the game after leveling the playing field”**

## EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY



In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.



In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.



In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.

# Questions/Comments

[Info@careparentnetwork.org](mailto:Info@careparentnetwork.org)

[dweisenberger@careparentnetwork.org](mailto:dweisenberger@careparentnetwork.org)