

What Special Ed Supports & Services Can I Ask For?

Guide for Parents



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IDEA

What can I ask for?

On a recent survey of over 200 parents of children with disabilities,

53% did not know what they could ask for.

This e-book will help give you the legal limits of what you can ask for.

01

The purpose of IDEA

The Purpose of IDEA

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is the name of the law that governs special ed services in the U.S. It is usually called IDEA for short.

Most people with kids in special ed have never seen the purpose as it's written in the law.

"The purposes of this title are:

1. (A) to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes **special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs** and prepare them for **further education, employment, and independent living**.
- (B) to ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and parent of such children are protected, and
- (C) to assist States, localities educational service agencies, and federal agencies to provide for the education of all children with disabilities.

You may be familiar with this portion. This is where we get the acronym **FAPE** from

Part 4 of the purpose is also very interesting:

4. to **assess**, and **ensure the effectiveness of**, efforts to educate children with disabilities.

This means that not only does the program need to meet your child's needs, it also needs to **effectively** meet those needs. How do you know this is happening? When you see **measurable** progress according to **assessments**.

02

Comprehensive Evaluation

The law is pretty clear. The student is entitled to a program that meets their unique needs. So why is it so hard to get this?

Because most schools approach it backwards. Instead of matching the supports to the child, they place the child in one of the existing programs.

Here's what usually happens:

A parent brings their child to the school. The school does a cursory evaluation in a few areas. The special ed specialist hears a part of the child's issue like ADHD, reading problems, or autism, and responds, "We give our students with ADHD *these* kinds of services."

And just like that, your child has been matched to a pre-existing school program, regardless of whether it's a good fit or not.

Here's what is supposed to happen:

The parent brings their child to school. The school evaluates the child *in all areas of need* and based on that report, works with the parent to develop a set of services that allows the child to be in the general ed class as much as possible while receiving their special ed services and supports.

Most parents assume that the school automatically evaluate in all areas of need.

Sorry to say, that seldom happens. I recently ran into a huge district in our area that has a written (and illegal) district policy *not* to evaluate for OT, or other related service areas until the child has already been admitted into public school and is in class.

An FIE (full individual evaluation) can consist of up to 15 mini evaluations, depending on the level of need.

This means, as a parent, you **must** be able to talk about what your child's needs are.

Does your child have problems with:

Reading, math, following multi-step directions, hearing, vision, not remembering what you told them, forgetting what they learned, needing a lot of repetition to learn, writing, spelling, behavior, tolerating certain sounds or textures, talking, being understood when they talk, talking to peers, having friends, keeping up with their materials, understanding a story that they have read, making careless mistakes in math, needing a lot of time to process instructions, walking, feeding themselves, dressing themselves, paying attention, hyperactivity, anxiety, not following the rules etc.

The school can evaluate your child in all these areas.

03

Special Education

Related Services

IDEA defines related services as including:

Transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as may be required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education:

Including but not limited to

- speech language pathology
- audiology services
- interpreting services
- psychological services
- counseling services including rehabilitative counseling
- physical and occupational therapy
- recreational therapy
- social work services
- school nurse services (designed to allow a child with a disability to receive FAPE at school)
- orientation and mobility services

While not mentioned in the law specifically, these are also related services that children can commonly need:

- music therapy
- ABA therapy

The district will have to evaluate your child specifically in that area to see if that therapy will help them to benefit from their special education.

Schools put up significant barriers to providing many of these services—especially occupational & physical therapy, music therapy, and recreational therapy. Rec therapy is useful for students who are transition age and haven't developed hobbies or friends in the community. In 18 years, I have never encountered anyone student who has received it.

I have had schools tell me that they don't offer music therapy or set the bar so high for PT or OT to be delivered as to make it practically impossible to get this service for your child.

If you find yourself in this position, you will have to learn how to write complaints to the state education agency or hire an advocate or attorney to help you go to mediation or due process.

04

Special Education Accommodations

Accommodations are not a part of IDEA.

They are a part of the 504 regulations. 504 is about allowing students with disabilities equal access in the classroom. Often students who do not need a special curriculum, related service, or modifications will qualify for a 504 plan.

Accommodations are modifications to the standard group instruction the teacher uses in the classroom as well as classroom activities.

All students with an IEP automatically qualify under the 504 regulations in addition to IDEA. That's why they also receive accommodations in the classroom.

Most districts have their standard list of accommodations they most commonly use with their students. There is no set list of all allowable accommodations.

The key is to have an accommodation that makes sense and is individualized to your child's needs, learning style, and interest.

Here is one of [the most comprehensive list](#) of accommodations I've found. Look through these pages to see if some of these fit your child better than the current standard district accommodations.

Remember, choosing an accommodation will depend on you knowing how your child learns as well as the teacher being able to implement it.

05

Special Education

Supplementary Aids and Services

IDEA defines supplementary aids and services to be:

Services and other supports that are provided in regular education classes or other education-related settings to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate in accordance with section 1412(a)(5) of this title.

This can include:

- Adapted equipment
 - Special seats
 - Fidgets for sitting
 - Special writing instruments, paper, & slantboards
 - Instructional equipment
 - AV instructional materials
 - Sensory aids
 - Technological aids & devices
- Assistive technology devices*
 - Any item or piece of equipment or product system (acquired commercially or modified) that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of a child)
- Training for staff, students, or parents
- Peer tutors
- A One on one aide or paraprofessional
- Adapted materials
- Collaboration/consultations between staff
- Specialize training for the staff in the use of a specialize curriculum or piece of equipment (specifically in§300.320(a)(4))

* Districts go to great length to avoid providing technological devices. They often insist that “low tech” assistive tech is available. Often when a child needs one, they only evaluate the student on the one or two devices that the district already owns, and once again match a child to a device instead of choosing the device that best meets the needs of that student.

06

Special Education

Modifying Instruction and/or Curriculum

IDEA allows modifications to be made to what a child is taught and/or how the child is taught.

This can include:

- Shortened assignments
- Textbooks at a different reading level than the rest of the class*
- Being allowed to have a scribe
- Being allowed to have test questions read to them
- Extra time for assignments
- Extra time for tests
- Chunking a test over several days
- Working in a small group
- Working 1:1 with the teacher for new instruction
- Using an audiotaped lecture or audio text book
- Using teacher's lecture notes to take their notes on
- Assignment of lower difficulty
- Allowing answers to be given orally or dictated

*Most general ed teachers will balk at having a student more than two reading levels behind the rest of the class in their classroom. Try to have a discussion about the training & classroom supports the teacher needs to be able to have the student in the classroom. However, I will say from experience, if you can't get buy-in from the teacher, it will prove problematic for your child.

Did you like the information you read?

I will be launching my up-leveled on-line parent training course in January 2021.

Please feel free to share this e-book with your parent friends who have kids with disabilities in public school.

Go to www.advocate-well.com to learn how to sign up.

