

1. My child is falling behind and needs more help in school. How can I find the best help for him/her in school?

You can request an evaluation for special education services from your child's school. This evaluation is free of charge. You can make this request at any time. The school district has twenty days to respond to your request. For details on how to do this, click [here](#).

2. What is my part on my child's special education team? What can I do?

You, the parent or guardian, are the most important person on your child's education team. You will be present at every team decision making meeting and will need to work with the school's child study team to advise on what is best for your child. Your written consent is necessary to begin the initial evaluation for special education services. You are also the first person listed as a member of your student's child study team. You know your child best and your input and consent are needed for the first IEP. Learn more about your role [here](#).

3. How do I know if my child qualifies for special education services?

The only way to find out if your child definitely qualifies is to have him or her evaluated. The 13 disabilities that require special education services through an individualized education plan are as follows:

- deafness/hearing impairment
- autism
- cognitively impaired
- communication impaired/ language disorder
- emotionally disturbed/ behavior disorder
- multiply disabled (two or more equally disabling conditions)
- orthopedically impaired, including malformation or malfunction of bones, muscle or tissue
- other health impaired/ chronically ill
- preschool disabled (ages 3-5)
- social maladjustment
- specific learning disability
- traumatic brain injury
- visually impaired

However, you may also get help for your child with a 504 plan as well. Start with a request for evaluation to your child's school district and move forward from there.

4. What do I do if my request for an initial evaluation is denied?

You always have the right to disagree with the school district's decision but you must follow the correct procedures to move your appeal forward. You can request a state mediation or a due process hearing. Details on how to appeal are [here](#).

5. After the school district agrees to the initial evaluation, what happens?

The school district will schedule a meeting to get your written consent to evaluate your child. You must give written permission for the initial evaluations to take place.

6. What is the initial evaluation process?

After the school district has approved the initial evaluation, they have 90 days from the date of your written request to evaluate your child, decide whether your child is eligible for special education services and if so, design and implement an individualized education program (IEP). To learn more about the initial evaluation process, click [here](#).

7. What is an individualized education plan?

An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is a written statement of a student's educational goals and how the school district will meet the learning needs of a particular student. It reflects annual goals for the student and accommodations to assist the student's learning in the least restrictive environment. Each of the student's teachers should review the document to learn how best to help the student learn in his/her classroom. It is reviewed and revised annually in conjunction with the school district's child study team. It can also be revised whenever necessary to best reflect the current needs of the student. You can find a brief overview [here](#).

8. I don't agree with the outcome or recommendations of the school district's evaluation process. What can I do?

You can request in writing that an outside evaluation be conducted. That is an evaluation done by a professional outside the school district. This is to be completed at no cost to the parent or guardian and is paid for by the school district. For more information about outside evaluations, click [here](#).

9. The school district did not find that my child needed special education services. I filed an appeal and the mediation/due process hearing had the same finding. Is there another way to get help for my student?

You can apply for a [504 plan](#). 504 plans can include some of the same accommodations found in IEP's. A medical diagnosis is not required for a 504 plan. The accommodations are provided at no cost to the family and are for students with any disability, not only the 13 disabilities which apply to an IEP. For more details on the difference between an IEP and 504 plan, click [here](#). The steps are slightly different to obtain a 504 plan. Check [here](#) for a brief explanation of the steps.

10. I had the first IEP meeting with the child study team and we approved my child's IEP. What does the process look like after this?

Your child's teachers should give your child the accommodations and changes outlined in the IEP. Going forward, the child study team (including you because you are a member) will meet once a year to review and revise the IEP if needed. The IEP can change at any time by calling a child study team meeting if your child's needs change. This meeting can be called by you or another member of the child study team. The school will notify you of the date and time of the meeting so you may attend. Your child's IEP may also change without a meeting if you and the school agree on the change and you provide written agreement.

11. Can my child's school change the IEP without my permission?

Yes. The school district does not need your consent to change an IEP after the first IEP is established. If you disagree with the proposed IEP at a meeting, do not sign the IEP signature page. You have 15 days to reject an IEP by requesting mediation or a due process hearing in writing. While waiting for your resolution, tell the school you want to use the "[stay-put](#)" provision for your child. This will retain the accommodations of the original IEP while you are waiting to come to a solution. For more details on appealing school IEP decisions, click [here](#).

12. I do not agree with the new IEP proposed by my child's school district. Does refusing to sign the IEP stop it from being changed?

No. Refusing to sign the IEP only delays it being used by 15 days. This does not stop the new IEP from being implemented. See [here](#) for more details.

13. How long will my child have an IEP and special education services? What happens in adulthood?

Special education services can continue until your child is 21 years old. Transition planning for adulthood begins in 8th grade. This includes having your child attend IEP meetings if appropriate and planning for adult life after high school. This can be a variety of different options such as vocational training, self-advocacy for college or an out-of-home adult residential setting. You and the child study team will develop these plans over the years leading up to adulthood. You can find a comprehensive overview [here](#).

14. My child wants to go to college. Will the IEP from high school apply in a college setting?

No. Your child's IEP does not apply to higher education. Your child will need to learn to advocate for himself or herself in college. College accommodations can be under a 504 plan or the American Disabilities Act. Your child can choose if he or she wants to share the disability with the college. If they choose to share their disability and seek out accommodations, the school's disability services office (if the school has one) is the place to coordinate services and get information. Use [this link](#) for more resources.

15. Where can I learn more about special education and students' rights in New Jersey?

Check out [this guide to special education](#) to start. Other good resources include [Advocates for Children of New Jersey](#), [SPAN Parent Advocacy Network](#), and The Arc of New Jersey's [IEP Go Bag](#) of resources.