



UNDERSTANDING IEPs

For students to receive special education services, they need an IEP — an Individualized Education Program. If your child has been evaluated, the process of getting one has already begun. But there's still a lot to learn about how the process works and what your role will be. The more you know, the more involved you can be in getting your child the best support possible.

You'll likely hear about many things that are unfamiliar to you. And you'll probably have lots of questions. Who gets an IEP? What's the difference between an IEP and a 504?

Understanding the process, being informed, and finding the answers to your questions can help you decide if you want to pursue an IEP for your child. It will also help you advocate for your child with more confidence.

Visit

**[www.deafchildren.org/
navigatingtheiepprocess](http://www.deafchildren.org/navigatingtheiepprocess)**
to learn more

1 Understanding the IEP Process

The first step is making a referral for your child to have an evaluation to determine if your child qualifies for special education services.

2 Knowing what's in an IEP

If you've never seen an IEP before, the various documents can be hard to decipher. They cover many areas, using terms and information you'll likely have questions about. But all of those pieces — from testing results to goals for progress — add up to the best program of instruction and supports for your child.

The information in an IEP can give you a deeper understanding of your child's strengths and challenges. And it should lay out exactly how the school plans to help your child improve and build skills.

3 Navigating IEP meetings

IEP meetings can be stressful and overwhelming but if you understand the process, understand your rights and responsibilities the process can go smoothly.

Being able to prepare for the IEP meeting, understanding, what questions to ask, and knowing what to expect at the meeting is crucial. As the parent or guardian of your child you are the most important part of the IEP team, and your child's biggest advocate navigating process.

4 Staying on top of your child's IEP

The IEP journey will continue as long as your child qualifies to receive special education services. From that initial IEP meeting until the last you will play a key role in making sure the plan is working and your child is making progress.

The more knowledgeable you are about the process the easier the process will be. As your child's needs change so will the IEP. Keep in mind you will always be your child's number one advocate throughout the school years and beyond!