

IDEA

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is legislation that guarantees services to students who have been identified as having a disability throughout the United States. IDEA provides school districts and Intermediate Units (IU) with regulations on how to provide early intervention, special education, and related services to students ages birth to 21 years of age. IDEA Part B governs students ages 3-21 while IDEA Part C governs birth-2 years old.

IDEA originated as Public Law 94-142 in 1975 and was also known as the Education for Handicapped Children Act. In 1990 it was revised and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The law has 6 fundamental areas:

1. **Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**

All students with disabilities ages 3-21 are entitled to a free and appropriate education (FAPE), which can include special education supports and related services as described in their IEP.

2. **Nondiscriminatory Evaluation**

Every child is entitled to receive a nondiscriminatory full evaluation that is free from cultural bias and language barriers in order to prevent misidentification.

3. **Parent and Teacher Participation**

Parents and teachers are an integral and required part of the Evaluation and IEP teams as they help to identify the student's strengths and needs, goals, LRE, and other considerations specific to that student. Parents and teachers may ask for an IEP meeting at any time to discuss concerns.

4. **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**

IDEA requires school districts and IEP teams to determine the Least Restrictive Environment for students with disabilities. The LRE is individualized for each student in how much time they are educated with their nondisabled peers depending on their needs and amount of support services.

5. **Individualized Education Plan (IEP)**

An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is designed to meet the needs of each student. This document outlines the special education support services and related services unique to each student. This document also includes parent and teacher input, goals, present levels of educational and functional performance, specially designed instruction, support to school personnel, and LRE. The following are required members of the IEP team: Parents, regular education teacher, special education teacher (if applicable), district administrator (LEA), student (if over age of 14), and any other district employee with direct knowledge of the student.

6. **Procedural Safeguards and Due Process**

Procedural safeguards are intended to protect students with disabilities and their families as well as ensure that these students receive FAPE. Both parents and schools have the right to due process to ensure fairness.