



Individualized Education Programs

San Diego City Schools (SDCS) offers special education and services in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). IDEA Part B describes the Individualized Education Programs (IEP) process for students between the ages of three to 21 years, identification of students with special needs, referral, evaluation, determination of eligibility, developing the IEP, programs and services, and procedural safeguards.

Referral: The referral process for special education may be initiated in two ways. When a student experiences educational difficulty, s/he may be brought to the attention of the school site's Instructional Study Team (previously called the Student Study Team). The parent is invited to attend this meeting, where concerns about the student's progress are reviewed and modifications/accommodations are identified for implementation in the classroom. If, after a time period, limited/no progress is noted, the student may be referred for Special Education. Parents, concerned about their student's educational progress, are encouraged to conference with the teacher and may also refer their child for special education.

Evaluation: Once a child has been referred, the parent receives a packet of materials including a *Consent for Assessment*, indicating assessments to be completed in areas of concern. When the parent signs and returns it, the case manager ensures that an evaluation is conducted in a timely manner. The evaluation typically includes a review of school records and other developmental or medical reports, observation of the student at school, portfolios, and completion of formal and/or informal evaluation tools.

IEP Meeting & Eligibility: An IEP meeting is convened to share results of the evaluation. Attendees include: the parents, general education teacher, staff who conducted the evaluation(s), and an administrator. If a student meets the eligibility criteria of any of the 13 disability areas (as defined by the federal and state regulations), and is in need of special education in order to benefit from the educational program, s/he is found eligible for special education.

IEP: An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed, containing goals for the student. Program options are considered and the one that best meets the needs of the student is selected. Placement options must ensure a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and reflect the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Options within the district include: designated instruction and service, (e.g., speech therapy, mobility) general education with support of a special educator, (e.g., Resource Specialist) special day class and special schools. Once the decision has been made and the IEP signed, the student begins to participate in the program or service as soon as it is reasonable to do so.

Procedural Safeguards: Occasionally there is disagreement about the IEP process. If this occurs, parents are encouraged to communicate their concern immediately to the case manager or principal. IDEA requires that parents be informed of their due process rights and expects parents and school districts to make every attempt to resolve any disagreement at the district level. If that is not feasible, upon request, SDCS staff can assist parents in exercising their procedural safeguards.

SUMMARY

- ❖ **Federal legislation, Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) ensures that students with disabilities are searched for and served.**
- ❖ **The Individualized Education Process (IEP) is composed of multiple steps, which include:**
 - **Instructional Study Team;**
 - **Referral;**
 - **Evaluation;**
 - **Determination of eligibility;**
 - **IEP development;**
 - **Program or services; and**
 - **Procedural safeguards.**
- ❖ **Continuum of program options refers to placements that range from least to most intense and/or restrictive.**
- ❖ **Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) refers to appropriate special education services provided to the student at no cost to the parent.**
- ❖ **Least Restrictive Environment requires students to be educated with typically developing peers to the maximum extent possible.**

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Contact Info: Special Education Programs Division: (619) 725-7650
Media inquiries: (619) 725-5578

www.sandi.net

Serving more than 138,000 students, San Diego City Schools is the second largest school district in California, with 200 educational facilities and more than 14,500 full-time equivalent positions (representing over 18,800 employees.) SDCS is improving student achievement by focusing on challenging education in reading, writing and mathematics. The district is committed to supporting schools and enhancing the classroom learning environment through modernized facilities and resources and through parent, teacher and community involvement in the educational process.