

How the IDEA can Help Parents Help Their Child

What is the IDEA?

- *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act:*

Prohibits discrimination based on disabilities in a broad range of programs, activities and services regardless of whether or not federal funds are involved.

- **IDEA** includes requirements to ensure that all children eligible for special education services have a *free, appropriate public education* (FAPE) which “emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs” THIS IS A PROTECTED RIGHT OF EVERY ELIGIBLE CHILD.
- **IDEA** assures that the rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected.
- **IDEA** assists states to provide for the education of all children with identified special needs/disabilities.

Parents are full and equal partners

Parents are key decision-makers, and are significant members of their child’s special education team. Parents help ensure their child receives an “effective, meaningful, and appropriate education” by:

- Learning about their child strengths, challenges, disability, and needs;
- Assisting in determining and meeting their child’s needs;
- Participating on the special education team with a sense of equality & confidence;
- As an advocate and partner, treating others with respect, and expecting the same in return.

Parents’ rights under the IDEA

- Examine all of their child’s records.
- Participate in all meetings concerning their child.
- Agree or disagree with placement decisions.
- Request independent evaluations, at public expense.
- Request a hearing to present concerns about their child’s education.
- Be provided with written notice of decisions made by the school about their child.

Special education is complex!

There is a lot to learn. Teacher, Family Workers, and Specialists can assist parents in navigating these complexities, by listening to their concerns, encouraging them to learn more, ask more, and develop a strong partnership with their child’s special education team.

Source: IDEA Parent Guide, National Center for Learning Disabilities: www.nclld.org