

Putting a Plan In Place to Help Your Child Succeed at School

By Jacob Bradshaw | Sep. 02, 2015

School is where most children spend the majority of their time during the day. Their experiences at school can play a major role in their development. It's important that these experiences are as positive and helpful as possible. A child with a mental health condition may have additional obstacles at school, and as a parent, you play a critical role in your child's education. There are laws in place, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), that not only protect the rights of children with disabilities, but also give parents the right to oversee how the school handles their child's education. These are called "procedural safeguards."

Your rights as a parent include (but are not limited to):

- An explanation of these rights and the way to make a formal complaint.
- Participation in meetings about the special educational needs of your child.
- Confidentiality and access to the educational records of your child.
- The right to grant or deny consent for many actions that a school can take for your child.
- The use of IDEA dispute-resolution procedures, and the right of appeal.
- The right to disagree and challenge the decisions of the school.
- An independent educational evaluation (IEE) for your child.
- The right to be notified in writing before a school takes certain actions related to your child's education.

Creating a Plan for Success

While knowing your rights can help ensure that your child is treated fairly by his or her school, occasionally additional resources are needed to help your child succeed. IDEA includes more than 13 categories of disability, including mental health conditions, which determine whether your child can receive special education services. However, just because a child has learning and attention issues doesn't mean that he or she is eligible for services. In order to receive education services, the student must be evaluated. Either a school official or a parent may request an independent educational evaluation (IEE), but parental consent is always required for an evaluation to occur. The school then conducts the evaluation at no cost to you. You have the right to have an IEE of your child done by an outside professional. The school must consider this in any decision about an individualized education plan (IEP), but it does not have to adopt the recommendations. IEPs are only required for public schools, but many private schools also offer IEPs or similar procedures. When a child between the ages of 3 and 21 receives special education services, IDEA requires that the school work with the parents and children to develop an IEP. Through an IEP, students may be provided with special education services, curriculum or assignment modifications, or accommodations.

Some examples of accommodations include (but are not limited to):

- Alternative assignments.
- Shorter papers or tests (or more time to complete tests).

- A different or adjusted curriculum.
- An atypical grading system. Having instructions read aloud.
- Ability to record lessons. Use of a calculator or other technology.
- Working in a quiet room away from noise or distraction.
- Extra break periods. Sitting at the front of the classroom.

The goal is to find a balance between giving your child the tools to succeed without providing them with an unfair advantage. Having too few accommodations can leave a child frustrated and affect his or her learning and development. Too many accommodations can leave a child poorly prepared for their post-IEP life. If you don't believe that your child needs an IEP, or you have not qualified your child as a student with a disability under IDEA, you may request a 504 plan. A 504 plan can be helpful when more substantial interventions are not needed. In most cases, 504 plans do not allow for a change in curriculum, and they cannot place children in special education classrooms. They can provide certain services, such as counseling, speech therapy or other general services. If your child qualifies, a 504 plan must be provided for free.

Who Develops the IEP?

As a parent, you have the right to invite anyone involved in your child's care to the IEP meeting to be part of the team. At a minimum, your child's IEP team will include: The child's legal guardian(s). At least one general education teacher. A special education teacher. A special school district representative. A school psychologist or other professional in the field of psychology. In certain cases, your child. You should also bring someone with you to IEP meetings to help support you, such as the child's case manager, therapist, psychiatrist or psychologist, or someone they recommend. There must be one IEP team meeting each year to review the plan. Through these meetings, the IEP adapts as the child progresses through school. Each child must have a new IEP at least every three years. Moving

Toward Independence

An IEP must also include a "transition plan" for when a child turns 16 years old, but it's often a good idea to start earlier. This plan provides a framework for preparing your child for adult life. It is more than just about school; it covers job and daily life skills, as well. It's important that your child be included in creating this plan. Knowing your rights for how to help your child succeed in school, and implementing services that can help him or her learn in the most effective way possible, can help prepare your child.

- See more at:

http://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/September-2015/Putting-a-Plan-In-Place-to-Help-Your-Child-Succeed?utm_source=naminow&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=september2015#sthash.b8sSfTaY.dpuf