

SCHOOL AGE; AGES 4-12 YEARS

The school years bring innumerable challenges for a child with autism, but they also hold incredible opportunity for growth. For parents, the challenge is to discover and leverage resources to maximize the child's avenues of academic learning, social experience and physical fitness. Having a team of professionals is essential throughout this long-life stage – getting help from those who know the system can reduce stress on the family and improve outcomes for the child with autism.

There are many [treatment approaches](#) available to school-aged children with autism –

- Applied Behavior Analysis
- Occupational therapy
- Supplemental therapies
- Dietary regimens and more

Similarly, there are many different educational programs that provide stimulating learning environments to children with different needs and abilities.

It is important to match a child's potential and specific needs with treatments or strategies that are likely to help him/her reach established goals and greatest potential. The Autism Society does not want to give the impression that parents or professionals will select just one treatment from a list. A search for appropriate treatment must be paired with the knowledge that all treatment approaches are not equal – what works for one will not work for all. The basis a treatment plan should come from a thorough evaluation of the child's strengths and weaknesses.

1. [Connect with Tri-Counties Regional Center, intake meeting and assessment](#)
2. [Prepare for transition to school with plans for an IEP Program](#)
3. [Start documenting all assessments, treatments and build your Team](#)

THE IEP – INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

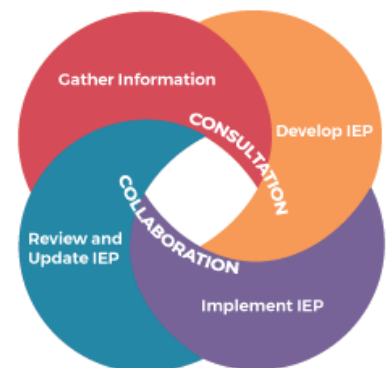
Subsequent to the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#), or IDEA, children with disabilities are entitled to a “free appropriate public education” (FAPE), meaning schools must provide eligible children with appropriate accommodations including specially designed instruction to meet their unique needs at no cost to the children's parents. IDEA also includes regulations to protect the rights of parents and children.

The most crucial element is **creating a plan for your child's education**. This plan is called the [Individualized Education Program](#), or the IEP, it lists the special education services your child will receive, based upon his or her individual needs.

It helps to think of the IEP both as a *process* and as a *document* to be written.

The IEP might seem overwhelming, we are including some information and tips to assist in the process. There are also various resources including workshops, and service providers available.

Individualized Education Program Process



504 PLAN & STUDENT SUCCESS TEAM

A 504 Plan provides services and changes to the learning environment to meet the needs of the child as adequately as other students. To get a 504 Plan, there are two requirements.

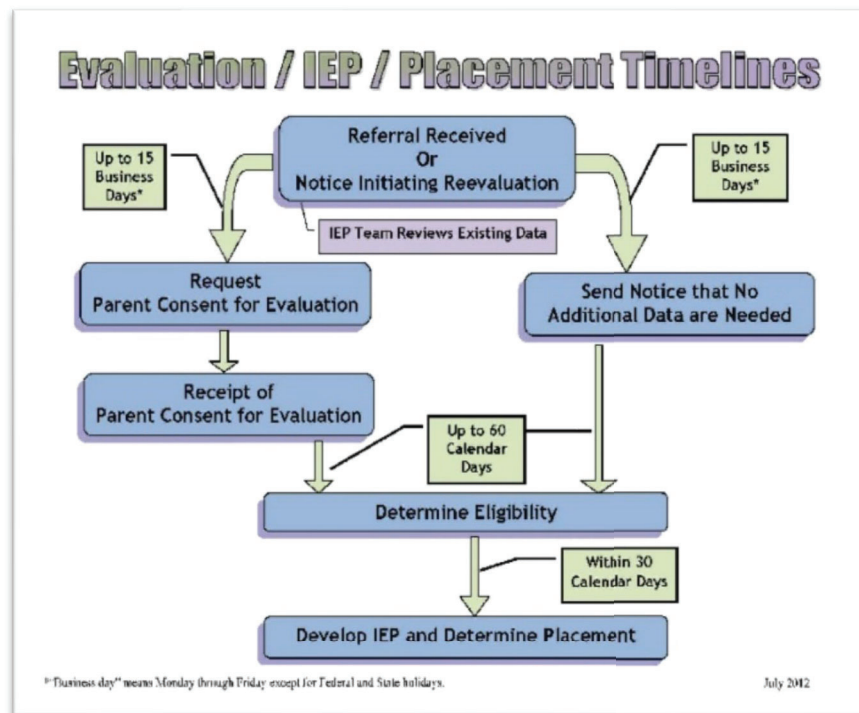
1. The child has any disability, which can include many learning or attention issues.
2. The disability must interfere with the child's ability to learn in a general education classroom. Section 504 has a broader definition of disability than IDEA (it says a disability must substantially limit one or more basic life activities, such as learning.) That's why a child who doesn't qualify for an IEP might still be able to get a 504.

By contrast, an IEP provides individualized special education and related services to meet **the unique needs of the child**.

Your child might be at a state where an IEP is not needed, but if you have a diagnosis of Autism it is within your rights to request a full IEP.

SEVEN STEPS OF THE IEP PROCESS

1. **Pre-referral:** Early diagnosis and intervention. Documenting challenges or difficulties and missed milestones exhibited by the child.
2. **Referral:** Someone, usually your child's teacher or another school professional, suspects your child may have a learning disability or need extra services, such as speech pathology or occupational therapy. Your child is then referred to the school district for an evaluation, and you will be asked to give parental consent. As a parent, if you suspect your child may need additional help, you have the right to request an evaluation as well. Once the parent requests assessment, the district has 15 calendar days to respond. The district

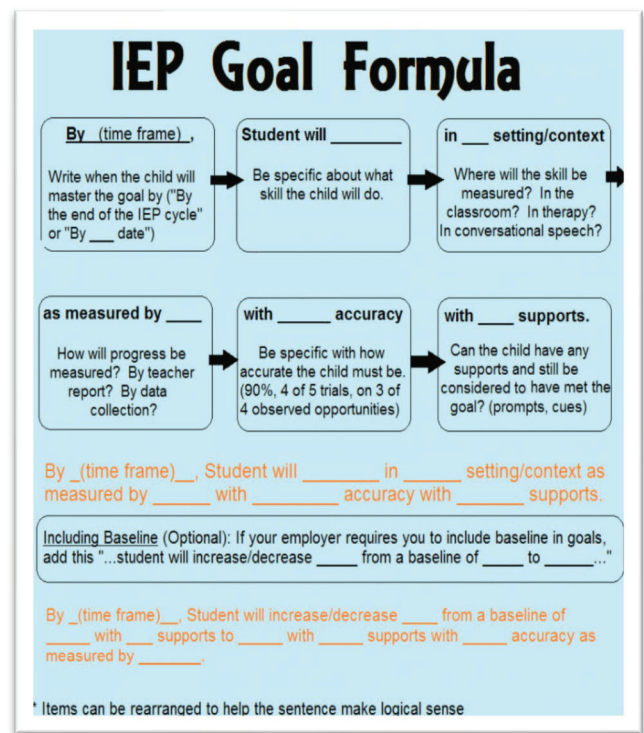


will either develop an Assessment Plan which indicates the areas to be assessed and the persons who will be conducting the assessment, or it will inform you that the district declines to initiate assessment at this time. If the district declines to initiate assessment, they must give reasons why.

3. **Identification:** The members of the evaluation team differ according to your child’s special needs. The team leader is often a school psychologist or special education professional from your district, and the others may include a physical therapist, a vision specialist, a speech and language pathologist, or another specialist whose expertise is required in assessing your child. The parent has the right to have a description of the areas to be assessed and the proposed assessors. If you have any questions about the Assessment Plan for your child, do not hesitate to contact the appropriate professional for further explanation. If you have additional assessment information from another specialist (i.e., doctor, therapist), be sure to give it to a member of the Assessment Team to be considered. After the assessment is completed the parent must be fully informed of assessment results, including a written copy of the findings. If you disagree with school district assessment results, you have the right to request an independent assessment at no cost. However, if the district disagrees that an additional assessment is necessary, it may request a Due Process Hearing to prove that its assessment is appropriate.

4. **Eligibility:** After the evaluations, the team members write their reports and determine whether your child qualifies for services. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), to receive services, your child must be determined a “child with a disability” — which can mean anything from an articulation issue to ADD to a hearing impairment and many others. If your child isn’t found eligible for services and you disagree, it’s your right to challenge the decision.

5. **Development of IEP:** The IEP meeting is scheduled by the school district, and it’s the coordinator’s job to contact you well in advance and attempt to accommodate your schedule. On the call, the coordinator is required to list the meeting’s attendees and invite you to bring anyone you feel would be an advocate for your child, such as a teacher or therapist. At the meeting, your child’s IEP will be written, including the specific services he’ll receive, how many times per week and for how many minutes he’ll get them, and whether they’ll be one-on-one or with a group. If you disagree with the IEP, you have the right to request a due process hearing and mediation.



Sample Goal Development Table

Goal	Present Level of Performance (PLOF)	Benchmarks/ Small Steps	Observations/ Questions for School

IEP Should Include:

- Student Information
- Present Level of Educational Performance
- Annual Goals
- Services (In Detail)
- Progress Reporting
- Supplementary Aides
- Participation
- Parent Consent

6. **Implementation:** Once the IEP is written, your child’s school is responsible for making sure it’s followed. Your child’s teacher, service providers, and you will all be given copies of the IEP. Often, you’ll meet at the beginning of the academic year with the school’s IEP coordinator to discuss how the program will be carried out. As often as your child’s report cards are sent out, you should receive official IEP progress reports, though usually you’ll be given informal updates on a more frequent basis. At least once a year, the IEP will be reviewed. At the meeting you can request changes or make suggestions, and if you disagree with the results, you can ask for additional evaluations or a hearing and mediation.

7. **Evaluation and Reviews:** According to the U.S. Department of Education, kids with IEPs must be reevaluated every three years to determine whether they’re still eligible for services. If you or your child’s teacher requests it, however, reevaluations can be done sooner or more often.

**Ventura County Special Education Local Plan Area
Prior Written Notice to Parent of Action
Proposed or Refused by School District
(300.503 – Code of Federal Regulations)**

Date: [Click here to enter a date.](#)

District: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Student’s Name: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Parent (s): [Click here to enter text.](#)

This notice is to inform the parent(s) of the above named student regarding the school district’s: Proposal to initiate or change the: Identification of Evaluation of Placement of Provision of a free appropriate public education for

Refusal of your request to initiate or change the: Identification of Evaluation of Placement of Provision of a free appropriate public education for your child.

1. Description of action proposed or refused by district: [Click here to enter text.](#)
2. Explanation of reason for proposal or refusal: [Click here to enter text.](#)
3. Description of any other options district considered and why they were rejected or selected: [Click here to enter text.](#)
4. Evaluation procedure(s), test(s), record(s) or report(s) used as a basis for the proposed/refused action: [Click here to enter text.](#)
5. Other relevant factors: [Click here to enter text.](#)

As a parent(s) of a child with a disability, or suspected of having a disability, you have protections under state and federal laws. Please see attached “Parent Rights.” If you need assistance in understanding these rights, you may call Ventura County SELPA at (805) 437-1560.

Additional resources for parents are available on our website: www.venturacountyselpa.com. If you have questions or need further assistance, please do not hesitate to call.

Signature

[Click here to enter text.](#)
Title

[Click here to enter text.](#)
Phone

SAMPLE FORM – SELPA ASSESSMENT PLAN

For Staff Only
Date Received _____

ASSESSMENT PLAN

- Initial Evaluation
- Triennial Review
- Other

Ventura County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)

Student Name _____ D.O.B. _____ Age _____ Grade _____ Date _____
 Parent/Guardian/Surrogate Name _____ Address _____
 Phone(s) Home _____ Cell _____ Work _____ Email _____
 School _____ ID# _____ EL Status _____ Primary Language _____
 REASON FOR ASSESSMENT/AREAS OF CONCERN _____

For Initial Evaluations only	
Referral Source _____	Date Referred _____
School years interventions were provided in general education _____	

The following assessments are proposed to assist in determining your child's educational needs. All assessments will be given by appropriately qualified personnel. The assessment will be in the areas checked below and may include pupil observation in a group setting, classroom work samples, district or statewide group assessments, individualized testing, teacher interview(s) and an interview with you. It also may include a review of reports you have authorized us to request or that already exist in current records. Assessments will be non-discriminatory, and alternative means of assessment may be used in situations when standardized assessments are inappropriate. Within 60 days of receipt of this signed assessment plan, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team meeting will be held. You will be invited to attend and review assessment results and participate in determining your child's educational needs and eligibility for special education services.

PRE-ACADEMIC/ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT: Special Education Teacher Early Childhood Specialist Other: _____
Purpose: To determine current reading, writing, and math skills or pre-academic skills such as matching or sorting.

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOR: Psychologist Behavior Specialist Intensive School-Based Therapist
 Other: _____
Purpose: To evaluate how the student handles feelings and emotions and how he/she gets along with other people.

SELF HELP/ADAPTIVE SKILLS: Psychologist Special Education Teacher Other: _____
Purpose: To evaluate how the student functions in daily life activities needed in the educational setting.

MOTOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: Occupational Therapist Physical Therapist Adapted Physical Education Specialist
 Psychologist Early Childhood Specialist Other: _____
Purpose: To evaluate small and large motor functioning and/or psycho-motor skills related to access and performance in the educational environment.

LANGUAGE/SPEECH/COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT: Speech-Language Pathologist Early Childhood Specialist
 Other: _____
Purpose: To determine an individual's ability to understand, relate to, and use language and speech clearly and appropriately.

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT: Psychologist Early Childhood Specialist Other: _____
Purpose: To determine how well individuals remember what they have seen and heard, how well they can use that information to solve problems, and to assist in predicting the student's learning rate. Verbal and performance instruments may be used as appropriate.

HEALTH ASSESSMENT: School Nurse Audiologist Other: _____
Purpose: To evaluate developmental patterns and current health status as they relate to school functioning.

VOCATIONAL/PREVOCAATIONAL: Special Education Teacher Psychologist Other: _____
Purpose: To determine the individual's interests and aptitudes as related to future job and/or career.

OTHER: Deaf/Hard of Hearing Functional Behavior Analysis Assistive Technology Augmentative/Alternative Communication
 Functional Vision Orientation & Mobility Special Circumstances Paraprofessional Other: _____
 Responsible Personnel: _____

If you have any questions contact: _____
Name/Title Phone/Email

PARENTAL CONSENT FOR PUPIL ASSESSMENT

I understand the purpose of the proposed Assessment Plan and have received a copy of my Parent Rights. I authorize the use of a suitable interpreter or prerecorded tests in my child's primary language as appropriate. I further understand that no Individualized Education Program will result from this assessment without my consent. The box(es) checked below indicate my decision(s).

Yes, I give my permission to conduct the assessment as described above and will make my child available for the assessment. I understand that assessment cannot begin until a copy of this form has been signed and returned.

If yes, check any that apply:
 I give permission to the school district to bill the LEA Medi-Cal Billing Option Program for this assessment, if applicable. (Income from this program is used by the district to offset costs of providing special education services and will not affect the child's individual benefits.)
 Please consider the following Independent Educational Evaluation report(s) as part of the assessment process: _____
 No, permission is denied.

Please sign and return, keeping one copy for your records.

Parent/Legal Guardian/Adult Student/Person Acting as Parent (Specify) _____ Telephone Number _____ Date _____

For more information about special education and your rights contact your district special education office or visit the Ventura County SELPA website at www.venturacountyselfpa.com

Copy to: District Office Cumulative File Case Manager Parent/Adult Student Related Services

SELPA – NAVIGATING THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Ventura County SELPA provides information and support to families of children with special needs so that they can be informed partners in the educational process of their children. There are numerous activities and resources that are provided to fulfill that mission. These include:

[Community Advisory Committee \(CAC\)](#)

[FREE Programs Available for Students with Disabilities](#)

[Information Alerts for Parents](#)

[Parent-to-Parent Support](#)

[2018 Parent Information Flyer](#)

[Parent Rights for Special Education](#)

["Ability Awareness"](#)

[Parent's Guide to Special Education](#)

RESOLVING DISAGREEMENTS

On occasion, parents and the school district may have disagreements. Special education law provides specific steps for resolving those conflicts. It is always a good idea to try to resolve things at the lowest level possible. If you haven't spoken to the Special Education Director in your district, you are encouraged to give them a call to express your concerns ([phone list](#)). If there is a disagreement between a parent and the district on what is best for the child (usually at the IEP Team level) either party may file for Due Process. Due Process is a system for increasing levels of intervention in resolving the conflict. Please visit the [Office of Administrative Hearings](#) website to download the Mediation or Due Process form. Also available from the Office of Administrative Hearings is a [Free/Reduced Cost Special Education Attorney Advocate List](#).

Solving Special Education Disputes Between Parents and School Districts

[Special Education Handbook](#) (PDF, new window) A comprehensive guide to understanding Special Education Due Process Hearings at OAH.

If a parent feels his or her rights or the rights of their child have been violated by the district or an employee of the district, the parent has a right to file a complaint. A complaint may be filed with the District Complaint Resolution Office. If not resolved, or if the parent chooses not to file the complaint with the district, a complaint can be filed directly with the California Department of Education using this form.

[Complaint Process Brochure](#)

[Request for Complaint Investigation](#)

[Helpful Hints When Requesting Direct State Intervention](#)

PARENT-TO-PARENT SUPPORT

[Rainbow Support Groups](#)

[United Parents](#) - Educational Advocacy, Parent Partners, Respite Services

[California Parent Organizations](#)

SAMPLE FORM – IEP BINDER CHECKLIST

IEP Binder Checklist <i>Put the newest items on top in each section</i>				
Communication		<i>To be updated:</i>	<i>Date updated:</i>	
School contact list	Yearly or as new members join the team			
Communication log	Every time you have a meeting, call or other important interaction with the school			
Letters and emails to and from the school	As often as needed (File after noting them in the communication log)			
Evaluations				
Request/referral for evaluation	Every three years or more often, if needed			
Consent to evaluate	(Tip: Keep this—and the referral—on top to help check if the evaluation is done in a timely manner)			
School evaluations	At least every three years			
Private evaluations (if your child has had any)	Every time your child is evaluated privately			
IEP				
Copy of Parent's Rights & Safeguards	Yearly (Keep this on top so you can easily show the school you don't need another copy)			
IEP	Yearly or more often, if changes are made (and, if your child has had a 504 plan, include that too)			
Prior Written Notice and meeting notes	Yearly or more often, if additional meetings take place			
Report Cards/Progress Notes				
Reports cards and progress reports	As often as they come from the teacher or school			
Sample Work				
Samples of schoolwork	At least monthly or as often as you see signs of progress or concern			
Standardized tests	Whenever the results are sent home			
Behavior				
School handbook and school calendar	Yearly			
Behavior Intervention Plan (if your child has one)	Yearly or as often as changes are made			
Disciplinary notices	Any time your child receives one			

SAMPLE FORM – PARENT/SCHOOL COMMUNICATION LOG

Parent-School Communication Log	
Date:	<input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> In Person
Who initiated:	Who participated, received or attended:
What prompted the communication:	
What was discussed:	
What was decided:	
Date:	<input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> In Person
Who initiated:	Who participated, received or attended:
What prompted the communication:	
What was discussed:	
What was decided:	
Date:	<input type="checkbox"/> Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> In Person
Who initiated:	Who participated, received or attended:
What prompted the communication:	
What was discussed:	
What was decided:	

Contact List: Who to Call at Your Child’s School



Your child’s teacher is a terrific resource, but some questions may be better for other staff members. Ask the school office or parent coordinator for the information you need to fill out this contact list.

<u>Afterschool Programs</u> (supervisor info, activity questions, social issues)	Name: Phone / Email:
<u>Athletics</u> (issues with coaches, student-athlete codes of conduct)	Name: Phone / Email:
<u>Behavior</u> (support plans, periodic check-ins)	Name: Phone / Email:
<u>Bullying</u> (classmate issues before, during and after school)	Name: Phone / Email:
<u>Class Placement</u> (general vs. special education, inclusion classrooms)	Name: Phone / Email:
<u>Discipline</u> (detention, suspension, etc.)	Name: Phone / Email:
<u>Evaluation for Special Education</u> (response to intervention, evaluation requests)	Name: Phone / Email:
<u>Field Trips</u> (ways to prepare chaperones and prevent meltdowns)	Name: Phone / Email:
<u>Food</u> (sensory processing issues, food allergies)	Name: Phone / Email:
<u>Health Issues</u> (daytime rest or breaks, medications)	Name: Phone / Email:
<u>Homework</u> (concerns about overall workload)	Name: Phone / Email:
<u>IEPs or 504 plans</u> (requests and concerns, issues with specialists)	Name: Phone / Email:
<u>Schoolwide Testing and Curriculum</u> (state standards, standardized testing accommodations)	Name: Phone / Email:
<u>Social/Emotional Issues</u> (coping skills, conflict resolution, crisis intervention)	Name: Phone / Email:
<u>Teacher-Related Issues</u> (communication help, parent-teacher relationship)	Name: Phone / Email: