

# Guide to Special Education Parent Handbook



**SPECIAL EDUCATION  
PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Ingham Intermediate School District**

**Special Education Parent Advisory Committee**

2630 West Howell Road, Mason, MI 48854

([www.inghamisd.org](http://www.inghamisd.org))

517.244.1298

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**Ingham Intermediate  
School District**

Special Education  
Parent Advisory Committee

## Information Disclosure

Great care has been taken to convey this material accurately and clearly. The information provided in this handbook is only intended to be general summary information to the public. It is not intended to take the place of either the written law or regulations. The Parent Advisory Committee takes reasonable measures to ensure the quality of the information made available in this publication. However, the Parent Advisory Committee makes no warranty, expressed or implied, nor assumes any liability or responsibility for the accuracy, correctness or completeness of any information that is available through this publication. For your exact legal rights, please refer to the procedural safeguards document available from your school district, [Ingham Intermediate School District \(Ingham ISD\)](https://www.inghamisd.org) (<https://www.inghamisd.org>) or the [Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598_88184---,00.html) ([https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598\\_88184---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598_88184---,00.html)).

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The Board of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation and transgender identify), disability, age, religion, height, weight, marital or family status, military status, ancestry, genetic information or any other legally protected category, (collectively, “Protected Classes”), in its programs and activities, including employment opportunities.

Questions or concerns regarding the nondiscrimination policies should be directed to:  
Jason Mellema, Superintendent  
Ingham Intermediate School District

Contents

Information Disclosure..... 2

Notice of Nondiscrimination..... 2

PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE..... 7

    Meeting Schedule ..... 7

    Parent Advisory Committee Membership ..... 7

    Parent Advisory Committee Member Responsibilities..... 7

    A Letter from the Parent Advisory Committee..... 8

    How to Participate ..... 8

    Ingham Intermediate School District (Ingham ISD) ..... 8

Before We Begin ..... 9

    The Purpose of This Handbook ..... 9

Understanding Special Education Law..... 9

    State Laws ..... 9

    Federal Laws ..... 10

    What is free appropriate public education (FAPE)? ..... 10

    What if my child does not attend a public school?..... 10

    Do any other laws help children with disabilities? ..... 10

    Where can I get more information about special education laws?..... 11

Understanding the Special Education Process..... 12

Some Terms You Should Know Before You Begin..... 12

    IEP ..... 12

    IEPT ..... 12

    MET ..... 12

    Overview ..... 12

    Documentation ..... 14

Identification and Referral ..... 15

    Who can refer a child for help? ..... 15

    How does someone refer a child for help?..... 15

    What’s in the notification letter the school sends me?..... 15

    What happens at a Review and Existing Evaluation Data (REED) meeting?..... 15

    What if I *don’t* give permission for the evaluation? ..... 15

Evaluation ..... 15

    What happens when I agree to have the school evaluate my child? ..... 15

Who evaluates my child? .....	15
Can I provide input with the evaluation? .....	15
How do I know that my child is being evaluated fairly? .....	16
Prior to IEPT Meeting .....	16
What does the team do with the evaluation results? .....	16
What if I don't want my child in special education?.....	17
Determination of Eligibility .....	17
What does it mean to be eligible for services?.....	17
What if I disagree with the area of eligibility? .....	17
Developing a Program for Your Child.....	17
The IEP should help ensure that your child will:.....	17
What if a required IEP Team Participant cannot attend the IEP Team Meeting? .....	18
Attendance Not Necessary .....	18
What happens at the IEP meeting? .....	18
Do all districts have the same IEP form? .....	18
Transition IEP Form Including Post-School Transition Considerations .....	18
Parental Rights and Age of Majority .....	18
Education Development Plan (EDP).....	18
Course of Study .....	18
Transition Services .....	19
Post-Secondary Goals .....	19
What should I do to prepare for the IEP meeting? .....	20
What is my role during the IEP team meeting? .....	20
How does the IEP team decide where to provide services?.....	21
What does "least restrictive environment" mean? .....	21
What should I do after the IEP team meeting? .....	21
Visit the school on occasion.....	21
What if I have problems with the program or the school?.....	21
What Happens Next? .....	23
How is the IEP updated? .....	23
What if there's a problem with my child's IEP? .....	23
Re-Evaluation .....	23
When will my child be re-evaluated? .....	23
Understanding Your Rights and Procedural Safeguards .....	23
What is a procedural safeguards notice? .....	24

What is an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)?.....	24
How do I request an IEE? .....	24
How do I find someone to do the evaluation? .....	24
Isn't an evaluation expensive?.....	24
What does "prior written notice" mean? .....	25
What is meant by parental participation? .....	25
When is parental consent required? .....	25
Who can access my child's special education records?.....	25
Resolving Disagreements .....	25
What is mediation, and when is it used? .....	25
The mediation process:.....	25
How do I find a mediator? .....	26
Is it expensive to use a mediator? .....	26
What is the result of mediation? .....	26
What is an impartial due process hearing? .....	26
What is a resolution session? .....	26
Do I need an attorney? .....	26
Can a due process hearing complaint be amended?.....	26
Who conducts a due process hearing? .....	26
Will I know in advance what the school's argument is? .....	27
Does the hearing officer make a decision right away? .....	27
Can I appeal the hearing decision? .....	27
How can I file a complaint?.....	27
A complaint must contain the following items.....	27
What if I'm not a very good writer?.....	28
Can the school just ignore my complaint?.....	28
Discipline of Students with Disabilities .....	29
Will my child be disciplined differently if he or she is in special education?.....	29
Can my child be suspended?.....	29
What is a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR)? .....	29
What if my child's misconduct is due to his or her disability?.....	29
What happens if the team decides the misconduct is a manifestation of my child's disability? .....	29
What happens if the team decides the misconduct is <b>NOT</b> a manifestation of my child's disability? ...	30
Can my child be expelled? .....	30
What happens if there is a change in placement?.....	30

Alternative Educational Setting for up to 45 school days:..... 30  
How long would my child be in an alternative setting?..... 30  
Can the school just move my student to an alternative setting? ..... 30  
What happens when my child’s time in the alternative setting ends? ..... 31  
Can my child be moved to an alternative setting for any other reason? ..... 31  
What if I don’t agree with the disciplinary decisions the school and/or IEP team make? ..... 31  
GLOSSARY..... 32  
COMMON ACRONYMS..... 36  
Contact Information..... 38

## PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Ingham Intermediate School District (ISD) Special Education Parent Advisory Committee is a committee promoting a partnership between families and professionals in the education of students with active Individual Education Plans (IEP) or 504 Plans by promoting communication, awareness, and collaboration between parents, local school districts, and Ingham ISD.

### Meeting Schedule

Parent Advisory Committee meetings are held monthly at Ingham ISD, located at 2630 W Howell Rd, Mason, MI 48854. All parents and caregivers of a child receiving special education services are encouraged to attend or participate in our meetings online. Watch our Facebook page for more information [Facebook: Ingham ISD Parent Advisory Committee](https://www.facebook.com/InghamISDParentAdvisoryCommittee/) (<https://www.facebook.com/InghamISDParentAdvisoryCommittee/>).

Please refer to the calendar listed on the Ingham ISD Parent Advisory Committee webpage at [inghamisd.org](http://inghamisd.org) ([www.inghamisd.org](http://www.inghamisd.org)).

### Parent Advisory Committee Membership

The Parent Advisory Committee representatives are appointed by local school districts. We are continually looking for new members. If you would like to become a part of the committee, contact your local special education director to express your interest. We are always looking for parents, caregivers and volunteers to support Parent Advisory Committee activities.

### Parent Advisory Committee Member Responsibilities

Parent Advisory Committee members are accessible to local parents for support and information. Some of the duties of the Parent Advisory Committee members include:

- Act as liaisons between parents, local school districts, and Ingham ISD
- Provide support and information to parents who have a student with an active IEP or 504 Plan
- Attend Parent Advisory Committee activities to support awareness of students with an active IEP or 504 Plan
- Provide input and feedback on the Ingham ISD Plan for the Delivery of Special Education Programs and Services

Questions regarding the Parent Advisory Committee may be directed to your local special education director or to any [Parent Advisory Committee representative](https://www.inghamisd.org/ourpartners/parentadvisorycommittee/contacts/) (<https://www.inghamisd.org/ourpartners/parentadvisorycommittee/contacts/>). A list of district representatives can be found on the Ingham ISD Parent Advisory Committee webpage.

## A Letter from the Parent Advisory Committee

The Ingham ISD Parent Advisory Committee have developed this Guide to Special Education in an easy-to-read, question-and-answer format. It provides information to help you understand the process used to make decisions about special education eligibility, educational programs, and related services and supports for students.

Keep this guide as a reference. You may not read it from cover-to-cover at one time, but instead you might read it by sections and refer back to the handy timelines and definitions as the need arises. If, after reading through the material, you have questions, concerns, suggestions or ideas regarding your child's education or our organization, you may direct them to any committee member. The committee member representing your school district is aware of services within that district. Each of us on the committee want to help you become better informed about the services available to your child and you, or to support you in any way we can. You are welcome to attend any Parent Advisory Committee meeting. A contact list of all committee members can be found on the Ingham ISD website. Please review the Parent Advisory Committee section on the Ingham ISD website at [inghamisd.org](http://inghamisd.org) ([www.inghamisd.org](http://www.inghamisd.org)) or call Ingham ISD at 517.244.1298 for more information.

Sincerely,

The Ingham ISD Special Education Parent Advisory Committee

## How to Participate

The Parent Advisory Committee is made up of parents of children with IEPs or 504 Plans. These parents represent each local school district in the Ingham ISD service area, each public school academy, and also include additional members assigned by Ingham ISD. The mission of the Parent Advisory Committee is to promote partnerships among parents and educators that benefit students with IEPs or 504 Plans. Members are involved in a number of issues of special interest to parents of children with IEPs or 504 Plans.

## Ingham Intermediate School District (Ingham ISD)

The Ingham Intermediate School District (Ingham ISD) offers educational services that supplement those your local school district and the Michigan Department of Education provide. Ingham ISD provides specialists, specialized classroom programs, and other resources for teachers and students in your local school district.



## Before We Begin

Special education is individualized instruction designed to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. It includes instruction, at no charge to the parent, conducted in a classroom, home, hospital, institution or other setting.

No matter how you arrived here, you may be feeling a little bit overwhelmed. Special education is a whole new world that you need to master in order to help your child get the help he or she needs from the school system. The world of special education includes specialists in fields that may be new to you, complicated federal and state laws, and so many new phrases and acronyms that your head may spin.

In the world of special education, a “parent” may be any of the following:

- The natural or adoptive parent of a student or youth with a disability.
- A person acting in the place of a parent, such as a grandparent or stepparent with whom the student or youth with an active IEP or 504 Plan lives.
- A foster parent.
- A guardian (but not the state) if the student or youth with a disability is a ward of the state.
- A person who is legally responsible for the welfare of a student or youth with an active IEP or 504 Plan.
- A surrogate parent who has been appointed in accordance with state board of education policy.

## The Purpose of This Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to help you through the maze of new information that you’ll encounter in the world of special education. This handbook explains:

- How special education processes work
- The state and federal laws that regulate special education
- Your rights as the parent of a child who may need special education
- Where you can find support and resources

The Guide to Special Education explains the acronyms, abbreviations, and special phrases that you may need to know when working in the world of special education. It also lists some other resources in the Ingham County area that might be helpful to you. This handbook was put together for you by the Special Education Parent Advisory Committee of the Ingham Intermediate School District (Ingham ISD). The Parent Advisory Committee is made up of parents who all have children with active IEPs or 504 Plans. The Parent Advisory Committee members were once new to the world of special education and they want to make your introduction as easy as possible.

## Understanding Special Education Law

All children are entitled to the full benefits of a free appropriate public education (FAPE). This is not just a belief; it is the law. Special education is governed by laws at both the federal or national (United States) level, and at the state (Michigan) level. State laws can require schools to provide more services than federal laws require, but they do not allow schools in the state to provide fewer or lesser services.

### State Laws

Michigan law requires that special education services be available to all eligible children from birth to age 26 or until they receive a diploma. The types of services provided, however, vary for each child.

Children with disabilities who reside within the Ingham ISD service area, and who are eligible to receive special education services, will be provided appropriate programs and/or services by:

- Their local school district, OR
- The intermediate school district, OR
- Through an approved contractual agreement

## Federal Laws

At the national level, special education is governed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education and Improvement Act, or IDEA. IDEA has six basic principles. They provide for:

- Free appropriate public education (FAPE)
- Appropriate evaluation
- Individualized education program
- Least restrictive environment
- Parent and student participation in decision making
- Procedural safeguards

This law also makes it clear that children with IEPs or 504 Plans will participate in the general curriculum whenever possible.

The principles listed above are all explained in this handbook. The first principle is described below. The others are included in the section titled, "Understanding the Special Education Process."

## What is free appropriate public education (FAPE)?

FAPE means special education and related services that:

- Are provided at public expense, under public supervision/direction, and **without charge** to parents or students
- Meet requirements set by the Michigan Board of Education and by IDEA
- Include preschool, elementary school, middle school, and secondary school education in the state
- Are provided to meet your child's individualized education program (IEP). (Lots more information about the IEP is provided in the section of this handbook titled, "Understanding the Special Education Process.")

## What if my child does not attend a public school?

Children who do not attend typical public schools are still entitled to some special education services. Charter schools are public schools and must provide special education services. Private schools do not need to provide special education services, but your child may be eligible to receive special education services through the public school system, even if he or she attends a private school.

## Do any other laws help children with disabilities?

In addition to IDEA, another federal law helps children with disabilities. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (amended) prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities. This law applies to any program or activity that receives any kind of funding from the federal government. The act requires that schools make reasonable accommodations for each qualified person, regardless of the severity of his or her disability. Some children who do not qualify for special education programs and services may still qualify for 504 accommodations.

### Where can I get more information about special education laws?

The internet is a great source of information about special education in general. As with any subject that you research on the internet, the information you find is only as reliable as the source. Here are a couple of websites (federal and state education departments) that may be helpful:

Ingham ISD Parent Advisory Committee Website ([www.inghamisd.org](http://www.inghamisd.org))

US Department of Education ([www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/index.html))

Michigan Department of Education ([www.michigan.gov/mde](http://www.michigan.gov/mde)) Select: "Special Education"

## Understanding the Special Education Process

### Some Terms You Should Know Before You Begin

As mentioned previously, special education has a language all its own, with many phrases, acronyms and abbreviations that may be new to you. Here are a couple of important terms you should know before you begin to read about the special education process:

#### IEP

IEP stands for Individualized Education Program. The IEP is a written plan describing how the school district will meet your child's unique educational needs through special education programs and services. Because the IEP is as unique as your child, it may be very different from an IEP for another child.

#### IEPT

Your child's IEP is created by an IEPT – Individualized Education Program Team. This is a group of people that includes:

- You, the parent(s): The mother, father, surrogate, or legally designated guardian of the person with a disability. (see glossary)
- At least one general education teacher, if the child is, or may be, participating in a regular education classroom.
- At least one special education teacher or service provider.
- Someone from the local school district who is the District representative; and has the authority to commit the district's resources to meet your child's needs.
- Someone who can interpret and explain the test results used to evaluate your child.
- Other people invited by you or the school district who have special knowledge about your child or expertise with your child's disability.
- Your child, if it is appropriate to include him or her. Around age 13, your child should be included in the IEPT. The school district is required to invite your child to the IEPT meeting beginning at the IEP during which he or she will turn 16. This is especially important for transition planning.
- You can bring any person of your choosing, who knows your child and will be helpful to you to the IEP meeting.

#### MET

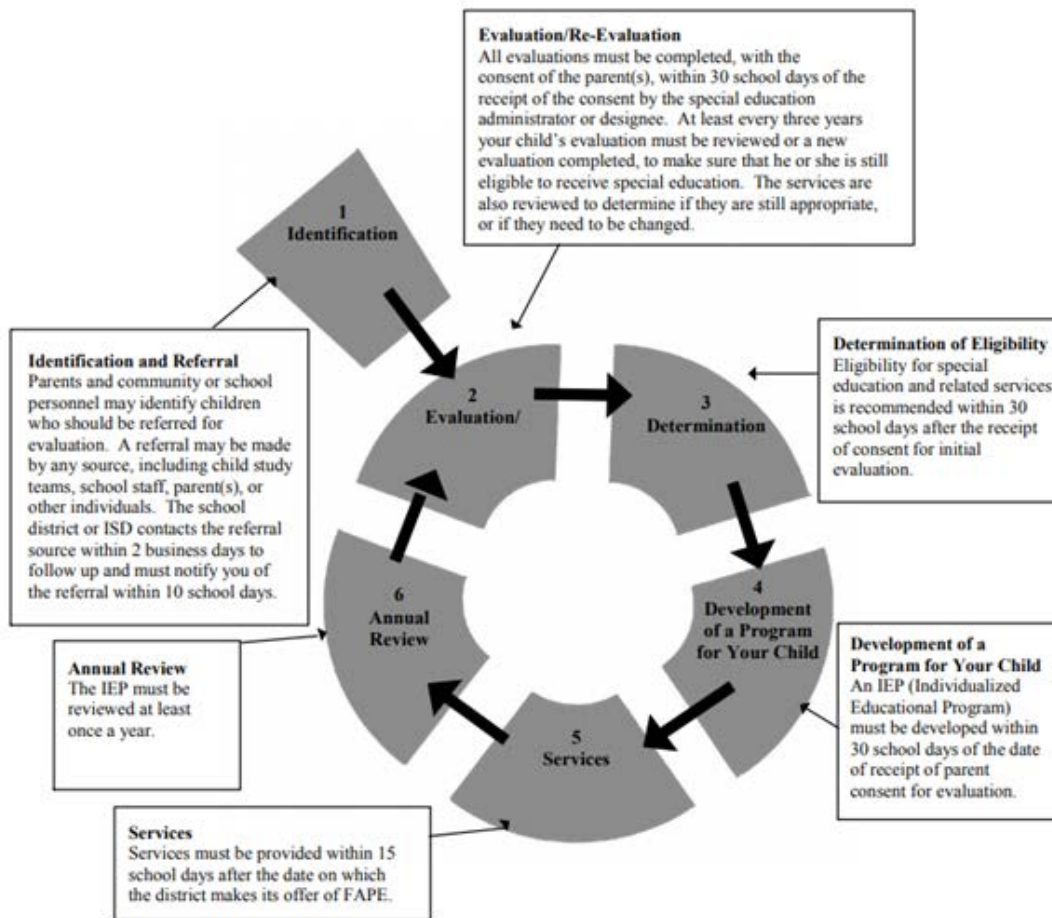
MET stands for Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team. This team is a group of school personnel who participate in the evaluation of your child. The exact make-up of the group depends on the child and the child's suspected disability.

The MET selects the tests or other assessment tools to use when evaluating your child. Some members of the team will also administer the test or participate in the evaluation process. Parent input is also an important part of the MET. More information about the evaluation process is provided later in this document.

#### Overview

When there is a concern that a child has a disability, a very specific process is followed to make sure that a child receives the help he or she needs. This process is outlined by federal and state laws that govern special education, described in the previous section. The process may seem complicated, but it boils

down to just a few basic steps. You cycle through much of the process each year, as long as your child continues to be eligible to receive special education. The process is pictured below.



1. Identification and referral. If your child is suspected of having a disability, anyone with an educational interest can refer him or her to the local school district or intermediate school district for evaluation. The request for evaluation must be made in writing. If you suspect that your child has a disability, you can make the referral yourself. In writing, ask that your child be evaluated to determine if he or she has a disability, and the nature of the services that may be needed. After receiving the referral, the district must respond within 10 days.
2. Evaluation. A team is put together to review information about your child and determine what evaluations are needed. The team includes specialists from different educational areas. Parents are important members of this team and provide input for the evaluation along with professionals.
3. Determination of eligibility. Once the school district determines your child has a disability, they, with your input and participation, also determine whether he or she is eligible to receive special education services. Federal and state laws spell out the circumstances that make a child eligible. It's possible for a child to have a disability, but not be eligible for services. This might occur if the disability is very mild or if the child is not experiencing significant impact to his or her learning.

4. Development of a program for your child. If your child is determined to be eligible to receive special education services, the team (this includes **you**) puts together an education plan for your child. (The plan is called an IEP – more about this in a couple of pages.) The IEP team also decides what specific services and/or programs your child will receive.
5. Services. Services must be provided within 15 school days after the date on which the district makes its offer of FAPE.
6. Annual review. The IEP must be reviewed and revised at least once a year.

Re-evaluation. At least once every three years your child's evaluation must be reviewed or a new evaluation completed, to make sure that he or she is still eligible to receive special education. The IEP team determined programs and services are also reviewed to determine if they are still appropriate, or if they need to be changed.

### Documentation

As soon as possible, start a file or a notebook. In the file, keep copies of all letters, reports, and other information about your child that you receive. Keep your own notes and thoughts too. You may wish to include medical information or photos to help track your child's progress. The Ingham ISD Parent Advisory Committee has developed a **Parent Organization Packet**. This packet may be given to you at your child's Initial IEP.

## Identification and Referral

### Who can refer a child for help?

Anyone who is concerned about a child, including parents, teachers, social workers, licensed physicians, nurses, foster parents, or other agencies may refer a child suspected of having a disability. As a parent, you must be notified that the school is proposing to evaluate your child, and you must consent to the initial evaluation.

### How does someone refer a child for help?

A special education referral begins with a written request for evaluation of a child suspected of having a disability. All requests must be made in writing.

The request is sent to the local school district, who must notify you that they have received it. When the school district receives a referral for your child, they must respond to you within *10 school days*.

### What's in the notification letter the school sends me?

The written notice will notify receipt of the request. It will also notify you of next steps in the process based on local district policies.

### What happens at a Review and Existing Evaluation Data (REED) meeting?

At the meeting, you will meet with the school personnel who may evaluate your child (if you agree to have him or her evaluated). You will discuss your child's suspected disability. You will have an opportunity to provide input about your child's current performance, strengths, health, and any other concerns. You may also want to share the results of any evaluations and/or medical reports you would like the team to consider. The information that you provide will be recorded on the Review of Existing Evaluation Data (REED) form. You will be asked to sign a form consenting to have your child evaluated. You must provide written consent to continue the evaluation process.

### What if I *don't* give permission for the evaluation?

If you don't give permission for the school to evaluate your child, the evaluation will not occur unless the school district pursues the initial evaluation of the student through a due process hearing.

## Evaluation

### What happens when I agree to have the school evaluate my child?

The IEP team (including you) must meet within thirty (30) school days (not calendar days) after they receive your consent to evaluate. At the meeting, the team will discuss their evaluations, determine whether your child has a disability, and decide whether he or she qualifies for special education services. More information about the evaluation is provided in the next section. Remember, *you, the child's parent(s), are members of the IEP team.*

### Who evaluates my child?

The initial evaluation, to determine if your child has a disability and if he or she qualifies for services, is performed by members of the multidisciplinary evaluation team (MET).

### Can I provide input with the evaluation?

You can help by providing your own observations about your child and his or her suspected disability. You can also provide the results of any evaluation(s) you may have obtained for your child. The evaluation team must consider the results of your evaluation; however, they may not be able to use the results of your evaluation.

## How do I know that my child is being evaluated fairly?

State and federal special education laws give you and your child very specific rights during the evaluation process. You need to be familiar with these rights:

- Tests must be provided and given in your child's native language or other mode of communication (e.g., sign language) unless it is clearly not feasible to do so.
- The testing may not discriminate on the basis of race, language or cultural background.
- You may ask for evidence that the tests are valid for the purpose(s) the school district is using them for.
- You can include information that will help your child to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum, or for preschool children, to participate in appropriate activities.
- The tests must be given by trained personnel who must follow the instructions that go with the tests.
- Your child must be evaluated to assess specific areas of educational need, not just take an IQ test. More than one evaluation must be used to determine if your child needs special education.
- Your child must be tested in all areas related to his or her suspected disability.
- The test should be modified or adapted for your child if he or she has impaired sensory, physical, or speaking skills. The tests should be appropriate for your child's age, socioeconomic, and cultural background.
- The evaluation must be made by a Multidisciplinary Team (MET) which includes a teacher or other person who knows about the suspected disability. This might mean evaluating health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and/or motor ability.
- You, the parent(s), must be notified of each evaluation procedure, test, record or report that the team uses to determine if your child has a disability.
- If career services or technical education is being recommended for your child from age 16 or beyond, he or she should have a vocational evaluation. It must include an assessment of the student's:
  - Personal adjustment skills
  - Aptitudes
  - Interests
  - Academic achievement

## Prior to IEPT Meeting

Ask (insist if necessary) that written copies of all reports be given to you before the IEP meeting. This gives you time to read and become familiar with the material before the team talks about the information at the meeting. You may have questions that you want to ask at the meeting, or you may want to talk to the evaluator before the meeting. If you have questions when you review the report(s), write them down to help you remember them.

## What does the team do with the evaluation results?

The IEP team does two things with the results of your child's evaluations:

- The team determines if your child is eligible for special education services.
- If your child is eligible, the team writes an IEP (Individualized Education Program) for your child, based on data from the evaluation. This plan sets specific educational goals for your child and specifies the programs and services that will help your child achieve those goals.



## What if I don't want my child in special education?

When you give consent for the school district to evaluate your child, you are not giving the school permission to place your child in special education. That decision will be made after the evaluation when the IEP team meets.

## Determination of Eligibility

### What does it mean to be eligible for services?

Under Michigan law, there are twelve categories of disability. If the evaluation of your child determines that he or she fits into one of the twelve disability categories, and has an educational need, then he or she is eligible for special education services.

What are the 13 disability categories?

The 13 disability categories are listed below. For a definition of what each of these categories means, please refer to the [Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598_88184---,00.html) (https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598\_88184---,00.html) MARSE - the laws that regulate special education in the state.

1. Cognitively
2. Emotionally
3. Deaf or hard of hearing
4. Visually
5. Physically
6. Other health
7. Speech and language
8. Early childhood developmental delay
9. Specific learning disability
10. Severely multiple impairment
11. Autistic spectrum disorder
12. Traumatic brain injury
13. Deaf-blindness

Definitions of each of the disability categories are included in both the state and federal laws relating to special education.

### What if I disagree with the area of eligibility?

If you disagree with the evaluation completed by the school district, you can request an independent evaluation to be conducted by someone else. The school district will pay for this Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE), but only if you follow the correct procedures. More details about obtaining an IEE are provided later in this handbook.

## Developing a Program for Your Child

Every child with a disability has their own set of educational needs that differ from those of other children. To make sure these unique needs are met, each child has an IEP: An Individualized Education Program. The IEP is developed specifically for your child. An IEP must be reviewed annually.

The IEP should help ensure that your child will:

- Be involved and progress in the general curriculum

- Participate with other children with disabilities and with non-disabled children in educational activities, extracurricular activities and other nonacademic activities.
- Advance toward achieving his or her annual goals

### What if a required IEP Team Participant cannot attend the IEP Team Meeting?

#### Attendance Not Necessary

A required member of the IEP team shall not be required to attend an IEP meeting, in whole or in part, if the parent and school district agree that this member's attendance is not necessary. This agreement must be in writing prior to the IEP meeting.

### What happens at the IEP meeting?

At the IEP meeting, the team works together to develop your child's IEP. The IEP form documents all of the decisions and questions that must be considered by the team. A member of the team who is familiar with the IEP form (for example, the school district's representative), leads the team through the meeting.

### Do all districts have the same IEP form?

No, IEP forms frequently differ from ISD to ISD and sometimes within an ISD. Most all districts use some form of electronic IEP software and these IEP forms look different as well. All forms contain the elements required by the Michigan Department of Education. Also, there are actually two different IEP forms. One is for children younger than age 16. The other is for students age 16 and beyond. The IEP for older students focuses on transition services. It includes questions related to the child's transition from school to adult life. You can view sample IEP forms at the Michigan Department of Education [Family Matters](http://www.michigan.gov/mde) website (www.michigan.gov/mde then Search: Family Matters).

### Transition IEP Form Including Post-School Transition Considerations

A different IEP form is used for students age 16 and over or at age 13 and over if appropriate. This form is very much like the other IEP form, but it has an additional page that has questions and requirements that help the IEP team plan for the student's transition outside of the school system and into adult life. The sections of the form that differ from the first IEP form are discussed below.

### Parental Rights and Age of Majority

Ordinarily, when a student turns 18, he or she is considered an adult, and the parents no longer have the right to make decisions for their child. This is true regardless of disability. However, depending on the student's needs and level of functioning, the parents (or another interested party) may go to court to be named guardians for the student. This allows them to continue to make decisions for their child. In this section of the Transition IEP, the team indicates whether the student has turned 18 and whether the parents have been named guardians. If the student is not yet 18, the upcoming transfer of rights should be discussed with him or her at age 17, if appropriate.

### Education Development Plan (EDP)

The EDP is to be completed by all eighth grade students. The EDP is a broad-based inventory to help students determine career interests.

### Course of Study

In this section, the team indicates what the student's course of study will be and how it will support their post-secondary goals. The student might be working toward a high school diploma or a certificate of completion.

## Transition Services

The next session that is unique to the Transition IEP is shown below. The team will identify strengths and needs based on the student's transition assessment. Here the team indicates who will be responsible for various activities/services to support the student's transition to adult life. These services should be coordinated and relate to the student's post-secondary goals and present level of academic achievement and functional performance.

## Post-Secondary Goals

This part of the transition IEP form asks for the student's input on his or her goals for adult life. The questions include where the student would like to live and work, what hobbies or activities he or she is interested in, and what kind of additional education or training they would like to pursue.

## What should I do to prepare for the IEP meeting?

There are many things you can do to prepare for an IEP team meeting. Some ideas are listed below.

- Read the reports written by the people who evaluated your child. If you have questions about a report, talk to the evaluator who wrote it. You may want to write your questions down so you remember them.
- If you have report cards, progress reports, or an IEP from the previous year, review those items. Has your child progressed or achieved his or her goals? Are the goals chosen last year still important? Have other needs become more important?
- Make a list of suggestions you would like to include in your child's IEP. This might include skills you know your child will need soon, or adaptations or services you think would be helpful.
- Write down any questions or concerns you want to bring up at the meeting. You may wish to prepare your own report that provides your observations and evaluations.
- You may wish to observe your child in his or her present program and/or talk to the teacher. (Check your school's observation policy.)
- Before the IEP meeting takes place, visit all of the programs in which your child may be placed. Work with your local special education director to arrange visitations. This way you will know whether you agree or disagree with any placement decisions the team may discuss.
- If your child has received services from another agency, collect as much information as you can to share with the team. This could be any activity your child participates in outside of school.
- If possible, both parents should attend the IEP team meeting. Remember, you can bring anyone you choose with you (child care provider, grandparent, aunt, uncle, advocate, etc.).
- You can review your child's school records if you wish.
- Familiarize yourself with terms used in IEP meetings. (See the glossary at the back of this handbook.)

## What is my role during the IEP team meeting?

The most important thing to remember at the meeting is that you are your child's best advocate and a full member of the IEP team. Share your opinions and ideas about your child's educational needs and the services and programs you believe are most likely to help. You know your child the best, so you are an expert. Here are some other suggestions:

During the IEP, ask:

- for an explanation of anything you don't understand. This might be new terminology, a service you've never heard of before, or a program you aren't aware of. Don't be afraid to ask; every professional in the room had to learn about these terms and programs at some time.
- about the advantages and disadvantages of various programs or classes proposed.
- for the reasoning behind a suggestion if you don't understand it.
- what related services (e.g., speech therapy, occupational therapy, etcetera) your child needs.
- what each could do for your child.
- what you can do at home to help reach educational goals or other important points.
- whether your child requires special transportation services.
- About other important points.

IEP Forms:

- The IEP forms may be filled out as the team works through the meeting. The school team may present a draft of the PLAAFP (present level of academic achievement and functional performance) and goals and objectives for your input. This form should be in a draft format.

- The IEP is a legal contract, be sure you understand its contents. If you are uncertain, ask for a copy of the IEP, take it home, review it, and think about it for a day or two before you sign the initial consent for the district to provide services and/or programs for your child. The only time you will be asked to provide written consent will be at the initial IEP for your child. You need not sign it at the meeting. *You do need to sign and return the consent form within 10 school days of receipt of the IEP and notification of the district's intent to implement special education programs and services.*
- If the forms are not completely filled out, do not sign the initial consent document. Remember, this is a legal document.
- If your child attends the initial IEP meeting, make sure he or she signs the initial consent form also. This will give them a sense of ownership in their education.
- Any official member of the IEP team (including you) may disagree with the plan and attach a written dissent to the IEP form.
- If you disagree, you can additionally request, in writing, an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE), mediation or a due process hearing. More about these options later in this handbook.

### How does the IEP team decide where to provide services?

When discussing placement, the IEP team should consider the unique needs and determine the least restrictive placement for your child based on those needs.

### What does “least restrictive environment” mean?

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) means that children with disabilities are educated alongside children without disabilities, to the greatest extent possible. Your child must not be placed in a special school or a special class unless education in a regular classroom, with supports and special services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

The team should consider whether a regular classroom setting may have potentially harmful effects on your child or on the services he or she needs.

### What should I do after the IEP team meeting?

Keep the IEP report and other special education records together in a safe location. Include report cards or progress reports. Keep some of your child's homework to help you remember what he or she has accomplished through the year. The *Special Education Organization Packet* given to you at your child's initial IEP is a good place for these records.

### Visit the school on occasion.

- Get to know your child's teacher and principal.
- Keep positive communication channels open between school and home.
- Share unexpected information that may affect your child's behavior (late night, illness at home, conflicts).
- Keep the IEP goals in mind and monitor progress.
- Monitor your child's program and services. Mention any concerns you have to your child's teacher, the principal, or an appropriate service provider (e.g., a therapist). Discuss progress on goals, services that are not being provided as scheduled, staffing concerns, etcetera, as soon as you become aware of them. Ask how you can support your child's learning.

### What if I have problems with the program or the school?

If your child's teacher, the school, or a therapist are not following the IEP, you should first talk to the person involved. There may be a simple way to resolve the problem. The next step, if you do not get

resolution, would be to talk with the case manager, the school principal and then the school district's special education director/supervisor/coordinator. If necessary, you can ask for a meeting of the IEP team at any time. At the meeting you can raise your concerns, and the IEP team will determine if your child's IEP should be modified.

If you cannot resolve the problem, there are several other options you can pursue. Please refer to the section titled, "Resolving Disagreements" for more information.

## What Happens Next?

After your child is evaluated and determined to be eligible for special education services, and after the IEP has been written with the initial consent document signed, your child may begin placement in the program you have helped design. The IEP is generally used for a year and is then updated annually.

### How is the IEP updated?

The IEP team must review your child's IEP at least once a year. Your child does not need to be re-evaluated every year, but the team will revise the goals and, if appropriate, placement and services.

Most of the rules that pertained to creating the first IEP are still in effect. Remember:

- You must be notified in writing of the meeting.
- You, the parents, are members of the IEP team.
- You may review your child's records before the meeting.
- You may bring someone with you to the IEP meeting.

### What if there's a problem with my child's IEP?

If there is a problem with the goals, program or services outlined in your child's IEP, first talk with the person involved. There may be a simple way to resolve the problem. The next step, if you do not get resolution, would be to talk with the case manager, the school principal and then the school district's special education director/supervisor/coordinator. If necessary, you can ask for a meeting of the IEP team at any time. At the meeting you can raise your concerns, and the IEP team will determine if your child's IEP should be modified.

If you cannot resolve the problem, there are several other options you can pursue. Please refer to the section titled, "Resolving Disagreements" for more information.

## Re-Evaluation

### When will my child be re-evaluated?

At least once every three years (often in conjunction with your child's annual IEP process), the multidisciplinary evaluation team (MET) must consider re-evaluating your child. They will determine if your child still meets the eligibility requirements for special education and if his or her educational needs are still the same. A re-evaluation may not be necessary if your child's disability is stable/unchanged. If the team believes that a re-evaluation is not necessary, you must sign a form indicating that you agree with their decision.

If a re-evaluation is necessary, it will be much like the first evaluation. As with the first evaluation, you can obtain copies of the evaluation reports to review before the IEP meeting.

You should receive a copy of a publication that explains your rights and procedural safeguards at every IEP, or one time per year. If you haven't received it, or can't find it, you can ask your school district for another copy or find it at [www.michigan.gov/mde](http://www.michigan.gov/mde) and Search: Procedural Safeguards.

## Understanding Your Rights and Procedural Safeguards

Special education laws, both federal and state, provide "procedural safeguards." Procedural safeguards are rules that help protect your legal rights and your child's legal rights. Some of the most important rights and safeguards are:

- Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)

- Prior written notice
- Procedural safeguards notice
- Parental participation
- Parental consent
- Confidentiality

Each of these is described in more detail below.

### What is a procedural safeguards notice?

Procedural safeguards include information that is designed to protect the rights of parents and their child. The school district must give a copy of the procedural safeguards notice to the parents at least once a year, and as noted below:

- Upon initial referral or the parents' request for evaluation
- Upon request by the parents
- Upon receipt of the first due process complaint or state complaint in a school year
- Upon a change in placement for disciplinary action

### What is an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)?

When a parent disagrees with the results of an educational evaluation of their child, which was completed by the school district, **they can request** an independent educational evaluation. The IEE is like getting a second opinion. It is completed at no cost to the parent and is conducted by an individual who is not employed by the school district. When the IEE is completed and the results are shared with the school district, the individualized education program (IEP) team must consider the results when providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for the student. However, the IEP team is not required to implement the results or recommendations. The IEE becomes part of the student's permanent school record.

### How do I request an IEE?

You must submit a written, signed and dated request for an IEE. In your request for an IEE you must explain what you disagree with in the district's evaluation. The school district must respond in writing **within seven (7) calendar days** after they receive your request. They must tell you whether they will obtain the IEE or whether they will request a due process hearing to show that their evaluation was appropriate.

### How do I find someone to do the evaluation?

When you request an IEE, the school district should provide you with information about independent evaluations. This information should include:

- Suggestions of evaluators
- How to locate an examiner
- How to determine if the examiner's credentials are good
- How to go about being reimbursed
- How much the evaluation should cost
- A notice that says you do not have to select one of the examiners suggested by the school district

### Isn't an evaluation expensive?

- If the school district agrees to obtain the IEE, they will pay the full cost of the evaluation.



- If the school district requests a due process hearing, and the hearing determines that the original evaluation is not appropriate, the school district still pays the full cost of the IEE.
- If the school district requests a due process hearing, and the hearing determines that their evaluation was appropriate, you still have the right to obtain an IEE. However, in this instance, you must pay for the evaluation.
- If an IEE is conducted, the IEP team must consider the IEE results in the development of your child's IEP. If you obtain an IEE at your own expense, and if you choose to share the results, the IEP team must consider the IEE results. The IEE can potentially be used as evidence at a later due process hearing regarding your child.
- If a hearing officer requests an IEE as part of a hearing, the school district must bear the cost of the evaluation.

### What does “prior written notice” mean?

Prior written notice means that the school must notify you in writing (usually in a letter) of certain events in regard to your child with a disability. For example, you must be notified in writing before the school district may evaluate your child, and you must be notified in writing of every IEP team meeting.

### What is meant by parental participation?

Parental participation means that you must be allowed to help determine the appropriate programs and services for your child with a disability. Parents are automatically members of the IEP team. You must be allowed to provide input at IEP meetings, during evaluation reviews, and regularly informed of your child's progress.

### When is parental consent required?

The schools must obtain your consent for evaluation and services. For example, the school must obtain your permission before they may initially evaluate your child following a special education referral and before your child is initially placed in special education programs/services.

### Who can access my child's special education records?

As with all school records, your child's special education records must be kept private by the school. Teachers and other school personnel may not discuss your child's IEP, evaluation, or any other records with doctors, other parents, outside service providers, or anyone else, without first obtaining your written consent.

## Resolving Disagreements

### What is mediation, and when is it used?

If you disagree with any matter relating to the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of your child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to your child, you have the option of requesting that a mediator hears your concerns.

### The mediation process:

- Must be voluntary on the part of both parties, and
- Must not be used to deny or delay a parent's right to a due process hearing or to deny any other rights.

The Parent Advisory Committee encourages you to think of mediation as a positive way to solve conflict before going to a hearing.

### How do I find a mediator?

[Special Education Mediation Services \(SEMS\)](http://www.mikids1st.org) ([www.mikids1st.org](http://www.mikids1st.org)) provides individuals who are qualified mediators and who have knowledge in laws and regulations relating to special education.

1.833.KIDS.1ST

### Is it expensive to use a mediator?

The State bears the cost of the mediation process. Each session in the mediation process should be scheduled in a timely manner and should be held in a location that is convenient to both you and the school staff.

### What is the result of mediation?

If you and the school district reach an agreement, it will be recorded in a written, legally binding mediation agreement. Discussions that occur during the process are confidential. Evidence and discussions from the mediation process may not be used as evidence in any later due process hearing or civil proceeding.

### What is an impartial due process hearing?

Either a parent or a local school district may file a due process hearing complaint if they disagree on any matter relating to the identification, evaluation, manifestation determination of a student or educational placement of a child, or the provision of free appropriate public education (FAPE) for a child. The party that asks for the hearing must file the complaint with the MDE and provide the other party with a copy of the due process hearing complaint. Once the other party receives the due process hearing complaint, they must send a response to the filing party addressing the issues raised in the complaint.

### What is a resolution session?

Prior to the opportunity for an impartial due process hearing, the school district must hold a meeting with the parents and relevant IEP team members within 15 calendar days of the filing of the notice for a due process hearing request. This meeting allows an opportunity for the parent and school district to resolve a complaint prior to a due process hearing. If a complaint can be resolved at this meeting a written, legally binding agreement is developed. If the complaint is not resolved **within 30 days** from the date that that due process hearing complaint was properly filed, the due process hearing will occur.

### Do I need an attorney?

It is up to you to decide if you want to use an attorney. The State Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules (SOAHR) will inform you of any free or low-cost legal services available in the area.

### Can a due process hearing complaint be amended?

A due process hearing complaint may be amended only if the other party approves of the amendment and is given the chance to resolve the complaint through a resolution meeting or if by no later than five (5) days before the due process hearing begins, the Administrative Law Judge allows the amendment.

### What if I have trouble understanding English?

If you have limited English speaking ability or are deaf, an interpreter will be provided for you.

### Who conducts a due process hearing?

Upon receipt of a due process hearing complaint, the MDE will forward the complaint to the State Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules (SOAHR) which will appoint an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) to

conduct the hearing. SOAHR will share information with the parties about their roles and responsibilities in the hearing and a description of the hearing process.

### Will I know in advance what the school's argument is?

Prior to a hearing, each party must let the other parties have copies of:

- All completed evaluations of the child
- Any recommendations they will make at the hearing based on those evaluations

Failure to do so may mean that the Administrative Law Judge will not allow this information to be used in the hearing without the other party's consent.

### Does the hearing officer make a decision right away?

The Administrative Law Judge will issue a final decision to the parties within 45 calendar days after the expiration of the 30-day resolution period. The Administrative Law Judge may grant a specific extension at the request of either party.

The Administrative Law Judge's decision must be made on substantive grounds based on a determination of whether the student received free appropriate public education (FAPE).

### Can I appeal the hearing decision?

The decision made in a due process hearing is final, unless either party appeals the decision within 25 calendar days of receipt of the decision, in writing, with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). Upon receipt, the MDE will forward the request to the State Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules which will appoint an Administrative Law Judge to conduct the state level review.

Any party that disagrees with the findings and decisions made in a state level review has the right to bring a civil action in state or federal court. The party bringing the action has 60 days from the date of the Administrative Law Judge decision to bring this action.

### How can I file a complaint?

If you are concerned with how your child's program is being administered, you can file a complaint. Parents and other individuals and organizations may file a complaint if they believe a school district or other educational agency has violated one or more requirements of the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education, Michigan special education law, or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

You can view the many helpful resources at the Michigan Department of Education: [Family Matters](http://www.michigan.gov/mde) website ([www.michigan.gov/mde](http://www.michigan.gov/mde) then Search: Family Matters), the [Procedural Safeguards Notice](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598_88184---,00.html) ([https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598\\_88184---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598_88184---,00.html)), and Information on [Dispute Resolution](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598_88185---,00.html) ([https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598\\_88185---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598_88185---,00.html)).

### A complaint must contain the following items:

All complaints must be written and signed by the complainant. All complaints must include:

- A statement that a public agency has violated the MARSE (state special education rule), Michigan special education law, or the IDEA (federal special education law).
- Facts on which the statement is based.
- Contact information for the complainant.

A complaint about a specific student must also include:

- The student’s name and address (or other available contact information if the student is homeless).
- The name of the school the student is attending.
- A description of the nature of the problem of the student, including facts relating to the problem.

A complaint about a specific student may include:

- A possible resolution to the problem to the extent known at the time the complaint is filed.

#### What if I’m not a very good writer?

If you are having trouble with the wording of the complaint, you should contact the Ingham ISD monitor at 517.676.1051. This person may attempt to resolve the concern informally, but he or she also must inform you that you have the right to file a formal complaint. They will also assist you in writing the complaint if necessary. You must also be given a copy of the Michigan Special Education Problem Solving Process and Procedural Safeguards Notice.

#### Can the school just ignore my complaint?

No. If you file a formal complaint, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the ISD must investigate the complaint. The MDE and ISD will assign investigators. The investigator will contact you to clarify issues.

The investigation will be completed and a formal written report filed by the MDE within 60 calendar days after they receive the formal complaint. This process can be paused with the consent by both parties. The report must include a determination of whether a violation(s) has or has not occurred. If a specific violation(s) is found, or in other words, the complaint is valid, the investigator must develop recommendations for corrective action. The law also requires that a statement of appeal rights be included in the report.

Copies of the investigation report must be sent to you, the ISD, the local school district(s) involved, and the Michigan Department of Education.

## Discipline of Students with Disabilities

### Will my child be disciplined differently if he or she is in special education?

All students are given due process rights relative to student discipline under state law. In addition, the Individuals with Disabilities Education and Improvement Act (IDEA) requires additional due process rights for students with disabilities. All students are still expected to follow all of the school rules.

### Can my child be suspended?

School personnel may order the removal of a student with a disability for violations of school rules, just as they would a non-disabled student. The removal may not last for more than 10 days without a Manifestation Determination Review. Removals can occur more than once in a school year for separate incidents of misconduct, as long as the removals do not create a change of placement as defined in the student's current IEP. A change of placement occurs if a single removal exceeds 10 school days or a pattern of removals accumulate to more than 10 school days in a school year. Factors to consider in determining a pattern are: the length of each removal, the total amount of time removed, and the relationship of the removals to each other.

### What is a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR)?

The Manifestation Determination Review is a meeting at which the school district (usually the IEP team) determines if the student's misconduct is a manifestation of (a result of or evidence of) his or her disability. Relevant members of the IEP team (as determined by the parent and school district) conduct the Manifestation Determination Review.

### What if my child's misconduct is due to his or her disability?

When the school removes a student for the 11<sup>th</sup> accumulated school day in a school year, the school district must meet to conduct a Manifestation Determination Review. This meeting must occur within 10 business days of the day when the school decides to remove the student. The Manifestation Determination Review meeting will determine if your child's behavior is related to his or her disability. At the Manifestation Determination Review meeting, supports may be identified that can be implemented in an IEP.

### What happens if the team decides the misconduct is a manifestation of my child's disability?

If the IEP team decides that the student's misconduct was caused by or had a direct relationship to his or her disability, all disciplinary removals are terminated and the student returns to his or her previous IEP placement.

The team should decide if the misconduct still needs to be addressed in an appropriate behavior intervention plan. If the student already has a behavior intervention plan, the IEP team will review the plan and modify it as needed to address the problem behavior.

If the student does not already have a behavior intervention plan, the IEP team should consider if a functional behavior assessment needs to be conducted. The IEP team will use the assessment results to develop and implement a behavior intervention plan to address the problem behavior. (If the school district has conducted the assessment but the student doesn't have a behavior intervention plan, then the team may use the existing assessment to develop a plan.)

## What happens if the team decides the misconduct is **NOT** a manifestation of my child's disability?

If the IEP team decides that the student's misconduct is not a manifestation of the disability, the relevant disciplinary procedures used for students without disabilities may be used.

## Can my child be expelled?

Yes, there are several offenses that allow for different procedures for a student if special circumstances exist while at school, on school premises, or at a school function. School personnel may remove a student to an interim alternative placement for no more than 45 days without regard to whether the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the child's disability.

## What happens if there is a change in placement?

The IEP team will determine what services are needed to progress on goals.

## Alternative Educational Setting for up to 45 school days:

1. If the student carries a weapon to school or possesses a weapon.
2. If the student knowingly possesses, uses illegal drugs or sells/solicits the sale of a controlled substance.
3. If the student inflicts serious bodily injury upon another person.

If any of these offenses are committed by a student with an IEP, the district may impose discipline for as long as they would for a student without disabilities. The student will continue to receive special education services and programs, but in a different place—this might be the student's home, a different school facility, or some other setting. At the end of the Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES), the district follows general education discipline procedures and follows the procedure for a change of placement, unless the behavior was found to be a manifestation of the student's disability.

## How long would my child be in an alternative setting?

A change of placement to an alternative setting may be made for the same amount of time that a student without a disability would be subject to expulsion, with one important difference. A student with a disability may not be moved to an Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES) for more than 45 days, unless the parent and school district agree to continue the alternative placement.

## Can the school just move my student to an alternative setting?

The school district must follow a procedure much like the one used for lesser misconduct. It goes like this:

On the day on which the school decides to remove the student for a drug, weapon or serious bodily injury violation, the parent(s) must be notified of the decision and provided with a copy of the procedural safeguards.

The IEP team (which still includes you, the parent) identifies the interim alternative educational setting and appropriate programs and services for that setting. The team must determine what the student needs in order to:

- Maintain progress in the general curriculum
- Progress toward IEP goals
- Help prevent recurrence of the behavior that resulted in the disciplinary action

### What happens when my child's time in the alternative setting ends?

At the end of the period of removal, the student returns to the placement that was in effect before he or she moved to the interim alternative educational setting, unless the IEP team specifies a different placement.

### Can my child be moved to an alternative setting for any other reason?

In the case of a violation that does not involve weapons, drugs, or serious bodily injury, a student may be moved to an interim alternative educational setting. This may occur only if a court or a hearing officer determines that there is substantial evidence that the student's misconduct is likely to result in injury to him or herself or others. The placement may not exceed 45 days. Programs and services in the interim setting imposed for dangerous situations are determined by a court or a hearing officer in response to proposals by school personnel.

### What if I don't agree with the disciplinary decisions the school and/or IEP team make?

Both the parent and the local school district have the right to request a due process hearing regarding disciplinary actions if they disagree with the IEP. At the hearing, the parent(s) or local school district may challenge the Manifestation Determination Review or the interim alternative educational setting. This process is expedited to completion within 45 days after the hearing is requested. Other due process procedures are as described previously in this section.

## GLOSSARY

**Accommodations:** Tools and procedures in the areas of presentation, response, setting and timing/scheduling that provide equitable access during instruction and assessment for students with disabilities. Accommodations are intended to reduce or eliminate the effects of a student's disability; they do not reduce the learning expectations. (See Modification)

**Achievement Test:** A test that measures competency in a particular area of knowledge or skill.

**Adaptive Behavior:** Practical, everyday skills required to function and meet environmental demands, including effectively and independently taking care of oneself and interacting with other people. Examples of adaptive skills that individuals use on a daily basis include those related to eating, dressing, expressing needs, taking care of personal possessions, making purchases, interacting with peers, controlling one's behavior, following a schedule and communicating with other people.

**Adaptive Devices:** Technology, assistive technology, augmentative communication, and/or physical equipment needed to enhance a student's school participation.

**Advocate:** A person who works for the rights of and needed services for a disabled individual. The person can be a parent, guardian or a professional.

**Annual Goals:** Statements in an IEP describing what the student can be expected to accomplish within a 12-month period. Goals are measureable and meaningful (based on need and reasonable, yet challenging).

**Assistive Technology:** Any service or device that is used to maintain or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. Assistive technology needs are determined by the IEP team.

**Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP):** A plan for use in the school setting which includes measureable and positive ways to promote appropriate behavior. It is based on a functional behavior assessment (FBA).

**Child Study Team:** See Student Assistance Team

**Cognitive Ability:** Refers to general mental capability and involves the ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, comprehend complex ideas, learn quickly and learn from experience.

**Complaint/State Complaint:** A written and signed allegation that a public agency is not in compliance with the IDEA and its implementing regulations, the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE), the ISD Plan, an administrative law judge (ALJ) decision or Michigan's application for federal funds under the IDEA.

**Consent:** Voluntary written permission from a parent for a district to conduct a proposed activity with a particular student. Before obtaining consent, the district must give written notice that explains the proposed activity to the parent.

**Course of Study:** Courses and educational experiences that align with the student's postsecondary vision (goals) leading to a diploma or alternate path of school completion.

**Departmentalize:** A delivery system in which two or more special education teachers teach groups of students with disabilities by instructional content areas.

**Direct Instruction:** Explicit teaching of a specific skill.



**Due Process:** A procedure guaranteed by federal law for resolving disputes regarding special education services.

**Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE):** Michigan Early Childhood Special Education services include special instruction and related services provided to young children, ages three through five, who qualify under the IDEA.

**Eligibility:** The determination that a student is a child with a disability and needs special education.

**The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):** A federal law that protects the privacy of student education records.

**Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** Special education and related services are provided to students with disabilities by the Local Education Agency (LEA) at public expense and under public supervision and direction at no cost to the student's parents.

**Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA):** A problem-solving process used to identify the reasons for a specific behavior in order to help select interventions.

**Inclusion:** The placement of a student with a disability in a general education setting with a strategic plan and supports necessary for the student to benefit from education experience in a program.

**Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE):** An evaluation conducted at public expense by a qualified examiner who is not regularly employed by the school district.

**Individualized Education Program (IEP):** The written plan that details the special education and related services that must be provided to each eligible student. It must be reviewed and revised every year.

**Individualized Education Program Team (IEPT):** A group of individuals responsible for developing, reviewing or revising an IEP for a child with a disability. The group includes the parents, a representative of the school district, at least one general education teacher, at least one special education teacher or provider, a professional who can interpret any evaluation results, others who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child if invited by the parent or school district and, whenever appropriate, the student.

**Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP):** A written plan for providing early intervention services to an eligible child and to the child's family.

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** The federal law that guarantees all children with disabilities access to a free and appropriate public education.

**Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are to be educated with children who are not disabled. Special classes, separate schooling, or other ways of removing children with disabilities from the general education environment should only occur when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general education classes cannot be achieved satisfactorily with the use of supplementary aids and services.

**Local Education Agency (LEA):** The school district or public school academy (charter school) that is directly responsible for providing special education services.

**Modification:** A change in curriculum or instruction that substantially alters the requirements of the class or the content standards and benchmarks.

**Modified Achievement Standard:** An expectation of performance that is challenging for eligible students, but may be less difficult than a grade-level achievement standard. Modified achievement standards must be aligned with a state's academic content standards for the grade in which a student is enrolled.

**Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET):** A group of professionals that conducts an evaluation of a student suspected of having a disability.

**Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS):** A comprehensive framework comprised of a collection of research-based strategies designed to meet the individual needs and assets of the whole child.

**Occupational Therapist (OT):** A trained professional that focuses on the development of a student's fine motor skills and/or the identification of adapted ways of accomplishing activities of daily living.

**Orientation & Mobility Specialist (O&M):** A trained professional who evaluates, treats and/or makes recommendations to allow eligible students with visual impairments to travel safely and efficiently through their environments under varying conditions. Their services may include direct instruction in travel skills for independent movement appropriate in the school and/or community.

**Paraprofessional (Parapro) or Paraeducator:** A trained assistant who is directed by the classroom teacher and/or teacher consultant, to help provide accommodations for students with disabilities. This may include helping the teacher make adaptations to the curriculum, assisting students with assignments, working with students in relation to the class as a whole, and helping other students understand the student's disability.

**Parent:** The mother, father, surrogate, or legally designated guardian of the person with a disability. Parent also means the actual student with a disability when s/he reaches the age of 18 years, if a legal guardian has not been appointed by appropriate court proceedings.

**Parent Advisory Committee for Special Education:** The Parent Advisory Committee consists of parents of children with disabilities and attempts to maintain membership of at least one parent from each local school district within the Ingham ISD. The Parent Advisory Committee may provide advisory input on any matters that the committee deems appropriate to the improvement of special education services within the Intermediate School District.

**Physical Therapist (PT):** A trained professional who assists, treats and/or makes recommendations to improve or maintain a student's level of functioning within the school environment. Physical therapists make recommendations for orthotics, range of motion exercises, positioning and mobility.

**Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP):** Statements in the IEP that provide academic and functional performance data, an overview of factors impacting the student and descriptions of how the child's disability affects involvement and progress in the general education curriculum (participation in appropriate activities for preschool children). All other IEP components are developed based on information in the PLAAFP.

**School Psychologist:** A trained professional who assists in the identification of needs regarding behavioral, social, emotional and educational functioning of individuals.

**School Social Worker (SSW):** A trained professional who supports the educational program of individuals by assisting in identification and assessment of the individual's educational needs including social, emotional, behavioral and adaptive needs and provides intervention services.

**Section 504:** A section of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which prohibits discrimination of people with disabilities by any entity that accepts federal funds.

**Self-Advocacy:** The development of specific skills and understandings that enable children and adults to explain their specific disabilities to others and cope positively with the attitudes of peers, parents, teachers and employers.

**Short-Term Objectives:** Intermediate steps between the student's present level of performance and an annual goal in the IEP.

**Special Education:** Specially designed instruction and/or adaptations at no cost to parents to address the unique needs that result from a child's disability and to ensure access to the curriculum.

**Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP):** A trained professional who analyzes speech and language comprehension and production to determine communication competencies and provides intervention strategies and services related to speech and language development as well as disorders of language, voice, articulation and fluency.

**Student Assistance Team:** A team of educators and parents that meets to support the needs of students with academic, social or behavioral concerns. The focus of the team is to provide support to classroom teachers to implement interventions, accommodations and modification so that students can be successful in general education. Local school districts may use different names for this team.

**Summary of Performance (SOP):** A summary of the student's academic achievement and functional performance that includes recommendations to assist the student in meeting his or her postsecondary goals.

**Teacher Consultant (TC):** A certified special education teacher who provides support services to children with disabilities and/or provides consultation to the general education classroom teacher.

**Transition Services:** A coordinated set of activities that promote movement from school to post school activities. Transition services are determined by the IEP Team beginning at age 16 or earlier and are based on student needs and vision, taking into account the student's strengths, preferences and interests.

**Universal Supports:** Is a way of thinking and learning that helps give all students an equal opportunity to succeed. This approach offers flexibility in the ways students access material, engage with it and show what they know.

## COMMON ACRONYMS

ACRONYM	KEY PHRASE
<b>ADA</b>	Americans with Disabilities Act
<b>ADD</b>	Attention Deficit Disorder
<b>ADHD</b>	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
<b>APE</b>	Adaptive Physical Education
<b>AT</b>	Assistive Technology
<b>ASD</b>	Autism Spectrum Disorder
<b>BIP</b>	Behavior Intervention Plan
<b>CBI</b>	Community-Based Instruction
<b>CI</b>	Cognitive Impairment (mild, moderate, severe)
<b>CIL</b>	Center for Independent Living
<b>CMH</b>	Community Mental Health
<b>CP</b>	Cerebral Palsy
<b>DB</b>	Deaf Blindness
<b>DD</b>	Developmental Disability
<b>DHH</b>	Deaf Hard of Hearing
<b>ECDD</b>	Early Childhood Developmental Delay
<b>ECSE</b>	Early Childhood Special Education
<b>EI</b>	Emotional Impairment
<b>ESSA</b>	Every Student Succeeds Act
<b>ESY</b>	Extended School Year
<b>FAPE</b>	Free Appropriate Public Education
<b>FBA</b>	Functional Behavior Assessment
<b>FERPA</b>	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
<b>FIA</b>	Family Independence Agency
<b>IDEA</b>	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
<b>IEE</b>	Independent Educational Evaluation
<b>IEP</b>	Individualized Education Plan
<b>IEPT</b>	Individualized Education Plan Team
<b>IFSP</b>	Individualized Family Service Plan
<b>ISD</b>	Intermediate School District
<b>LD</b>	Learning Disability
<b>LEA</b>	Local Education Agency (Local School District or Charter School/Public School Academy)
<b>LRE</b>	Least Restrictive Environment
<b>MDE</b>	Michigan Department of Education
<b>MET</b>	Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team
<b>MRS</b>	Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth/Michigan Rehabilitation Services
<b>O&amp;M</b>	Orientation and Mobility
<b>OCR</b>	Office of Civil Rights
<b>OHI</b>	Other Health Impairment
<b>OSE</b>	Office of Special Education (State of Michigan)
<b>OSEP</b>	Office of Special Education Programs (federal)
<b>OT</b>	Occupational Therapy
<b>PI</b>	Physical Impairment
<b>PSA</b>	Public School Academy (also known as Charter School)
<b>PT</b>	Physical Therapist

<b>ACRONYM</b>	<b>KEY PHRASE</b>
<b>RESA</b>	Regional Education Service Agency
<b>SLD</b>	Specific Learning Disability
<b>SLI</b>	Speech and Language Impairment
<b>SLP</b>	Speech/Language Pathologist
<b>SSW</b>	School Social Worker
<b>SXI</b>	Severe Multiple Impairment
<b>TBI</b>	Traumatic Brain Injury
<b>TC</b>	Teacher Consultant
<b>VI</b>	Visual Impairment

## Contact Information

### Local and Intermediate School District Representatives

<b>Representative</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>
<b>Student Support Services Executive Director</b>	Ingham ISD	2630 W. Howell Road Mason, MI 48854	517.244.1298
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Dansville Schools	1264 Adams Street Dansville, MI 48819	517.623.6120
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	East Lansing Public Schools	501 Burcham Drive East Lansing, MI 48823	517.333.7461
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Haslett Public Schools	5593 Franklin Street Haslett, MI 48840	517.339.8205
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Holt Public Schools	5780 W. Holt Road Holt, MI 48842	517.694.2442
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Lansing School District	2901 Wabash Road, Room 100 Lansing, MI 48910	517.755.4001
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Leslie Public Schools	4141 Hull Road Leslie, MI 49251	517.589.9500 x120
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Mason Public Schools	400 S. Cedar Street Mason, MI 48854	517.676.6532
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Okemos Public Schools	1900 Kinawa Drive Okemos, MI 48864	517.706.4829
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Stockbridge Community Schools	222 Western Avenue Stockbridge, MI 49285	517.851.8600 x4131
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Waverly Community Schools	515 Snow Road Lansing, MI 48917	517.319.3026
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Webberville Community Schools	309 E. Grand River Webberville, MI 48892	517.521.3447 x324
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Williamston Community Schools	418 Highland Street Williamston, MI 48895	517.655.2855 x4020
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Blended Learning Academy	1754 E. Clark Road Lansing, MI 48908	517.574.4667
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Cole Academy	1915 W. Mt. Hope Lansing, MI 48910	517.372.0038
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Cole Academy East	2921 E. Coleman Road East Lansing, MI 48823	517.580.3470
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Great Lakes Cyber Academy	2875 Eyde Parkway, Suite 200 East Lansing, MI 48823	517.381.5062
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisors</b>	Lansing Charter Academy	3300 Express Court Lansing, MI 48910	517.882.9585
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Michigan Connections Academy	3950 Heritage Avenue Okemos, MI 48864	517.507.5390
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Mid-Michigan Leadership Academy	730 West Maple Lansing, MI 48906	517.485.5379
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	NexTech High School	2175 University Park Drive Okemos, MI 48864	517.347.7793
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	White Pine Academy	510 Russell Street Leslie, MI 49251	517.589.8961
<b>Special Education Director or Supervisor</b>	Windemere Park	3100 W. Saginaw Lansing, MI 48917	517.327.0700