

IEPs: A QUICK GUIDE

For Families and Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)

What is an IEP?

An **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** is a written plan for students that qualify for special education, which means they require specialized instruction and related services to access education. Its purpose is to outline the goals, supports, and services your child needs to succeed in school.

An IEP includes:

- What your child can do right **now**
- **Goals** for learning and development
- Special **supports** like speech language services or behavioral support
- **Accommodations** (extra time, modified assignments, etc.)
- **Transition** goals for life after high school (starting at age 15)

Who Can Have an IEP?

To qualify for an IEP in Colorado, your child must:

1. Have a **disability** under one of 13 categories (like autism, intellectual disability, etc.)
2. Show that the disability significantly impacts

the child's learning in school

3. Need **specialized instruction** to access grade level curriculum

Important: Having a diagnosis doesn't automatically qualify a child for an IEP. There must be a clear impact on learning.

Who is on the IEP Team?

Your child's IEP team must include staff who understand and can interpret testing data.

Required members of the team are:

- **YOU (the parent or guardian)** – a key decision-maker!
- **Special education teacher**
- **General education teacher**
- **School administrator**
- **A district level administrator or designee**
- **Your child** (required to attend at age 15 and encouraged earlier)

All team members review the child's results, share ideas, and together, create a meaningful and appropriate IEP.

What Happens at an IEP Meeting?

1. The team discusses your child's current strengths and challenges
2. The team creates appropriate and ambitious **goals** for the next year
3. The team agrees upon the services and **supports** your child needs
4. The team will determine the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) that will support your child's learning



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Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) means that students with disabilities should learn alongside students without disabilities as much as possible. Schools must offer different classroom options based on each child's needs—more support or special services may mean learning in a more separate setting.

Transition Planning (Age 15+)

Starting at **age 15**, your child's IEP will include a plan for:

- Education or training after high school
- Career and job goals
- Independent living skills (like transportation and self-care)

Services might include job skills training, mock interviews, or work-based learning

Procedural Safeguards: Your Rights as a Parent

As a parent, you have legal rights. These include:

- Being involved in **all** decisions
- Reviewing records
- Requesting evaluations
- Disagreeing with school decisions
- Getting help from advocates (like The Arc)

Tips!

- **Take notes and keep records** (emails, letters, test results)
- It's okay to say, *"I need time to think about this."*
- Ask the team to **explain things in plain language**
- Talk about your child's **strengths** and dreams

How The Arc Can Help

The Arc – Jefferson, Clear Creek & Gilpin Counties offers:

- Free advocacy support
- Help preparing for IEP meetings
- Referrals to other services
- Training and guides on: Writing SMART goals, understanding evaluations, transition planning, and special education rights

The Arc serves children with **intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD)**, like autism and intellectual disability. If your child has a different need (like dyslexia or ADHD), advocates will still offer helpful **resources and referrals**.

Connect with us!



The Arc – Jefferson, Clear Creek & Gilpin Counties

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