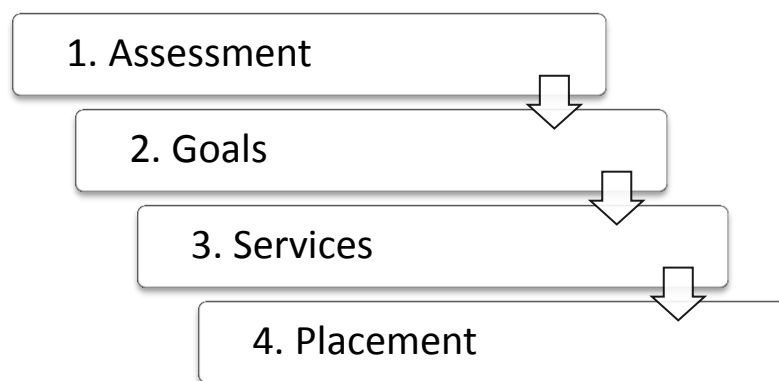


IEP**Individualized Education Program (IEP): The Sequence**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal special education law which requires that students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This law establishes a process with a sequence designed to ensure that students with disabilities receive an individualized education program (IEP) based on their specific needs, and that they not be needlessly segregated from their non-disabled peers.

You will see that the sequence of discussion and decisions must proceed in an orderly manner: first assessments, then goals, then services, and only then, placement. Assessment is the base or foundation for the development of the IEP. All of the components of the IEP are to flow from assessments of the student. Below you will see how the IEP is “built” from the assessment.

The Sequence

1. Assessment

Assessment should occur in all areas related to the suspected disability. It consists of standardized tests, background information, and data on functional performance such as work samples and observations. Assessment cannot be discriminatory: students not speaking English should not be tested in English, visually impaired students should have assessments that do not rely on seeing, etc. For students with language disabilities, their cognitive ability (intelligence) should not be measured with tests that are heavily dependent on language. No single procedure is to be used as the sole criterion of eligibility. Parental consent is required for all such assessments. Screenings by teachers are not considered to be an evaluation.

2. Goals

Using the assessment information, the IEP team, including the parent, identifies areas of need that the IEP will address so that the student will make progress in the general curriculum. Beginning with specific and measurable statements of present levels of performance, the team develops annual goals, both academic and functional. These are specific and measurable statements of how the student will perform after one year of special education services. Student strengths and interests must be considered in addressing areas of needs.

3. Services

Once goals are written, the team determines the services the student needs to make progress on their goals and be educated in the least restrictive environment. This means being educated to the greatest extent appropriate with non-disabled peers. The frequency and duration and location of services must be specified. Availability and convenience should not determine services; rather the determination is based on what the student needs to make progress. Needed modifications should be specified as well as behavioral support.

4. Placement

The last decision to be made is where services should occur for the student to make adequate progress on their goals and be in the least restrictive environment appropriate for this student. Discussion of placement occurs after agreement is reached on assessment, goals, and related services and should be based on needs, not category of disability. Parents have a right to visit any recommended placement.

CITATION: 34 CFR Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities, Sec.300.523

SOURCE: Adapted from: Matrix Parent Network and Resource Center