

EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

*“Leadership and learning
are indispensable to each other.”*

— John F. Kennedy



0-3 Years - Introduction

Hearing loss or deafness does not affect a person's intellectual capacity or ability to learn. However, children who are either hard of hearing or deaf generally require some form of special education services in order to receive an adequate education. Such services may include the following:

- Regular speech, language and auditory training from a specialist
- Amplification systems
- Services of an interpreter for students who use manual communication
- Favorable seating in the class to help with speechreading
- Captioned films/videos
- Assistance of a note taker so that the student can fully attend to instruction
- Instruction for the teacher and peers in alternate communication methods, such as sign language
- Counseling

Children who are hard of hearing will find it much more difficult than children who have normal hearing to learn vocabulary, grammar, word order, idiomatic expressions, and other aspects of verbal communication. For infants/children who are deaf or have severe hearing losses, early, consistent and conscious use of visible (sight) communication modes (such as Sign Language, Fingerspelling, and Cued Speech), and/or amplification (for example, hearing aids), and aural/oral training can help lessen this language delay. By age four or five, most children who are deaf are enrolled in school on a full-day basis and do special work on communication and language development. It is important for teachers, families, speech-language pathologists, and audiologists to work together to teach the child to use his/her existing hearing to the maximum extent possible, even if the preferred means of communication is manual. Since the great majority of deaf children (over 90%) are born to hearing parents, programs should provide instruction for parents on implications of deafness within the family.

Part C of IDEA, Individual with Disabilities Education Act, which was established in 1986 as Part H

and amended as Part C in 1997, covers children with disabilities from birth until the age of three. This is the law that governs the services that are provided for deaf and hard of hearing infants and toddlers. For infants/children who are deaf or hard of hearing in Alaska, the educational services should begin at the time he/she is identified with a hearing loss, preferably at birth.

Alaska Early Intervention Hearing Resource Program has teachers who travel to communities statewide to teach and provide services to deaf and hard of hearing infants, toddlers, and their families. They work with the local Early Intervention/Infant Learning Programs in order to provide these services.

All eligible children, birth to three years old, receive a multi-disciplinary evaluation/assessment before determining their eligibility for services. Following the determination of eligibility, a team of professionals, including your infant/child's family, works together to create an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). This plan is based on your infant/child's developmental needs and the needs of your family in helping your infant/child learn. The plan identifies outcomes and the early intervention services and supports needed to reach those outcomes, how services will be paid for, length and locations of services, and how progress will be determined.

Transition

When your child turns three, he/she is entitled to free, public education under Part B of the Individuals Disabilities Education Act law. During this time, your child will move from an IFSP to an Individual Education Program (IEP), which is developed with goals and objectives focused on your child, rather than on the family.

This free, public education can be provided in a variety of options:

- Your child may stay in their home community and attend pre-school, Head Start, day care, or be home schooled with the needed related services support from the school district. Your school district must provide an IEP, which will define the

educational services in a school setting. Consultation services by a deaf/hard of hearing teacher may be available through the Special Education Service Agency (SESA) if needed.

- School districts vary in the type and quality of programs they offer. For example, some of the larger school districts, such as Fairbanks, Anchorage, Mat-Su Valley and Kenai Peninsula Borough offer special education pre-school classes with itinerant services provided by a teacher of the deaf/hard of hearing. Direct services from the hard of hearing itinerant teacher may also be provided at the students' home school from kindergarten through grade 12.
- Your child may attend school at the Alaska State School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ASSDHH) in Anchorage. This program serves children from age 3 to 22 who experience hearing losses that range from mild to profound and supports the development of both American Sign Language and English. Some families choose to move to Anchorage so that their child can attend ASSDHH. If your family does not live in Anchorage, foster care can be arranged until your child is six. At age six, he/she can move into the student living center which houses a small num-

ber of deaf/hard of hearing students and have house parents who are either deaf/hard of hearing or are fluent in sign language.

At age three, most children begin preschool or Head Start and become eligible for special education services. For children and their parents who are used to home-based services, like ILP, this transition to a school program can be challenging. The Alaska Early Intervention Committee (EIC) has identified this transition as a major concern for families statewide.

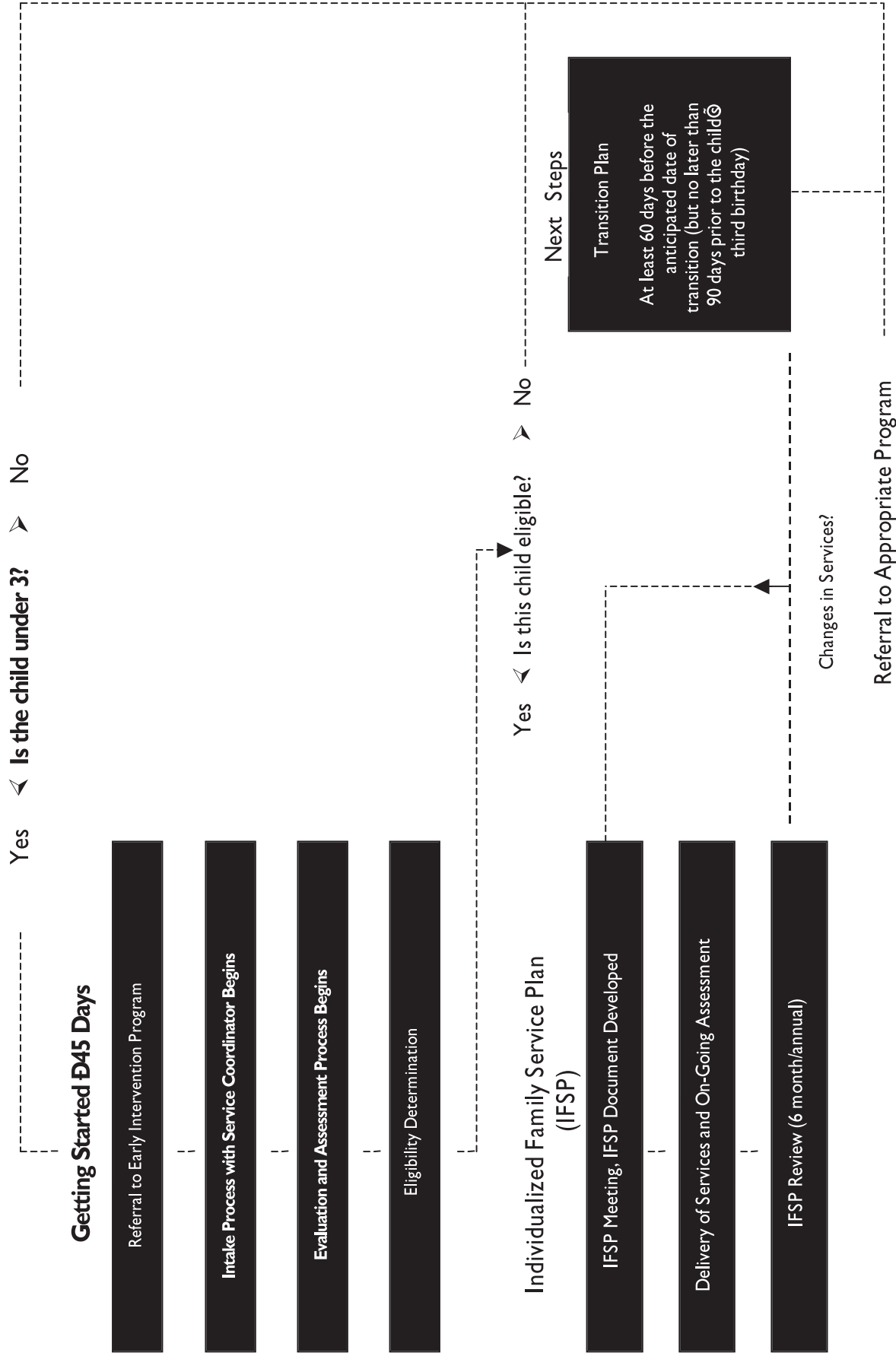
Without teamwork and effective planning among all the community agencies involved (for example, Head Start, school districts, preschools, Public Health, etc.), it is impossible to make sure that there are smooth transitions for special needs children at age three.

Alaska has been one of several states nationwide to begin exploring ways to improve this transition or move for children, families, and service providers. After gathering data on community needs, the Department of Health and Social Services in cooperation with the Department of Education developed and started the *Alaska Transition Training Initiative (ATTI)*. A skilled Alaska training team has been assembled as part of ATTI.



Steps Through the Alaska Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program

Developmental Concerns by Parent or Provider (Nurse, Doctor, Child Care Staff, etc.)



Frequently Asked Questions

What is meant by “different educational approaches to language learning”?

Young children who hear, generally develop speech and spoken language naturally, without any conscious effort. Deaf infants/children, whose parents are deaf and use American Sign Language (ASL) as the language of the home, also develop the language (ASL) naturally and without much effort. The necessary ingredient for language development, whether it is spoken language or a visual (sight) language such as ASL, is for your infant/child to be able to actually receive (take in) the language of the surroundings. Currently, there are various approaches for helping infants/children who are deaf or have a hearing loss to develop a first language. All infants/children need a first language for thinking, learning, communicating, and developing relationships with parents, family and others.

What are the educational approaches with infants/children who have a hearing loss?

- American Sign Language/English Bilingual approach
- English-Only approaches
- Auditory-Verbal approach
- Auditory-Oral approach
- Cued Speech
- Spoken English combined with a Manually Coded English Sign System known as Simultaneous Communication, sometimes referred to as TC/Total Communication

What is the “right” method for my child?

There is no “right” educational approach for your infant/child. Teachers, programs, and schools throughout the state use different approaches. Each approach can claim positive impact on the lives of many deaf and hard of hearing people. Some infants/children have moved very slowly or not at all through one approach and, with a change in approach, have learned very well. Again, there is no one, “right” approach for your infant/child.

Who makes the decision regarding the educational approach for my child?

You as a parent will need information on the differ-

ent approaches in order to make a choice for your child and family. Parents can be assisted in gathering objective information on all approaches from the audiologists, pediatricians, early interventionists, speech language therapists/pathologists, other professionals, visiting a variety of programs, talking with a variety of parents, and meeting adults who are deaf and hard of hearing.

What is IDEA?

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that was established in 1986 to provide services to children birth to 22 years of age with disabilities.

What is Part B of IDEA?

This portion of the IDEA law entitles children with disabilities to free public education from the ages of 3 to 22, or 3 through age 21.

What is Part C of IDEA?

Part C is a part of IDEA that was established to specifically address the early educational needs of young children with disabilities. This portion of the law governs the provision of services for children from birth until age three who have hearing loss or other disabilities.

What is special education?

Special education is instruction that is specially designed to meet the unique needs of children who have disabilities. This is done at no cost to the parents. Special education can include special instruction in the classroom, at home, in hospitals or institutions, or in other settings.

Over 5 million children ages 6 through 21 receive special education and related services each year in the United States. Each of these children receive instruction that is specially designed for the following:

- To meet the child’s unique needs (that result from having a disability), and
- To help the child learn the information and skills that other children are learning.

This definition of special education comes from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Public Law 105-17.

Who is eligible for special education?

Certain children with disabilities are eligible for special education and related services. IDEA provides a definition of a “child with a disability.” This law lists 13 different disability categories under which a child may be found eligible for special education and related services. These categories are listed in the box below.

IDEA’s Categories of Disability for children ages 3 through age 21:

- Autism
- Deafness
- Deaf-blindness
- Hearing impairment
- Mental retardation
- Multiple disabilities
- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment
- Serious emotional disturbance
- Specific learning disability
- Speech or language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual impairment, including blindness

According to the IDEA, the disability must affect the child’s educational performance. The question of eligibility, at that point, comes down to a question of whether the child has a disability that fits into one of IDEA’s 13 categories and whether that disability affects how the child does in school. That is, the disability must cause the child to need special education and related services.

How do I find out if my child is eligible for special education?

The first step is to find out if your child has a disability. To do this, ask the school to evaluate your child. Call or write the Director of Special Education, or the principal of your child’s school. Tell him/her that you think your child has a disability and needs special education help. Ask the school to evaluate your child as soon as possible.

What happens during an evaluation?

Evaluating your child appropriately will give you and the school a lot of information about your child. This information will help you and the school:

- Decide if your child has a disability
- Design an individualized instruction plan for your child

How does the school collect information for the evaluation?

The school collects information from many different people and places. The evaluation should include:

- Certain tests.
- Observations and opinions of professionals who have worked with your child.
- Your child’s medical history, when it relates to his/her performance in school.
- Your ideas about your child’s school experiences, abilities, needs, and behavior outside of school, and his/her feelings about school.

What does the school do with the information from the evaluation?

The information gathered from the evaluation will be used to make important decisions about your child’s education. All of the information will be used:

- To decide if your child is eligible for special education and related services, and
- To help you and the school decide what your child needs educationally.

What happens if my child is not eligible for services?

If your school determines that your child is not eligible for special education services, the school system must tell you this in writing and explain why your child has been found “not eligible.” Under the IDEA law, you must also be given information about what you can do if you disagree with the school’s decision.

What kinds of changes can be made in a classroom for children with hearing loss?

There are many changes that can be made in a classroom to help children with hearing loss. In conjunction with hearing aids or cochlear implants, there are changes that can be made to the classroom itself to make it a more of a sound favorable setting. Minor changes such as wall-to-wall carpeting, sound treated tiles on the ceilings and walls, well-fitted and closed windows and doors, and quiet hearing/ventilation systems are all helpful. In addition, there are assistive listening devices such as personal FM sys-

tems and sound field amplification systems, that can increase the teacher's voice over the background noise, and are quite helpful in classroom settings for children with hearing loss. In fact, strengthening the whole classroom with a sound field amplification system can help every child in the class. (For more information, see Assistive Technology section).

“There are things, such as walking, that children learn entirely on their own. There are things, such as using the toilet, that they learn with just a little bit of help from their parents. And there are things, such as reading and writing and good table manners, that children can master only with persistent and patient guidance, over many years, from their parents. For deaf children, communicating with the rest of the world falls into this third category. This makes life harder, but well within the capabilities of a competent parent — and the things in the third category seem ultimately to give the most satisfaction.”

— David (parent)

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

for the family of _____ born on ____/____/____ residing with _____

Mother	Father	Guardian or Caregiver
Name: _____	Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____	Address: _____
Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____	Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____	Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____

IFSP Timeline (Enter date of each event.) This IFSP begins ____/____/____ and ends ____/____/____.

Referral	Initial Evaluation	Part C Eligibility	Initial or Interim IFSP	Review/Revision	Re-Evaluation/Assessment	Annual Renewal	Transition Plan

Plan Developers/Signatures

The following individuals have contributed to the development of this IFSP. Each individual understands and agrees to carry out the plan as it appears on their role in providing services. The parents have received and been informed of all procedural safeguards. All team members understand that the IFSP may be revised at any time by request of any team member.

Title/Role	Signature (if present)	Date	Date/Initial Changes
Parent/Guardian: _____	_____	____/____/____	____/____/____
Parent/Guardian: _____	_____	____/____/____	____/____/____
Family Service Coordinator: _____	_____	____/____/____	____/____/____
_____	_____	____/____/____	____/____/____
_____	_____	____/____/____	____/____/____
_____	_____	____/____/____	____/____/____
_____	_____	____/____/____	____/____/____

Anyone who disagrees with the IFSP, please explain what part of the IFSP you disagree with and sign below. Attach an additional page if needed.

Signature _____ Date _____

Top copy to program; second copy to parent; photocopies to all other IFSP team members



Information about _____'s development and strengths at the age of _____ (adjusted age of _____)

Evaluation/assessment tools and methods used:

Family concerns/priorities for child's growth and development:

Present level of development (strengths and areas to work on):

Moving (*gross motor*):

Family resources/natural supports:

Using hands (*fine motor*):

Thinking/learning (*cognitive*):

Understanding/talking (*communication*):

Natural environments:

Service Location

Primary:

Getting along with others (*social/emotional*):

Others:

Doing things for him/herself (*adaptive*):

If services cannot take place in natural setting or environment state reason.

Health and Medical Information (List screening or evaluation dates, concerns and other pertinent information.)

Vision	Behavioral Health
Hearing	Medication(s)
Immunizations	Nutrition
Dental	Other

Health and Medical Information (List screening or evaluation dates, concerns and other pertinent information.)

Summary of Services

Service	Provider's Name	Service Setting/Location	How Often (visits/month)	Minutes/visit	Start Date	End Date	Cost per unit of service	Payer

Service Options:

- 1. Assistive Technology
- 2. Audiological Services
- 3. Family Training/Support
- 4. Health Services
- 5. Hearing Services
- 6. Medical Diagnostic Services
- 7. Nursing Services
- 8. Nutrition Services
- 9. Occupational Therapy
- 10. Physical Therapy
- 11. Psychological Services
- 12. Respite
- 13. Service Coordination
- 14. Social Work Services
- 15. Speech/Language Therapy
- 16. Transportation
- 17. Special Instruction
- 18. Vision Services
- 19. Other (Specify)

Description of outcomes developed in partnership with _____'s family.

Date and Type of Outcome*	What We Want To Happen Outcomes / Goals	How We Will Do It Strategies / Materials	Who Will Do It Person(s) Responsible	Family's Evaluation Date / Rating**

*Type of Outcome: I. Health/Medical II. Educational/Developmental III. Individual/Family Supports

**Family's Evaluation of Progress Rating:

- 1. No longer needed
- 2. Keep working on it
- 3. Achieved

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

Your Child's Evaluation

How do I find out if my child is eligible for special education?

The first step is to find out if your child has a disability. To do this, ask the school to evaluate your child. Call or write the Director of Special Education or the principal of your child's school. Say that you think your child has a disability and needs special education help. Ask the school to evaluate your child as soon as possible.

The public school may also think your child needs special help, because he or she may have a disability. If so, then the school must evaluate your child at no cost to you.

However, the school does not have to evaluate your child just because you have asked. The school may not think your child has a disability or needs special education. In this case, the school may refuse to evaluate your child. The school must let you know this decision in writing, as well as why it has refused.

If the school refuses to evaluate your child, there are two things you can do immediately:

- Ask the school system for information about its special education policies, as well as parent rights to disagree with decisions made by the school system. These materials should describe the steps parents can take to challenge a school system's decision.
- Get in touch with your Alaska's Parent Training and Information (PTI) center. The PTI is an excellent resource for parents to learn more about special education, their rights and responsibilities, and the law. The PTI can tell you what steps to take next to find help for your infant/child. (See Resources section for PTI contact information).

What happens during an evaluation?

Evaluating your child means more than the school just giving your child a test or two. The school must evaluate your child in all the areas where your child may be affected by the possible disability. This may include looking at your child's health, vision, hear-

ing, social and emotional well-being, general intelligence, performance in school, and how well your child communicates with others and uses his or her body. The evaluation must be complete enough (full and individual) to identify all of your child's needs for special education and related services.

Evaluating your child appropriately will give you and the school a lot of information about your child, such as:

- To decide if your child has a disability
- To design instruction for your child

The evaluation process involves several steps. These are listed below:

Reviewing existing information. A group of people, including you, begins by looking at the information the school already has about your child. You may have information about your child you wish to share as well. The group will look at information such as:

- Your child's scores on tests given in the classroom or to all students in your child's grade
- The opinions and observations of your child's teachers and other school staff who know your child
- Your feelings, concerns, and ideas about how your child is doing in school

Deciding if more information is still needed. The information collected above will help the group decide the following:

- If your son or daughter has a particular type of disability
- How your child is currently doing in school
- Whether your child needs special education and related services
- What your child's educational needs are

Group members will look at the information they collected above and see if they have enough information to make these decisions. If the group needs more information to make the decisions, the school must collect it.

3-22 Years - Introduction

A federal law exists which requires that an Individualized Educational Program (IEP), be developed for each child who is identified as having special needs. The IEP allows the teachers to figure out exactly what your child needs. Developing an IEP is complicated and not foolproof. It is intended that parents and professionals work together as a team to identify the special needs of your child. Sometimes you as the parent may have to fight for many of the educational services and placements for your child. You have the right to request reasonable services and placements

for your child, as well as, the right to request reasonable services and placements for your child. Fear or embarrassment should not prevent you from making such requests. New laws now cover your child from birth to age three. They require an Individual Family Service (delivery) Plan (IFSP) that has the same purpose as the IEP with additional concern for the needs of your family. Also remember, that there is an appeal process that can be used if you disagree with the professional regarding services and/or assistive listening devices.



Frequently Asked Questions

So my child has been found eligible for special education. What next?

The next step is to write what is known as an Individualized Education Program, usually called an IEP. After a child is found eligible, a meeting must be held within 30 days to develop the IEP. (For more information re: IEPs, see IEP section.)

What is an IEP?

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is an individualized comprehensive plan that a child receives when he/she transfers from early intervention (age birth to three) to public education. This plan is developed with goals and objectives focused on your child rather than your family. The document is:

- Intended to be developed in a collaborative and cooperative effort between you and school personnel
- Describe your child's abilities and needs precisely
- Set forth in detail the placement and services specially designed to meet those unique needs

What is the purpose of the IEP meeting?

The purpose of the IEP meeting is:

- For you and the school district to jointly determine the needs of your child
- To develop an educational plan for your child that is appropriate to meet his/her needs

Who attends an IEP meeting?

The following people are to attend an IEP meeting:

- Your child's parents or guardians
- A regular education teacher (if your child is participating, or may participate in regular education)
- A special education teacher or representative
- A representative of the education department who is qualified to supervise a specially designed education program and who is knowledgeable about the general curriculum
- An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results of your child
- A related service provider, if applicable
- Any other person/s that you, as the parent's request

What will be discussed during the IEP meeting?

Many things related to your child will be discussed

during the IEP meeting. Things to consider are:

- Your child's strengths
- Your concerns for improving the education of your child
- The results of the initial or most current evaluation of your child
- Your child's current school records
- The current IEP for your child
- Any independent educational evaluations of your child
- Information about your child's current communication mode and abilities; information about your family's communication preference; the linguistic needs of your child
- The severity of your child's hearing loss and potential for using his/her remaining hearing
- Behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports to address these problems if your child has behavioral problems that might slow down his/her learning or the learning of others
- Assistive technology devices and services
- Opportunities for direct communications with peers and professional personnel in your child's language and communication mode
- Your child's academic level
- Your child's social, emotional, and cultural needs, including opportunities for peer interaction and communication.

What type of information is included in an IEP?

According to the IDEA, your child's IEP must include specific statements about your child. These are listed below. Take a moment to read over this list. This will be the information included in your child's IEP.

Your child's IEP will contain the following statements:

- *Present levels of educational performance.* This statement describes how your child is currently doing in school. This includes how your child's disability affects his/her involvement and progress in the general curriculum.
- *Annual goals.* The IEP must state annual goals for your child, meaning what you and the school team think he/she can reasonably complete in a year.

This statement of annual goals includes individual steps that make up the goals (often called short-term objectives) or major milestones (often called benchmarks). The goals must relate to meeting the needs that result from your child's disability. They must also help your son or daughter be involved in, and progress in the general curriculum.

- *Special education and related services to be provided.* The IEP must list the special education and related services to be provided to your child. This includes supplementary aids and services (such as a communication device). It also includes changes to the program, or supports for school personnel that will be provided for your child.
- *Participation with non-disabled children.* How much of the school day will your child be educated separately from non-disabled children or not participate in extracurricular or other nonacademic activities such as lunch or clubs? The IEP must include an explanation that answers this question.
- *Participation in state and district-wide assessments.* Your state and district probably give tests of student achievement to children in certain grades or age groups. In order to participate in these tests, your child may need individual modifications or changes in how the tests are administered. The IEP team must decide what modifications your child needs and list them in the IEP. If your child will not be taking these tests, the IEP must include a statement as to why the tests are not appropriate for your child and how your child will be tested instead.
- *Dates and location.* The IEP must state:
 - (a) when services and modifications will begin,
 - (b) how often they will be provided,
 - (c) where they will be provided, and
 - (d) how long they will last.
- *Transition service needs.* If your child is age 14 (or younger, if the IEP team determines it appropriate), the IEP must include a statement of his/her transition service needs. Transition planning will help your child move through school from grade to grade.
- *Transition services.* If your child is age 16 (or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP team), the IEP must include a statement of needed transition services and, if appropriate, a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages.
- *Measuring progress.* The IEP must state how school

personnel will measure your child's progress toward the annual goals. It must also state how you, as parents, will be informed regularly of your child's progress and whether that progress is enough to enable your child to achieve his/her goals by the end of the year.

It is very important that children with disabilities participate in the general curriculum as much as possible. That is, they should learn the same curriculum as non-disabled children, for example, reading, math, science, social studies, and physical education, just as non-disabled children do. In some cases, this curriculum may need to be adapted for your child to learn, but it should not be deleted altogether. Participation in extracurricular activities and other nonacademic activities is also important. Your child's IEP needs to be written with this in mind.

For example, what special education services will help your child participate in the general curriculum—in other words, to study what other students are studying? What special education services or supports will help your child take part in extracurricular activities such as school clubs or sports? When your child's IEP is developed, an important part of the discussion will be how to help your child take part in regular classes and activities in the school.

Who develops my child's IEP?

Many people come together to develop your child's IEP. This group is called the IEP team and includes most of the same types of individuals who were involved in your child's evaluation. Team members will include the following:

- You, the parents
- At least one regular education teacher, if your child is (or may be) participating in the regular education environment
- At least one of your child's special education teachers or special education providers
- A representative of the public agency (school system) who,
 - (a) is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of special education,
 - (b) knows about the general curriculum, and
 - (c) knows about the resources the school system has available.

- An individual who can interpret the evaluation results and talk about what instruction may be necessary for your child
- Your child, when appropriate
- Representatives from any other agencies that may be responsible for paying for, or providing transition services (if your child is 16 years or, if appropriate, younger)
- Other individuals (invited by you or the school) who have knowledge or special expertise about your child. For example, you may wish to invite a relative who is close to the child or a childcare provider, the child's audiologist, and/or speech/language therapist.

Together, these people will work as a team to develop your child's IEP.

So I can help develop my child's IEP?

Yes, absolutely. The law is very clear that parents have the right to participate in developing their child's IEP. In fact, your input is invaluable. You know your child the best, and the school needs to know your insights and concerns.

The school staff will try to schedule the IEP meeting at a time that is convenient for all team members to attend. If the school suggests a time that is impossible for you, explain your schedule and needs. It's important that you attend this meeting and share your ideas about your child's needs and strengths. Often, another time or date can be arranged. However, if you cannot agree on a time or date, the school may hold the IEP meeting without you. In this event, the school must keep you informed, for example, by phone or mail.

What should I do before the IEP meeting?

The purpose of the IEP meeting is to develop your child's Individualized Education Program. You can prepare for this meeting by the following:

- Making a list of your child's strengths and weaknesses
- Talking to teachers and/or therapists and getting their thoughts about your child
- Visiting your child's class and perhaps other classes that may be helpful to him/her
- Talking to your child about his or her feelings toward school

It is a good idea to write down what you think your child can accomplish during the school year. It also helps to make notes about what you would like to say during the meeting.

What happens during an IEP meeting?

During the IEP meeting, the different members of the IEP team share their thoughts and suggestions. If this is the first IEP meeting after your child's evaluation, the team may go over the evaluation results, so your child's strengths and needs will be clear. These results will help the team decide what special help your child needs in school.

Remember that you are a very important part of the IEP team. You know your child better than anyone. Don't be shy about speaking up, even though there may be a lot of other people at the meeting. Share what you know about your child and what you wish others to know.

After the different team members (including you, the parent) have shared their thoughts and concerns about your child, the group will have a better idea of your child's strengths and needs. This will allow the team to discuss and decide on the following:

- The educational and other goals that are appropriate for your child
- The type of special education services your child needs

The IEP team will also talk about the related services your child may need to benefit from his/her special education. The IDEA lists many related ser-



vices that schools must provide if eligible children need them. The related services listed in IDEA are listed below. Examples of related services include the following:

Related Services, as listed in IDEA

- Transportation
- Speech-language pathology
- Audiology services
- Psychological services
- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Recreation (including therapeutic recreation)
- Early identification and assessment of disabilities in children
- Counseling services (including rehabilitation counseling)
- Orientation & mobility services
- Medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes
- School health services
- Social work services in schools
- Parent counseling & training
- Occupational therapy, which can help a child develop or regain movement that he or she may have lost due to injury or illness, and
- Speech therapy (called speech-language pathology), which can help children who have trouble speaking.

This list does not include every related service a child might need or that a school system may offer. To learn more about these related services and how IDEA defines them, contact National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities and ask for the News Digest on Related Services. (For more information, see the Resources section.)

Depending on the needs of your child, the IEP team may also discuss the special factors listed below:

- Whether or not your child's behaviors interfere with his/her learning or the learning of others.
- The IEP team will talk about strategies and supports to address your child's behavior.
- If your child has limited understanding of the English language.
- The IEP team will talk about your child's language needs as these needs relate to his/her IEP.
- Since your child has communication needs, the IEP team must consider those needs.

- Since your child is deaf or hard of hearing, the IEP team will consider your child's language and communication needs. This includes your child's opportunities to communicate directly with classmates and school staff in his/her usual method of communication (for example, American Sign Language).

The IEP team will also talk about whether your child needs any assistive technology devices or services. Assistive technology devices can help many children do certain activities or tasks. Examples of these devices include the following:

- Devices that make the words bigger on the computer screen or that "read" the typed words aloud—which can help children who do not see well
- Electronic talking boards—which can help students who have trouble speaking
- Computers and special programs for the computer—which can help students with all kinds of disabilities learn more easily

Assistive technology services include evaluating your child to see if he/she could benefit from *using* an assistive device. These services also include providing the devices and training your child (or your family or the professionals who work with your child) to use the device. (For more information about these devices, see the Assistive Technology section.)

As you can see, there are a lot of important matters to talk about in an IEP meeting. You may feel very emotional during the meeting, as everyone talks about your child's needs. Try to keep in mind that the other team members are all there to help your child. If you hear something about your child which surprises you, or which is different from the way you see your child, bring this to the attention of the other members of the team. In order to design a good program for your child, it is important to work closely with the other team members and share your feelings about your child's educational needs. Feel free to ask questions and offer opinions and suggestions.

Based on what is discussed in the meeting above, the IEP team will then write your child's IEP. This includes the services and supports the school will provide for your child. It will also include the location where particular services will be provided. Your child's placement (where the IEP will be carried out)

will be determined every year, must be based on your child's IEP, and must be as close as possible to your child's home. The placement decision is made by a group of persons, including you the parent, and others knowledgeable about your child. The meaning of the evaluation data, and the placement options are also taken into account. In some states, the IEP team makes the placement decision. In other states, the placement decision is made by another group of people. In all cases, you as parents have the right to be members of the group that makes decisions on the educational placement of your child.

Depending on the needs of your child and the services to be provided, your child's IEP could be carried out in the following locations:

- In regular classes
- In special classes (where all the students are receiving special education services)
- In special schools
- At home
- In hospitals and institutions
- In other settings

Which of these placements is best suited for your child? Can he or she be educated in the regular classroom, with special aids and services? (The IDEA law prefers this placement.) If not, then the placement group will look at other placements for your child. Before the school system can provide your child with special education for the first time, you, as parents, must give your written consent.

Can my child's Individualized Education Plan be changed?

Yes. At least once a year a meeting must be scheduled with you to review your child's progress and develop your child's next IEP. The meeting will be similar to the IEP meeting described above. The team will talk about the following:

- Your child's progress toward the goals in the current IEP
- What new goals should be added
- Whether any changes need to be made to the special education and related services your child is currently receiving

This yearly IEP meeting allows you and the school to review your child's educational program and

change it as necessary. But you don't have to wait for this yearly review. You, or any other team member, may ask to have your child's IEP reviewed or revised at any time.

For example, you may feel that your child is not making good progress toward his/her yearly goals. Or you may want to write new goals, because your son or daughter has made such great progress! Call the principal of the school, the special education director, or your child's teacher, and express your concern. If necessary, they will call the IEP team together to talk about changing your child's IEP.

What are the Alaska Transition Training Initiative's (ATTI) goals?

- To offer statewide training to promote teamwork and support among agencies and families involved in children's transition from the Infant Learning Program to school based programs.
- To help community agencies in developing effective models for children to transition from the Infant Learning Program to school based programs.

Who is the training for?

- School district special education staff
- All teachers and aides
- Head Start and preschool staff
- Infant Learning staff
- Parents and other family members
- Medical care providers
- Day care providers

What's included in the training?

- Ways to welcome the child and family into the new program
- Family involvement in decision making
- Identification of agencies for referral
- Interagency support and agreements
- Development of transition timeline
- Support for child through curriculum planning and environmental modification (change in surroundings)
- Evaluation of transition procedures

Where can I get more information about ATTI?

State of Alaska
Department of Health & Social Services
Division of Public Health
Section of Maternal, Child & Family Health
3601 C Street, Suite 934
P.O. Box 240249
Anchorage, Alaska 99524-0249
(907) 269-3400

Is the school responsible for ensuring that my child reach the goals in his/her Individualized Education Plan?

No. The IEP sets out the individualized instruction to be provided to your child, but it is not a contract. The school is responsible for providing the instructional services listed in an IEP. School officials must make a good-faith effort to help your child meet his/her goals. However, the school is not responsible if your child does not reach the goals listed in the IEP. If you feel that your child is not making progress toward his/her goals, then you may wish to contact the school and express your concern/s. The IEP team may need to meet and revise your child's IEP.

What if I disagree with the school about what is right for my child?

You have the right to disagree with the school's decisions concerning your child. This includes decisions about the following:

- Your child's identification as a "child with a disability"
- His/her evaluation
- His or her educational placement
- The special education and related services that the school provides to your child

In all cases where the family and school disagree, it is important for both sides to first discuss their concerns and try to compromise. The compromise can be temporary. For example, you might agree to try out a particular plan of instruction or classroom placement for a certain period of time. At the end of that period, the school can check your child's progress. You and other members of your child's IEP team can then meet again, talk about how your child is doing,

and decide what to do next. The trial period may help you and the school come to a comfortable agreement on how to help your child.

If you still cannot agree with the school, it is useful to know more about the IDEA's protections for parents and children. The law and regulations include ways for parents and schools to resolve disagreements. These include the following:

- **Mediation.** This is where you and school personnel sit down with an impartial third person (called a mediator) and talk openly about the areas where you disagree, to try to reach agreement.
- **Due process.** This is where you and the school present evidence (or information) before an impartial third person (called a hearing officer), and he/she decides how to resolve the problem.
- **Filing a complaint with the state education agency (SEA),** where you write directly to the SEA and describe what requirement of IDEA the school has violated. The SEA must either resolve your complaint itself, or it can have a system where complaints are filed with the school district and parents can have the district's decision reviewed by the SEA. In most cases, the SEA must resolve your complaint within 60 calendar days.

Your state will have specific ways for parents and schools to resolve their differences. You will need to find out what your state's policies are. Your local department of special education will probably have these guidelines. If not, contact the state department of education and ask for a copy of their special education policies. The telephone number and address of the state department of education are listed on National Information Center for Children & Youth with Disabilities, State Resource Sheet for your state. (See the Resources section for contact information).

You may also wish to call the Parent Training and Information (PTI) center in your state. The PTI has been mentioned several times in this information. They are an excellent resource for parents to learn more about special education. (For contact information, see the Resource section.)

Talking to Other Parents Helps!

You can learn a lot from talking to other parents of children who are already receiving special education services. There are many different local parent groups. (See the Resources section for more information.) Find one, and go to a meeting. If there aren't any groups in your area, contact the nearest group and ask for its newsletter. These can be full of information, too!

How do I find parent groups?

National Information Center for Children with Disabilities has a State Resource Sheet for your state. This sheet is a good source of information about parent groups or disability groups in your state. These state groups can tell you about groups in your area. If you do not already have a State Resource Sheet, call National Information Center for Children with Disabilities and ask for one. It's free and can be very useful.

How can I get more services for my child?

Suppose your child gets speech therapy two times a week, and you think he/she needs therapy three times a week. What do you do?

First, you can talk with your child's teacher or speech-language pathologist (sometimes called a speech therapist). Ask to see the evaluation of his/her progress. If you are not satisfied with your child's progress, then request an IEP meeting to review your child's progress and increase speech therapy. Discuss your child's needs with the IEP team and talk about changing the IEP. The other team members will either agree with you and change the IEP, or they will disagree with you.

If the rest of the IEP team does not agree that your child needs more services, try to work out a compromise. If you cannot, then parents can take the problem beyond the IEP team. As was mentioned above, mediation, due process, and filing a complaint are ways to resolve disagreements. But, always remember that you and the school will be making decisions together about your child's education for as long as your child goes to that school and continues to be eligible for special education services. A good working relationship with school staff is important now and in the future. Therefore,

when disagreements arise, try to work them out within the IEP team before requesting mediation, due process, or filing a complaint.

How can I support my child's learning?

Here are some suggestions that can help you support your child's learning and maintain a good working relationship with school professionals:

- Let your child's teacher/s know that you want to be involved in your child's educational program. Make time to talk with the teacher/s and, if possible, visit the classroom.
- Explain any special equipment, medication, or medical problem your child has.
- Let the teacher(s) know about any activities or big events that may influence your child's performance in school.
- Ask that samples of your child's work be sent home. If you have questions, make an appointment with the teacher/s to talk about new ways to meet your child's goals.
- Ask the teacher/s how you can build upon your child's school activities at home.
- Give your child chores at home. Encourage behavior that leads to success in school, such as accepting responsibility, behaving, being organized, and being on time.
- Volunteer to help in the classroom or school. This will let you see how things work in the school and how your child interacts with others. It will also help the school.
- Remember that you and the school want success for your child. Working together can make this happen.

What if I still have questions and need more information?

You can contact your state's Parent Training and Information (PTI) center. Your PTI will have a lot of information to share about the special education process in your state. You can also contact National Information Center for Children & Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY) again. They have information on all aspects of the IEP process. They also have information on other issues that are important to families who have a child with a disability. NICHCY staff can send you more publications, answer questions, and put you in touch with other organizations who can work with you and your family. (See the Resource section for contact information.)

Preparing for the IEP

Prior to the IEP meeting, you should do the following:

1. Carefully review your child's school records.
2. Carefully review all evaluations of your child.
3. Determine who will be attending the IEP meeting on behalf of the education department.
4. Make a list of your child's strengths, weaknesses, and needs including the surroundings he/she will require, the communication mode your child should use, and the services necessary to help him/her learn.
5. Identify realistic goals for your child to achieve during the school year and place those goals in order of importance.
6. Consider who you wish to bring with you to the meeting (such as an advocate or attorney, educational or other experts) and invite them to the meeting.
7. Prepare written notes to bring to the meeting that address your concerns, opinions, and expectations for your child, and the delivery of educational and related services to him/her.

