

Legal Information

Statement of Assurance

Special Education and Child Find Process

The Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) requires all children (0-25) with disabilities residing in the State of Michigan, including children with disabilities who are homeless children or are wards of the State, and children with disabilities attending private schools, regardless of the severity of their disability, and who are in need of special education and related services, are identified and evaluated. IDEA also requires that Assistive Technology (AT) services be considered for all special education students. AT equipment can be anything from a pencil grip, specially lined paper, and lot-tech communication boards to portable word processors and specialized software for students eligible for special education services.

Effective schools have a written system that is systematically implemented to locate, evaluate, and identify students suspected of having disabilities, from birth through the age of 25. This system includes students who are homeless, children of migrant workers or wards of the state, as well as those attending private schools. If you feel your child may have a disability that prohibits him/her from succeeding educationally, please contact the Special Education office at 987-2516

IDEA Overview

IDEA both authorizes federal funding for special education and related services and, for states that accept these funds, sets out principles under which special education and related services are to be provided. The requirements are detailed, especially when the regulatory interpretations are considered. The major principles include requiring that:

- States and school districts make available a **free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all children with disabilities, generally between the ages of 3 and 21 (25 in Michigan);**
- States and school districts **identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disability,** to determine which children are eligible for special education and related services;
- Each child receiving services has an **individual education program (IEP) spelling out the specific special education and related services to be provided** to meet his or her needs; the parent must be a partner in planning and overseeing the child's special education and related services as a member of the **IEP team;**
- "To the maximum extent appropriate," children with disabilities must be **educated with children who are not disabled; and states and school districts provide procedural safeguards** to children with disabilities and their parents, including a right to a due process hearing, the right to appeal to federal district court and, in some cases, the right to receive attorneys' fees.



IDEA helped fund special education and related services for about 6 million children with disabilities in school year 1998-1999 (the most recent year for which data are published). The largest group of children served are those with specific learning disabilities. Other types of disabilities specified in the law are mental retardation, hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, visual impairments, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, and other health impairments.