



*Simple steps to achieving an appropriate education for young people in foster care from birth to age 22.*

**ALLIANCE**  
*for* **CHILDREN'S**  
**RIGHTS**

# **Education Manual**

August 2025

## **As long-standing advocates for children with disabilities,**

the Alliance understands how confusing it is to figure out how to seek services for children. This step-by-step guide is intended to provide the tools needed to seek early intervention services from regional centers for children birth to 3 years of age, and education-related services from the school system for children 3 and older. This manual is not intended as legal advice, but for practical use by pro bono attorneys, caregivers, education rights holders, and other service providers of children in the foster care system.

### **THE TRUTH ABOUT CHILDREN WHO NEED EARLY INTERVENTION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

It is important to remember that all children develop and learn in different ways. Being eligible for early intervention or special education services does not mean that the child is “dumb” or cannot learn. It means the child needs specialized services to assist with their learning and development.

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# Getting Started for Children of All Ages

## EDUCATION RIGHTS

### WHO HAS THE LEGAL RIGHT TO MAKE DECISIONS FOR EARLY INTERVENTION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES?

A person who holds education rights (ER) has the legal authority to make education-related decisions for a child, including: requesting education records and assessments, and consenting to assessments, early intervention services and placements in the IFSP, or to special education services and placements in the IEP.

#### Who is the Education Rights Holder (ERH)?

- **Biological Parents:** By default, parents hold ERs until a child turns 18 or a court limits and transfers those rights to someone else.
- **Adoptive Parent(s):** Adoption automatically transfers ERs.
- **Legal Guardian:** Guardianship automatically transfers ERs.
- **18 Year Old Youth:** Holds their own ERs.
- **Judge's Order:** Judges can limit education rights of biological parents and appoint a new ERH (via a JV535 form or minute order) such as:
  - Foster Parent
  - Prospective Adoptive Parent
  - Person acting as parent (i.e., relative caregiver)
  - Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Court-trained volunteer

If you don't know who the ERH is, ask the child's court-appointed attorney or social worker.

*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 56028, 56055; Cal. Rule Court § 5.650*

#### How and Why the ERH Might Change?

Education rights may be transferred if:

- Biological parents who previously held education rights had their rights limited or terminated by the court.
- Child is reunified with their biological parent(s) after living with someone else.
- Child is removed from their caregiver who previously served as ERH.
- ERH is unwilling or unable to continue holding ERs or is not acting in the child's best interests.

Contact the child's court-appointed attorney to see if there is a responsible adult in the child's life who is willing to be an ERH for the child. Have the child's court-appointed attorney walk on an order to change ERs.

#### What If There Is No ERH?

- The school district or regional center must appoint a Surrogate Parent within 30 days of determining that one is needed, if the child is or may be eligible for early intervention or special education services.
- Surrogate Parents cannot have a conflict of interest with the child, such as working for the district or being a social worker or probation officer.

*Cal. Gov't Code § 7579.5*

## Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

A volunteer can be appointed as an independent advocate for the best interests of the child. They provide information, access records, and help advocate for the child. They have regular contact with the child and with the court. They do not automatically hold education rights but can be appointed as an ERH.

*Cal. Welf. & Inst. Code § 361*

## REQUESTING EDUCATION RECORDS

### THE PURPOSE OF RECORDS

- They help you better understand the child's needs.
- They show the interventions that have or have not worked in the past.
- They allow comparison between old testing and new testing to monitor academic and developmental progress.

Requests should be made in writing and can, as appropriate, be requested from: (1) the regional center; (2) the child's physician if they have a significant birth or other medical history; and (3) any and all schools and/or districts ever attended (even if the child only attended a school for a short amount of time). The schools, districts, and regional centers have 5 business days to provide you with the records. Request that the copying costs be waived because the cost would prevent the ERH from obtaining records. See [Requesting Education Records: Step-by-Step Guide](#).

### ERHs or Attorneys Representing Children and their ERHs Can:

- Request records
- Refer children for early intervention or special education evaluations/assessments
- Request IFSP/IEP meetings
- Advise the ERH regarding consenting to early intervention or special education services and placements in the IFSP/IEP

*Cal. Educ. Code § 56504, 17 Cal. Code Regs. § 52164*





# Saltz Family Early Education Advocacy Center: For Children 0-3

## EARLY INTERVENTION ADVOCACY: STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

### STEP 1: Getting to Know Your Child

#### *Child Development Basics*

**Developmental Milestones:** Milestones are skills that children typically learn by a certain age such as sitting up by 6 months or talking by age 2. A caregiver friendly milestones tool can be found [here](#).

**Developmental Delay:** A child has a developmental delay if they are not developing at a normal rate and are not reaching their developmental milestones at the expected time.

*17 Cal. Code Regs. § 52022(a)*

**Developmental Risk factors may include:** Exposure to drugs or alcohol during pregnancy, low birth weight, prematurity, complications at birth that cause the baby to be on a respirator, failure to thrive, having a parent with a developmental disability, serious injuries or illnesses in infancy, suffering abuse/neglect, or attachment disruptions (e.g., multiple home and caregiver changes in the first few years of life).

*17 Cal. Code Regs. § 52022(c)*

#### *What are Early Intervention Services?*

Early intervention services are free early education/developmental services for eligible children birth to age 3 designed to help them catch up to normal developmental levels. They include speech and language therapy, physical therapy, occupation

therapy, infant development or center based services, and behavior intervention services.

Research has shown that because children's brains are changing and growing so quickly in the first years of life, early intervention services are especially effective in reducing or eliminating developmental delays and improving life-long outcomes.

*Cal. Gov't Code § 95001, 17 Cal. Code Regs. § 52000(b)(12)*

#### *Who Provides Early Intervention Services in California?*

Local regional centers contract with the state Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to provide services to children ages 0-3 under a program called Early Start. School districts serve children with low incidence disabilities.

*Cal. Gov't Code § 95014(b), Welf. & Inst. Code § 4620, 17 CCR § 52000(b)(43)*

#### *Low Incidence Disabilities*

Low incidence disabilities include visual impairments/blindness, hearing impairments/deafness, and orthopedic impairments (e.g., caused by cerebral palsy, paralysis, or spinal cord injury).

Regardless of whether you think your child has a developmental delay or a low incidence disability, the initial referral should be sent to your local regional center.

*17 Cal. Code Regs. § 52000(b)(32)*

## STEP 2: The Initial Referral

After compiling evidence that the child may have a developmental delay, low incidence disability, or a diagnosed disability such as Down Syndrome, cerebral palsy or epilepsy, send a written referral to the child's regional center for an evaluation for Early Start Eligibility. See [Early Start Referral and Assessment Request Step-by-Step Guide](#).

Find which regional center serves the child's geographic area [here](#).

If the child is in foster care, contact their social worker and request that they submit a regional center referral. In Los Angeles county, this can be done on Form 5004. If the social worker does not submit the referral quickly, contact the child's attorney at dependency court and request that the attorney have the court order the social worker to make the referral.

*17 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 52000(b)(44), 52040*

## STEP 3: The Evaluation and Assessment

### The Intake Call

The regional center will call the ERH to explore their developmental concerns. The ERH can review [developmental milestones](#) to prepare. If the call has not happened within 1 week of the referral, call the intake department to ensure they received the referral.

*17 Cal. Code Regs. § 52060*

### The Evaluation and Assessment

The regional center will meet with the ERH in the

child's home or at the regional center to evaluate and observe the child. The regional center must obtain written permission from the child's ERH before the evaluation and assessment can take place.

*Cal Gov't Code § 95016, 17 Cal. Code Regs. § 52162*

**The Evaluation:** The evaluation will fully review all of the child's developmental areas (cognitive, communication, physical and motor, adaptive and social/emotional) to determine if the child is eligible for Early Start services.<sup>17</sup>

*Cal. Code Regs. § 52000(b)(13)*

**The Assessment:** If the child has communication, fine/oral motor/feeding/sensory processing, or gross motor delays, the regional center must also complete a comprehensive speech and language, occupational therapy, and/or physical therapy assessment prior to the end of the 45-day timeline to determine the services the child needs.

*17 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 52000(b)(4), 52084*

**A comprehensive evaluation and assessment should include:**

- Standardized testing providing age equivalent scores describing where the child is functioning in each developmental domain (for example, child's communication skills are at a 25 month-old level and the child is 12 months old, so the child is 50% delayed).
- Interview with caregiver/ERH regarding concerns.
- Review of medical records and pertinent background information (e.g. prenatal substance or alcohol exposure, prematurity).

*17 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 52082, 52084*

## TIMELINES AND TIPS

- The referral date is the day you or the social worker first contacted the regional center to make the referral.
- **What is your referral date?** \_\_\_\_\_
- The regional center has 45 calendar days from the date of referral to evaluate and assess the child in all necessary areas and develop the IFSP. **When is your IFSP due?** \_\_\_\_\_
- If you have not heard from the regional center by day 35 to schedule the IFSP meeting, call the regional center to immediately schedule the meeting. **When will you follow up with the regional center?** \_\_\_\_\_
- Request that the service coordinator provide you with copies of all evaluation and assessment reports before the meeting.
- If the IFSP is held late, the child may be entitled to compensatory or make-up services dating back to the date when the IFSP should have been conducted. *Cal Gov't Code § 95020, 17 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 52102(a), 52086*

## STEP 4: Determining Eligibility

Once the child has been evaluated/assessed, analyze the results to see if the child is eligible for Early Start services.

### Children are eligible for Early Start if they:

1. have a **developmental delay**,
2. have an **"established risk condition"** including a "low incidence disability"
3. are at **"high risk for developmental disability"**

#### 1. Developmental Delay:

A child must be significantly below children their age (at least 25% delayed) in one or more of the following areas:



**Cognitive Development:** How the child thinks, processes information, and problem solves.



**Adaptive Development:** Skills necessary to function in everyday life such as eating, dressing, and hygiene.



**Social-Emotional Development:** How the child interacts with others, including showing anger in a healthy way, solving conflicts, waiting their turn, and playing with others.



**Communication Development:** How the child understands what others say and uses language and gestures to express their thoughts and needs.



**Physical & Motor Development, Including Vision and Hearing:**

*Fine Motor:* How the child uses their hands and fingers to accomplish tasks like dressing and feeding.

*Gross Motor:* How the child walks, jumps, balances, and climbs.

#### 2. Established Risk Condition:

**a)** An infant or toddler has a condition that has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay, including chromosomal disorders such as Down Syndrome, or neurological disorders such as Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Epilepsy, Hydrocephalus, Spina Bifida, Tuberous Sclerosis, or Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

**OR**

**b)** An infant or toddler has a solely low incidence disability (i.e., vision impairment, hearing impairment, orthopedic impairment).

See **Step 1: Getting To Know Your Child** for more information on low incidence disability.

*Cal Gov't Code § 95014(a)(2); SB 188 (published 7/01/2022)*

*17 Cal. Code Regs. § 52022(b)*

#### 3. High Risk For Developmental Disability:

An infant or toddler is considered at high risk for a developmental disability when a multidisciplinary team determines that the child has 2 or more biomedical risk factors such as:

- Prematurity (less than 32 weeks and/or low birth weight defined as less than 1500 grams)
- Requiring assisted ventilation for 48 hours or longer during the first 28 days of life
- Being small for gestational age (below 3rd percentile)
- Multiple congenital anomalies or genetic disorder
- Prenatal substance exposure
- Failure to thrive

*17 Cal. Code Regs. § 52022(c); Cal Gov't Code § 95014(a)(3);*

*SB 188 (published 7/01/2022)*

**OR**

- The parent of the infant or toddler is a person with a developmental disability.

The percentage of delay is determined through the formal evaluation and assessment conducted by the regional center. The child's age at the time of testing is compared to the age at which they have mastered skills, to calculate the percentage. For premature children, regional centers may attempt to use a child's adjusted age (calculated from their due date, not their birth date), which will decrease the level of delay. The law requires the delay to be calculated based on actual age, not adjusted age.

*Cal. Gov't Code § 95014(a)(1), 17 Cal. Code Regs. § 52022(a); SB 188 (published 7/01/2022)*



## STEP 5: Individualized Service Family Plan (IFSP)

### What is an IFSP?

An IFSP is a contract between the regional center and the ERH which states the services an eligible child has the legal right to receive to improve their development.

17 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 52000(b)(28), 52100

### An IFSP includes:

#### 1. Present Levels of Development

Identify the child's strengths and weaknesses/needs in each developmental area.

#### 2. Developmental Outcomes

The goals for the child's growth within the next 6 months, in each area of identified need.

- Outcomes must include how and when progress will be measured.
  - » Ex. Sally will learn 10 new words in the next 6 months.

#### 3. Specific Early Intervention Services

The services designed to help the child reach their developmental outcomes, such as:

- *Speech and Language Therapy:* To develop communication skills, improve vocabulary, and/or pronounce/articulate words more clearly.
- *Physical Therapy:* To work on weaknesses that impact walking, sitting, and maintaining balance.
- *Occupational Therapy:* To develop adaptive, fine motor, feeding, or sensory processing skills.
- *Infant Development Services:* In-home services with

a specialist to work on overall development

- *Center-Based Programs:* Center-based programs are structured educational environments, which benefit children with more significant delays.

The type, amount, and frequency of services should be clearly written in the IFSP document.

Cal Gov't Code § 95020(d), 17 Cal. Code Regs. § 52106

### Signing the IFSP

- Before the IFSP is signed, review all outcomes, services, and notes to ensure they clearly outline what the child will receive.
- Do not sign a blank document, The ERH should only sign the IFSP when it clearly lists the outcomes and services agreed to at the IFSP meeting.
 

**Note:** *Services cannot begin until IFSP is signed.*
- If there are parts of the IFSP that the ERH agrees with, but others that they do not, the ERH can sign for implementation of only the portions agreed to, as long as that is clearly written on the signature page.
- Do not leave the meeting without a copy of the service page, including ERH signature.
- Request a complete copy of the IFSP document be sent to you within 5 business days.

Cal Gov't Code § 95020, 17 Cal. Code Regs. § 52162

## WHO SHOULD BE PART OF THE IFSP TEAM?

### Required members of the IFSP team:

- Education Rights Holder
- Regional Center Service Coordinator
- Early intervention service providers/evaluators/assessors

17 Cal. Code Regs. § 52104

### Optional members:

- Social worker
- Other family members (if appropriate)
- CASA
- Others who know about the child's development

### **Transfer Procedures and Timelines (AB 1089)**

- Special transfer protections apply to infants and toddlers in foster care or voluntary placements who are receiving early intervention services.
- When these children transfer from one regional center area to another, the social worker must immediately send a notice of relocation to the original regional center (sending regional center). The sending regional center must then immediately send a notice of transfer to the new regional center (receiving regional center).
- The sending regional center must work with the receiving regional center to get services started in the new area as soon as possible, but definitely within 30 days from the date of the notice of transfer.
- If all services identified in the current IFSP have not been started within 30 calendar days after the notice of transfer, the sending regional center must submit a written report to the court, social worker, and ERH, detailing services that are being provided, along with the steps being taken to secure the missing services. They must continue reporting at 30-day intervals, until all services are started.

*Cal Gov't Code § 95014(a)(3), Wel. & Inst. Code § 4643.5*

### **DUTY TO USE GENERIC RESOURCES**

- Many early intervention services may be covered by a child's insurance/Medi-Cal, which must be used to access services before regional center funding is used. Regardless of whether insurance/Medi-Cal is expected to fund certain services, all services must be included in the IFSP (i.e., not just those services being funded by the regional center).
- Using insurance can be a slow process.
  - Start this process as early as possible.
  - Request that the regional center provide "gap funding" for all services required by the child's IFSP. This means the regional center will pay for services until Insurance/Medi-Cal takes over.
- This requirement does not apply to evaluations assessments. A child should be assessed by the regional center and the level of therapy should be determined by the IFSP team, with the services written into the IFSP document.

*17 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 52000(b)(37), 52109, Wel. & Inst. Code § 46481(g)*

### **ACCESSING SERVICES THROUGH INSURANCE/MEDI-CAL**

- Describe the child's delays to their pediatrician and request a prescription for the specific service(s) you are seeking.
- Locate a Medi-Cal provider of that service by calling the 800 number on the back of the child's Medi-Cal card. Keep your regional center service coordinator informed and request that they follow up with Insurance/Medi-Cal.
- Whether services are denied or approved by the child's Insurance/Medi-Cal, request the decision in writing and provide a copy of it to your regional center service coordinator.
- Even if services are approved, Insurance Medi-Cal may fund less services than the child needs. The regional center is responsible for funding the additional services, at the level required by the IFSP.
- If services are denied, the regional center is responsible for funding all services required by the IFSP.

*Cal Gov't Code § 95004, 17 Cal. Code Regs. § 52108*

## STEP 6: Legal Remedies (Children Ages 0 - 3)

### Early Start Compliance Complaint

You may file a compliance complaint with the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) for violations of Early Start laws including:

- **Failure to adhere to legal timelines.**
  - Example: The regional center did not hold an IFSP until after the 45-day timeline.
- **Failure to implement portions of the IFSP.**
  - Example: The regional center failed to give the child speech and language therapy, even though the IFSP required it twice a week.

### To File a Compliance Complaint, Write a Letter with the Following Information

- The name, address and telephone number of the ERH and caregiver.
- **Statement of the Alleged Violation:**
  - *Timeline Violation:* How the regional center failed to meet its deadlines.
  - *IFSP Non-Compliance:* What services the IFSP said it would provide (include a copy of the IFSP) and what services were not provided.
- Request a remedy for the violation. You can often request compensatory or make-up services.
- **Mail to:**  
Department of Developmental Services  
Attn: Complaints, Appeals, and Projects Section  
1600 Ninth Street, Room 340 (MS3-9)  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
OR Fax: (916) 654-3641

*Cal Gov't Code § 95028, 17 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 52000(b)(9), 52170*

### Mediation

Voluntary process that both parties must agree to. It is confidential and overseen by a neutral party. It is an informal method to deal with—and resolve—disagreements. You can file a request for mediation at any time.

Mediation is available to resolve disagreements related to:

1. evaluation and assessment,
2. eligibility determination, and
3. services.

Requests for mediation are filed with:

Office of Administrative Hearings  
Attention: Early Start Intervention Section  
2349 Gateway Oaks Drive, Suite 200  
Sacramento, CA 95833  
OR Fax: (916) 376-6318

*17 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 52000(b)(33), 52170(h), 52172, 52173*

### Administrative Due Process Hearing

Disagreements related to identification, evaluation/assessment, or services can be resolved through a due process hearing.

A lawyer is not needed to file or conduct a hearing but the regional center may use a defense lawyer so an ERH may want to seek counsel as well.

A request form for a due process hearing can be obtained from the child's service coordinator, the regional center, or the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

*17 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 52172, 52174*



## THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESCHOOL

### TRANSITIONING TO PRESCHOOL

#### *The Transition From Regional Center to School District*

- Children over the age of three may be eligible for special education services from their local school district.
- About six months before an Early Start-eligible child turns three, the regional center and school district must discuss the transition process starting with a transition IFSP meeting with the ERH, service coordinator, and school district representative.
- At the transition IFSP meeting, the regional center, school district, and ERH discuss the child's current developmental concerns.
- Current developmental information is necessary so that the school district can develop an assessment plan.
- The school district must assess in all areas of suspected disability, not just the areas where the child is currently receiving Early Start services.
- The assessment plan must include assessments by qualified personnel in all areas of concern.
- For example: Child has had difficulties with articulation (people cannot understand what he's saying). Even though the regional center did not identify speech and language as an area of developmental delay, and was not providing speech and language services, the school district must still assess in this area because it is a suspected area of disability.
- The district must complete the assessments and hold an initial Individualized Education Program ("IEP") meeting in time for services to start by the child's third birthday, if eligible.
- If a child's third birthday falls over the summer, the regional center and school district should plan ahead to ensure the IEP and all services are in place by the first day of school after summer break.

17 Cal. Code Regs. § 52112

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: What is the difference between early intervention services for children ages 0-3 and preschool special education services for children 3-5?**

A: For children 0-3, Early Start services are generally provided through the regional center. For children 3-5, special education services are provided by their local school district.

*Cal Gov't Code § 95001(a)(11), Cal. Educ. Code § 56441.11*

**Q: Why do Early Start services through regional centers stop at age 3?**

A: Early Start services are administered by regional centers, but at age 3, the responsibility for special education services transfers to school districts. Regional centers also provide services for individuals 3 and up who have a qualifying developmental disability under the Lanterman Act, but this is a separate process and the services are intended to provide developmental supports, rather than educational ones.

*Wel. & Inst. Code § 4512*

## PRESCHOOL

### *The Importance of Preschool*

All children benefit from attending a high-quality early care and education program to develop skills that contribute to school success, regardless of whether they have a developmental delay.

*Cal. Educ. Code § 8235*

### *Preschool Education Options*

**Early Head Start and Head Start Programs:** Free programs that provide comprehensive early education and development classes. Early Head Start programs serve children ages 0 - 3rd birthday. Head Start provides part-day or full-day programs for children ages 3 - 5. To find an Early/Head Start program near you, call 1.877.773.5543 or visiting [PreKKid.org](http://PreKKid.org).

**California State Preschool Program (CSPP):** Free part-day and full-day child development program for low-income 3 and 4 year-olds.

**Child Care and Development Centers:** Provides developmental services for infants, toddlers, and school-aged children.

**Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP):** Part-day child development programs for 4 year old children.

Find an early care and education program near you by calling the Los Angeles Child Care Alliance Resource and Referral line at 1.888.922.4453.

### *Preschool Suspensions and Expulsions*

Researchers have found that preschool students are expelled three times more often than school-aged students. Aggressive or inappropriate classroom behaviors that often lead to suspensions or expulsions could be signs that a child needs behavioral or mental health services. Schools should work with a child's family and/or social worker to explore community and school-based mental health services, including considering a referral for special education services.

California state preschools are not allowed to expel or unenroll children without first documenting reasonable steps taken to maintain the child's participation in the program, then determining, in consultation with ERH, that continued enrollment presents a serious safety threat to the child or their classmates. The preschool must also refer parents to alternative appropriate preschool placements before unenrolling the child. (AB752).



## SPECIAL EDUCATION: FOR CHILDREN AGE 3 - HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION (OR AGE OUT AT 22)

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q: How early can children be eligible for special education services?**

A: Children as young as 3 years old are eligible for and can benefit from special education services from their local school district.

*Cal. Educ. Code § 56026*

**Q: When do children age out of services?**

A: Children continue to qualify for services until they receive a high school diploma or the end of the semester in which they turn 22 years-old.

*Cal. Educ. Code § 56026*

**Q: What does a disabled child have a right to under the law?**

A: If eligible, the child has a right to special education and related services.

*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 56000, 56001*

**Q: What are Special Education and Related Services?**

A: An education program that is individualized to meet the child's unique needs based on their disability. This is called a FAPE: Free Appropriate Public Education. In order to qualify, the disability must prevent the child from benefiting from their education.

*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 56000, 56031, 56040*

**Q: How do you know if the child is not receiving a FAPE?**

A: (1) The school failed to identify and/or address all areas of suspected disability. (2) The child is not making adequate progress (academic or otherwise). (3) The child is not in the least restrictive environment. (4) There is a procedural violation that denies the ERH meaningful participation in the IEP process or denies the student an academic benefit.

**Q: What does a child with an education disability look like?**

A: Symptoms can include:

- Poor grades or attendance
- Difficulty with classroom activities such as writing, coloring, drawing, or learning letters and numbers
- Behavior problems
- Speech and language problems
- Problems with memory or attention
- Social or emotional problems
- Problems moving normally, such as using a pencil
- Problems seeing or hearing
- Problems performing daily living skills such as dressing, feeding or grooming in an age-appropriate manner

## CHILD-FIND

Child-find is the school district's duty to 'find', evaluate, and serve children with 'suspected' disabilities living within its boundaries. This is a very low bar to meet: anyone with any evidence of a suspected disability (e.g., poor grades, struggles with attendance or behavior, or any diagnosed disability), has a right to a special education assessment. Schools often tell parents that they do not have to assess a child because they do not believe the child will ultimately be eligible for special education services; courts have ruled that this is incorrect. Eligibility decisions can only take place at an IEP meeting, after the district fully assesses the child.

*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 56300, 56301, 56302*

## STEP 1: Requesting an Assessment

Write a letter to the school requesting a comprehensive psycho-educational assessment. Depending on your child's needs, additional assessment requests might be appropriate. Download a [sample letter](#). State the reasons why the child is suspected of having a disability in that area.

- The school is required to send a written response within 15 calendar days of receiving the request.

*Cal. Educ. Code § 56321*

- The ERH has 15 calendar days to review, sign, and return the assessment plan to the school. Review the assessment plan carefully to ensure all areas of suspected disability are covered.

*Cal. Educ. Code § 56321*

### TIPS

- Make requests in writing. Keep proof of receipt. Types of proof include:
    - sent email;
    - fax confirmation sheet;
    - date-stamped copy from the school clerk; or
    - certified mail receipt.
  - In response to the request for an assessment, there are only 2 legal options for the district:
    - a written refusal to assess OR
    - an assessment plan.
- Cal. Educ. Code §§ 56321, 56500.4*
- DO NOT accept other options! Do not agree to a parent-teacher conference or a Student Study Team (SST) meeting instead of IEP testing.
  - Suspected Disability: If the child demonstrates any evidence that they have a disability (e.g., mental health diagnosis or failing grades), a school district likely cannot refuse to conduct the requested assessment.
  - Request, in writing, on the assessment plan, to receive a copy of the assessment report(s) 5 business days before the IEP meeting.

## Types of Testing That Can Be Requested

- Psycho-Educational, including:
  1. Cognitive/IQ (learning and memory);
  2. Academic;
  3. Psychological processing including visual, auditory, sensory motor, and attention processing;
  4. Social, emotional, and behavioral; and
  5. Health & physical development including hearing and vision.
- Speech and language by a licensed speech and language pathologist
- Central auditory processing by a licensed audiologist
- Visual processing/vision therapy assessment by an optometrist
- Fine motor and/or sensory processing by an occupational therapist
- Gross motor by an adapted PE specialist or licensed physical therapist
- Vocational
- Educationally Related Mental Health Services (see [Step 2: IEP](#) for more information)

## A Comprehensive Assessment Should Include:

1. Standardized testing
2. Classroom observations
3. Interviews of caregiver, ERH, teacher, etc.
4. Review of school records and work samples

## If A Child is in Special Education, How Often Should They Be Tested?

- A child must be assessed every 3 years (Triennial Assessment)
- A child can be assessed once per year, if requested by the ERH
- A child should be tested academically every year to track their progress

*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 56043, 56381*

## STEP 2: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

### What is an IEP?

An IEP is a written education program developed by the school district, teachers, and ERH. IEPs include how the child is currently doing in school, and what everyone involved wants to do for the next school year to improve the child's education outcomes.

*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 56032, 56345*

### 5 Main Components of IEP Meeting:

1. Eligibility
2. Present Levels of Performance
3. Annual Goals & Objectives
4. Statement of Placement
5. Statement of Services

*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 56341.1, 56345*

### 1. Eligibility

- Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH)
- Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
- Visual Impairment (VI)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Orthopedic Impairment (OI)
- Speech and Language Impairment (SLI)
- Emotional Disability (ED)
- Intellectual Disability (ID)
- Autism (AUT)
- Other Health Impairment (OHI), including ADHD and FASD
- Multiple Disabilities (MD)

*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 56026, 56333 et seq., 5 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 3030, 3031; SB 1016*

For more on special education eligibility, see our [Eligibility Checklist](#).

## WHEN AND WHY ARE IEPs HELD?

Generally there are 4 kinds of IEPs:

1. **Initial IEP:** To determine eligibility for special education services.
2. **Annual IEP:** Each eligible child must have at least 1 IEP every year.
3. **Amendment or Addendum IEP:** ERH or school can request a meeting at any time to change or modify the existing IEP. After written ERH request, the IEP must be held within 30 calendar days.
4. **30-Day Transfer IEP:** Must have an IEP within 30 calendar days after any move between school districts to discuss placement options and services at the new district. District must implement the old IEP and provide 'comparable' services for the first 30 days.

*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 56043, 56043.5, 56343*

## WHO SHOULD ATTEND IEP MEETINGS?

### Required IEP Team Members:

- Education Rights Holder
- General Education Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- Administrative Designee
- Any person who has assessed the child or who provides services, if those services are being discussed
- Interpreter if the ERH's primary language is not English

### Optional IEP Team Members:

- Parent or current caregiver (if not ERH) Social Worker
- Anyone who has been invited by the ERH who has knowledge about the child's education needs

*Cal. Educ. Code § 56341*

## 2. Present Levels of Performance (PLOP)

Indicates how the child is currently doing in all areas where they are having problems, including:

- Pre-academics or academics including reading, writing, and math
- Emotional/behavioral/social/attention
- Speech and language
- Gross and fine motor skills
- Daily living skills
- Completing class work/homework
- Attendance

*Cal. Educ. Code § 56345*

## 3. Annual Goals and Objectives (G/O)

Indicates what the IEP team will work on for the next year to help the child perform better in school.

- Goals should be easily understood and measurable (you should be able to figure out whether or not the child is meeting the goals).
- There should be at least 1 annual goal in every area of weakness.

## Specificity:

The PLOP must identify the specific area of weakness for the child. The G/O must specifically identify what will be worked on for the next year.

### Insufficient PLOP:

"Billy is having trouble communicating."

**vs.**

### Acceptable PLOP:

"Billy has limited expressive vocabulary and is not able to express his feelings with words."

### Insufficient G/O:

"Billy will use more words to express himself."

**vs.**

### Acceptable G/O:

"Billy will use 2 to 3 word phrases to communicate his needs and feelings 80% of the time."

## Comprehensiveness:

The IEP must have a PLOP and G/O for each area of weakness, even if this means the child has 20 of each.

Make sure to check that each identified weakness has a thorough and specific accompanying goal (e.g., If Billy also has receptive language issues, he will need a goal for receptive language).

## A NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST OF AREAS WHERE IEP PLOPS/GOALS CAN BE WRITTEN

Pre-Academic	Reading/Writing	Math	Gross/Fine Motor & Adaptive Behavior	Social/Emotional/Behavior/Attention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identifying &amp; matching</li><li>• Colors &amp; shapes</li><li>• Recognizing numbers</li><li>• Interest in books</li><li>• Concepts of quantity</li><li>• Identifying body parts</li></ul>	<p><u>Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decoding</li><li>• Comprehension</li><li>• Fluency</li><li>• Phonics</li><li>• Sight words</li></ul> <p><u>Written Language:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spelling</li><li>• Punctuation &amp; capitalization</li><li>• Sentence structure</li><li>• Paragraph structure</li><li>• Multiple paragraph essays</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Addition/subtraction/multiplication/division</li><li>• Computation: with or w/out regrouping</li><li>• Word problems</li><li>• Money/dollar sense</li><li>• Telling time</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Walking/running</li><li>• Climbing stairs</li><li>• Scribbling</li><li>• Stringing beads</li><li>• Building tower of blocks</li><li>• Holding a pencil and/or forming letters correctly</li><li>• Eating</li><li>• Using the bathroom</li><li>• Dressing</li><li>• Self care</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Time on task</li><li>• Social skills</li><li>• Depression</li><li>• Temper tantrums</li><li>• Following directions</li><li>• Attendance</li><li>• Homework/class work completion</li></ul>



#### 4. Statement of Placement

##### Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Disabled children have a right to participate with general education (non-disabled) students for as much of the school day as possible. This could include mainstreaming in a general education classroom, lunch/recess, and extracurricular activities.

*Cal. Educ. Code § 56040.1*

LREs are unique to each child and can be a combination of any of the different types of placements or services discussed below.

##### General Education

- Pros: Students learn through positive peer modeling from their nondisabled peers. For example, good study skills, academics, and/or social relationships.
- Cons: Disabled students may not get the assistance that they require to benefit from their education.
- General education for children 3-5 can include Head Start, state preschool, or general education kindergarten classrooms.

##### Resource Specialist Program (RSP)

- Students are given more individual attention to address delayed academic skills.
- Collaboration: RSP teacher discusses the child's needs with a general education teacher and gives pointers on how to help the child in the general education classroom.
- Push-In: RSP teacher and/or aide go into the general education classroom and assist the child.

- Pull-Out: Student leaves the general education classroom and is taught in another classroom with less students and more individualized attention.
- RSP services for children 3-5 can include Preschool/Kindergarten Itinerant Teacher (PKIT) services, a specialist to help the child in the classroom.

##### Special Day Class (SDC)

- Restrictive Placement: Students are segregated in a classroom with no general education peers, only disabled peers.

*CAUTION: These types of placements sometimes can function more as a daycare than a classroom for instruction. Before such placements are agreed upon, the ERH should research and visit the placement.*

- SDC placement options for children 3-5 can include preschool collaborative classes designed for children with mild to moderate special needs.

##### Non-Public School (NPS)

- A non-public school is a specialized placement for students whose academic, developmental, behavioral, and/or social-emotional issues are so severe that they cannot be served in the public school setting.

*Cal. Educ. Code § 56034*

- Before agreeing to any specific non-public school placement, you should visit and ask others about the school's reputation.





## 5. Statement of Services

- **Speech and language therapy:** Helps children develop expressive and receptive language skills and improve their articulation (how they pronounce words).

*Cal. Educ. Code § 56031, 5 Cal. Code Regs. 3051.1*

- **Occupational therapy:** Helps children improve fine motor and visual motor skills necessary for writing, drawing, copying, and cutting. Also, addresses sensory processing deficits.

*5 Cal. Code Regs. § 3051.6*

- **Adapted physical education:** Helps children who have difficulty with motor skills participate in PE.

*5 Cal. Code Regs. § 3051.5*

- **Physical therapy:** Helps children with physical limitations access their school environment.

*5 Cal. Code Regs. § 3051.6*

- **School-based counseling:** Helps children develop social and emotional coping skills and improve their behavior. Often called DIS counseling.

*Cal. Educ. Code § 56345.2, 5 Cal. Code Regs. § 3051.10*

- **Audiological services or therapy:** Helps children with hearing impairments, or processing disorders, access their education.

*5 Cal. Code Regs. § 3051.2*

- **Low vision services or vision therapy:** Helps children with visual impairments, or processing disorders, access their education.

*5 Cal. Code Regs. § 3051.7*

- **One-to-one behavior aide:** Helps children regulate their behavior in the classroom.

*Cal. Educ. Code § 56040.1*

- **Transportation:** Bus transportation is provided if: (1) Due to the need for special education services, the child is not attending their home school; or, (2) A child is so disabled that they cannot get to school in a way that their age-appropriate peers can (e.g., high schooler walking to school).

- **Extended School Year (ESY):** 4 weeks of instruction provided during the summer for some special education students when they have the inability to recoup information lost over the summer.

*5 Cal. Code Regs. § 3043*

- **Assistive Technology Services:** Any service that assists a student in the selection or use of an assistive technology device that is educationally necessary.

*Cal. Educ. Code § 56343, 5 Cal. Code Regs. § 3051.19*

## Educationally-Related Mental Health Services (ERMHS), formerly known as AB 3632

- Federal law requires that mental health services be provided to special education eligible children, if such services are necessary for the child to benefit from their education program.
- These services can include individual/family/group counseling or therapy, medication management, and/or residential placement. Residential placement is a 24-hour care facility for those children with the most involved mental health issues.
- To receive ERMHS services, request an ERMHS assessment. Normal assessment timelines apply.

*34 Code of Fed. Regs. § 300.34*

## IEP Consent

- IEP consent is the same as IFSP consent with one exception, stay-put (see page 9 on Signing the IFSP).
- Stay-Put: If the ERH does not agree to anything in the new IEP, and wants the old IEP to stay in place, the ERH has the right to not sign the new IEP.

*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 56346, 56505*

## STEP 3:

### Legal Remedies (Children Ages 3 - 22)

If the ERH disagrees with the services or placement offered in an IEP or feels the child's IEP is not being followed, there are 2 ways to take legal action against the school.

#### Compliance Complaint

File with the California Department of Education for:

- Failure to adhere to legal timelines.
- Example: the district did not provide a written response within 15 days of receiving a request for an assessment.
- Failure to implement portions of the IEP.
- Example: The district failed to give the child speech and language therapy services for the last 2 months, even though it is required by the IEP. A lawyer is not needed to do this!

*Cal. Educ. Code § 56043, 5 Cal. Code Regs. § 4660, et seq.*

To file a Compliance Complaint, write a letter with the following information:

- What the IEP states the school will provide.
- What the school is not providing.
- What you want to make up for this failure.
- Include a copy of the IEP.

Mail to:

California Department of Education  
Special Education Division  
Procedural Safeguards Referral Services  
1430 N Street STE. #2401  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
OR Fax: (916) 327-3704

#### Administrative Due Process Hearing

File a lawsuit against the school district for failing to provide the child with a FAPE for any of the following reasons:

- Not making adequate progress under the current IEP;
- Failing to identify/address all areas of suspected disability; and/or
- Failing to offer placement in the least restrictive environment; and/or
- Procedural errors that amount to: a loss of academic benefit to the child and/or a denial of meaningful participation in the IEP process by the parent.
- Seek the assistance of an attorney.

*Cal. Educ. Code § 56501, et seq.*



## BRIDGES TO THE FUTURE: EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR FOSTER YOUTH

### FACTS AND STATISTICS

Why are the tools, resources and practices described in the Education Manual so important?

Currently, the education outcomes of foster/probation youth in California are heartbreakingly poor:



**High Rates of School Mobility:** Students in foster care experience much higher rates of school instability than other students. 83% of students in foster care are held back in K-3rd grade, compared with 5% of students statewide.<sup>1</sup> In the 2023/2024 school year, 33.4% of youth in foster care changed schools mid-year, compared to only 9% of the general student population.<sup>2</sup>



**Low Test Scores:** Just 20% of students in foster care score proficient or above in English language arts on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress ("CAASPP"), compared to 47% of students statewide. Similarly, 11% of foster youth score proficient or higher on the math portion of the CAASPP compared with 35.5% of students statewide.<sup>3</sup>



**High Dropout Rates and Low Graduation Rates:** Foster youth have the highest dropout rates and the lowest graduation rates. The dropout rate for students in foster care is 31%, compared with 10% of students statewide. Likewise, just 63.6% of students in foster care graduate from high school compared with 86.4% of students statewide, with 15.7% of those graduating under state minimum graduation requirements instead of local district graduation requirements.<sup>4</sup>



**Within Two Years of Aging Out:** While 70% of students who were in foster care want to attend college, only 6% have earned their associates degree.<sup>5</sup> 50% of former foster youth are unemployed.<sup>6</sup> Of those who are working, 93% do not earn a living wage,<sup>7</sup> 25% are incarcerated,<sup>8</sup> and 20% are homeless.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Uninterrupted Scholars Act – How Schools Can Share Information about Foster Children with Child Welfare Agencies. (2018). [pdf] U.S. Department of Education. Available at: [https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/training/supporting\\_materials/Foster\\_Children\\_WebinarFinal\\_08-26-13\\_0.pdf](https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/training/supporting_materials/Foster_Children_WebinarFinal_08-26-13_0.pdf) [Accessed 1 Mar. 2018].

<sup>2</sup>2023-24 Stability Rate. Data Quest. California Department of Education. Available at: <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/DQCensus/StbStudentReport.aspx?cds=00&aggllevel=State&year=2023-24&ListReportRows=Sub&charter=All&subgroup=-&ro=1>.

<sup>3</sup>Most recently released test scores are available at: <https://caaspp-elpac.ets.org/caaspp/DashViewReportSB?ps=true&lstTestYear=2024&lstTestType=B&lstGroup=17&lstSubGroup=240&lstGrade=13&lstSchoolType=A&lstCounty=00&lstDistrict=00000&lstSchool=0000000&lstFocus=a>

<sup>4</sup>Most recently released statistics available at: <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/CohRate.aspx?cds=00&aggllevel=state&year=2023-24>.

<sup>5</sup>Courtney et al., Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 19, Chapin Hall, 2005.

<sup>6</sup>Id.

<sup>7</sup>Coming of Age: Employment Outcomes for Youth Who Age Out of Foster Care Through Their Middle Twenties (2008). In U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services. Retrieved from <https://aspe.hhs.gov/basic-report/coming-age-employment-outcomes-youth-who-age-out-foster-care-through-their-middle-twenties#eo>

<sup>8</sup>Courtney et al., Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 19, Chapin Hall, 2005.

<sup>9</sup>Id.



## EDUCATION RIGHTS OF FOSTER AND PROBATION YOUTH

### *Assembly Bill 490: Foster Youth's Education Bill of Rights*

Provides foster and probation youth with specific protections for their education.

- Immediate enrollment without any of the normally required documentation such as birth certificate, proof of residence, or immunization records.  
*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 48853, 48853.5, 49069*
- Right to Partial Credits: determined by seat time (e.g. if you are in class for 14 hours, you earn 1 credit) or enrollment.  
*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 48645.5, 49069.5, 51225.1*
- Right to access academic resources, services and extracurricular activities regardless of missing sign-up deadlines.  
*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 48850, 48853*
- Every school district must have a Foster Youth Liaison identified to help address these issues.  
*Cal. Educ. Code § 48852.5*

### *School of Origin (SOO)*

- SOO is the school the youth attended when they were detained from their parents, the school they most recently attended, or any school they attended in the past 15 months where the youth feels a connection.
- The youth is allowed to stay in their SOO for the entire time they are in care. Elementary and middle school students can finish the school year in their SOO after their case closes. High school students can remain in their SOO until graduation, even if their case closes.
- When a youth moves, only the ERH can decide whether remaining in their SOO is in the child's best interests.
- The youth has a right to stay in their SOO while disputes are resolved. (Assembly Bills 490/1933)
- Youth have a right to transportation to their SOO.  
*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 48853, 48853.5, All County Letter 11-51*

## **ASSEMBLY BILL 12**

Foster youth can remain in the foster care system until age 21 if they meet 1 of the following eligibility criteria:

1. Completing high school or an equivalent program;
2. Attending college, community college, or a vocational education program;
3. Attending a program designed to remove barriers to employment;
4. Maintaining employment for at least 80 hours per month; or
5. Unable to do one of the above requirements because of a medical condition.

AB 12 allows a foster/probation youth to live in a Supervised Independent Living Placement and receive foster care payments until they turn 21. Youth are eligible if they lived in a suitable placement (dependency or delinquency) and were 18 years old as of 1/1/12.

*Wel. & Inst. Code §§ 303, 11403*

## HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION AND BEYOND

### **Assembly Bill 167/216:**

- Foster and probation youth are eligible to graduate with a diploma under AB 167/216 if they transfer schools after completing their 2nd year of high school.
- Students are eligible to complete only state graduation requirements, if they are not reasonably able to complete additional local graduation requirements by the end of their 4th or 5th year of high school.
- Students have a right to remain in high school for a 5th year if they can complete either the state minimum or local graduation requirements during that year.
- If youth are not AB 216 graduation eligible at the time of transfer, they have a right to have their eligibility redetermined within 30 days of the start of each following academic year, or at any time that the youth or ERH request.
- Serious consideration should be given before graduating under AB 167/216 to ensure youth have the academic skills necessary to pursue higher education or vocational goals.
- Graduating under AB 167/216 may also make a youth ineligible for applying to a 4 year university.
- Only an ERH or 18 year old youth can make the decision to graduate under AB 167/216.

*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 51225.1, 51225.2, 51225.3*

### **Typical School District Graduation Requirements**

- History and English: 4 years each
- Math and Science: 3 years each
- Art and Foreign Language: 2 years each
- Electives: 70 or more credits
- Senior Project

### **AB 167/216 Graduation Requirements**

- History and English: 3 years each
- Math and Science: 2 years each
- Art OR Foreign Language: 1 year
- Electives: None
- Senior Project: None

### **18 YEAR OLD YOUTH: DID YOU KNOW?**

- You hold your own education rights
- You make the decisions about your education
- You can consult with the adults in your life prior to making any important decision about your education



## DISMANTLING THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

### **BARRIERS TO EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS OF FOSTER CHILDREN LEAD TO PLACEMENT IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM**

- 18,000+ Los Angeles County children are in foster care.<sup>10</sup>
- 50% of children in foster care have disabilities resulting from the neglect, abuse and trauma they suffer.<sup>11</sup>
- Few youth receive appropriate special education services because they lack a qualified advocate.
- The denial of services in turn leads to more problematic behaviors.
- Overburdened schools look to the juvenile justice system to deal with “problem” students.
- 25% of children in foster care will “cross-over” into the juvenile justice system.<sup>12</sup>
- 70% of cross-over youth have mental health issues<sup>13</sup> and/or learning disabilities.<sup>14</sup>

### **School Discipline Guidelines**

#### **School Push-Out**

- Schools often push problem youth out of mainstream campuses, especially students with behavior or attendance problems, or those who are significantly behind in their credits. They give them an option of going to continuation schools or independent study programs, although these schools provide less services. This can happen to children of all ages including preschool.
- Youth have a right to attend their local comprehensive school for the entire school day
- ERHs should NOT agree to pick their child up from school early or stay on campus with them all day due to behavioral problems.

#### **Suspension**

- A temporary removal from school (usually no more than 5 days).
- The school must give written notice of any suspension including the date when the youth can return to school.
- Youth may not be suspended for absence or tardies.
- If the youth is asked to write a statement after an incident, they can politely refuse as this statement can be used against them in expulsion or delinquency proceedings.

*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 48900, 48900.1*

#### **Expulsion**

- A long term removal (usually two semesters) from all comprehensive schools in the district; it can be longer for a “Zero Tolerance” offence such as weapons, drugs, serious bodily injury or sexual harassment. You can only be expelled after a formal hearing. At the hearing, the youth has a right to be represented by an attorney, to review evidence, and to present/cross-examine witnesses.
- Youth must attend school, even while under an expulsion order. The district should help find an alternative school.
- Youth have to apply to be readmitted to the district once they have complied with all requirements of their Rehabilitation Program (usually good grades, behavior, attendance).

*Cal. Educ. Code §§ 48900, et seq.*

<sup>10</sup>Most recently released numbers are available at: <http://lacdcs.org/aboutus/factsheets.html>

<sup>11</sup>Individuals with Disabilities Act of 2004 and the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999: What Are the Policy Implications for Youth with Disabilities Transitioning from Foster Care? Hill, Katharine. Child Welfare; Arlington Vol. 88, Iss. 2, (2009): 5-23.

<sup>12</sup>Courtney et al., Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth: Outcomes at Age 19, Chapin Hall, 2005.

<sup>13</sup>Mental Health Issues in California's Juvenile Justice System. (2010). [pdf] Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice (BCCJ). Available at: [https://www.law.berkeley.edu/img/BCCJ\\_Mental\\_Health\\_Policy\\_Brief\\_May\\_2010.pdf](https://www.law.berkeley.edu/img/BCCJ_Mental_Health_Policy_Brief_May_2010.pdf) [Accessed 2 Mar. 2018].

<sup>14</sup>Special Education and the Juvenile Justice System. (2000). [ebook] U.S. Department of Justice: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Available at: <http://youthjusticenc.org/download/juvenile-justice/juvenile-and-criminal-representation/Special%20Education%20and%20the%20Juvenile%20Justice%20System.pdf> [Accessed 2 Mar. 2018].

## Special Education and Discipline

- Schools are not permitted to subject disabled youth to normal discipline procedures if the incident was caused by their disability.
- When schools want to expell a disabled youth or suspend them for 10+ days, they must hold a manifestation determination IEP.

### Manifestation Determination

- An IEP meeting must be held within 10 days of the suspension/decision to recommend expulsion to determine: 1) if the conduct was a manifestation of or caused by the student's disability, or 2) if the conduct was caused by the school's failure to implement the IEP. If either of these is found, the IEP team must end the suspension or expulsion proceedings, conduct a behavior assessment, and create a behavior plan. If the IEP team does not find the incident to be a manifestation of the youth's disability, the school may discipline the youth like any other.
- If a youth is not IEP eligible, but an ERH has requested an assessment in writing, prior to the behavior that led to the discipline, the school must conduct the assessment, determine the youth's eligibility for special education services and then do a manifestation determination before proceeding with the disciplinary action.

*Cal. Educ. Code § 48915*

## Prepare for Court

Provide school records of good attendance and grades.

**IF THE YOUTH HAS A DISABILITY:** Write a letter and appear at their court date to inform the court about how the youth's disability affects their behavior, the alleged charge, and their ability to comply with the terms of their probation.

### Disposition (Sentencing)

- Diversion: If the youth's crime is very minor, they can participate in a diversion program to avoid the charge.
- Informal Probation: The youth stays at home and if they successfully complete the terms of their probation for 6 months to 1 year, the case is dismissed.
- Formal Probation: Youth can be sent to suitable placement (i.e. group home or camp) and must complete the terms of their probation for 1-3 years. For any disposition there are terms that the youth must complete include good attendance/grades, following parent rules, and possibly going to therapy and/or drug treatment.

### Sealing Juvenile Records

All youth should seal their juvenile record once they have been off probation for 6 months. Go to the court where the hearing was held and request a Petition to Seal Juvenile Records and Court Order.

*Wel. & Inst. Code § 781*

## THE PLAYERS

**Public Defender:** A lawyer for the youth who argues their case to the judge.

**Probation Officer:** Assists youth to find services needed to follow the court ordered plan.

**Judge:** In charge of the courtroom, they decide if the youth is guilty and sentences them to a rehabilitation plan.

# Resources and Common Acronyms

## RESOURCES

### Sources of Law

- Individuals with Disabilities Education (Improvement) Act—(IDE(I)A) 20 United States Code section 1400 et seq. Parts B & C
- Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations section 300 et seq. & section 303 et seq.
- California Code of Education section 56000 et seq.
- Title 5 California Code of Regulations section 3000 et seq. & Title 17 CCR section 52000 et seq.
- California Early Intervention Services Act, Government Code section 95000 et seq.
- Case Law: Supreme Court, 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, and Office of Administrative Hearings (persuasive authority)

### Other Resources

- CA Composite of Laws
- Wrightslaw.com
- Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) decisions:
  - [dgs.ca.gov/oah/DDSHearings/DDSDecisions.aspx](https://dgs.ca.gov/oah/DDSHearings/DDSDecisions.aspx)
  - [dgs.ca.gov/oah/SpecialEducation/searchDO.aspx](https://dgs.ca.gov/oah/SpecialEducation/searchDO.aspx)

## Common Acronyms

APE Adaptive Physical Education

AT Assistive Technology

CASA Court Appointed Special Advocate

CDE California Department of Education

CP Cerebral Palsy

CSW County Social Worker

DCFS Department of Children & Family Services

DD Developmental Delay

DHH Deaf or Hard of Hearing

DMH Department of Mental Health

DIS Designated Instruction and Services

ED Emotional Disability

ERH Education Rights Holder

ESY Extended School Year

FAPE Free Appropriate Public Education

ID Intellectual Disability

IEP Individualized Education Program

IFSP Individualized Family Service Plan

LRE Least Restrictive Environment

MR Mental Retardation

ODD Oppositional Defiance Disorder

OHI Other Health Impairment

OT Occupational Therapy

PKIT Preschool/Kindergarten Itinerant Teacher

PT Physical Therapy

RSP Resource Specialist Program

SDC Special Day Class

SLI Speech or Language Impairment

SLD Specific Learning Disability