
Information for Parents¹ on the New Individualized Education Program (IEP) Form: Quick Reference Guide

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) made improvements to the IEP form for use beginning in School Year 2024-2025. This quick reference guide will share ways you can:

- Prepare for IEP meetings,
- Collaborate with school professionals to use the new form during IEP meetings, and
- Partner with the school throughout the year to put the IEP into action.

This quick reference guide cannot cover every topic in the but will highlight changes from the previous IEP form. For a complete review of the whole form, please see the [Technical Guide](#).

Introduction

IEP Teams should use the new IEP form as a discussion guide during the IEP meeting. The form guides the whole IEP Team to talk about the student’s vision and parent and student concerns. Then IEP Team members, including parents and the student (whenever appropriate), share data and information on the student’s unique strengths, skills, and needs. In the final step, the IEP Team discusses and decides which goals, supports, and services will help the student make effective progress in the year ahead.

Each page of the new IEP form guides the IEP Team to provide specific information about the student’s unique profile and needs. For example, the Postsecondary Transition Planning section is used only with students who are the right age for transition planning.² The IEP Team may mark unused sections of the form “Not Applicable.”

As members of the IEP Team, parents can offer information and input throughout the IEP, and there are several sections where your input is especially important.

The IEP Team meeting will be held at a time and place that you and the school agree on. Special education law allows the school to hold the IEP Team meeting without you *only* if the school has repeatedly tried and failed to arrange your attendance. If you need support for the meeting, such as translated materials or an interpreter, contact your IEP Team leader before the meeting.

We encourage you to become familiar with the special education process, including the role of each person on the IEP Team.

¹ In this document, “parent” means father, mother, legal guardian, person acting as a parent of a child, foster parent, or an educational surrogate parent appointed in accordance with federal law. 603 CMR 28.02(15).

² “Beginning age 14 or sooner if determined appropriate by an individualized education program team, school age children with disabilities shall be entitled to transition services and measurable postsecondary goals, as provided under the federal Individual with Disabilities Education Act, 20 USC sec. 1400, et sec.” G.L. c. 71B, § 2.

Tips and Resources for You to Consider

<i>Before the Meeting</i>	<i>During the Meeting</i>	<i>After the Meeting</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider talking with your child and others, such as family members, about your hopes for your child for this year, your vision for your child’s future, and any concerns relating to your child. • Consider observing your child at home and in the community and note your child’s strengths, interests, preferences, and needs. • If your child will be participating in the IEP Team meeting, talk with your child’s teacher(s) and/or other trusted adults in your child’s life about preparing your child to participate in the IEP team meeting. • Check out the Parent’s Guide to Special Education and/or other resources on the Parent Information Page of the MA DESE website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share your concerns about your child’s development, progress, and needs, as well as your vision for your child. • Consider all of the information shared by other members of the IEP Team, such as their perceptions of your child’s progress and needs. • Together with IEP Team professionals, support your child to participate in the meeting. • Throughout the meeting, please feel free to share what you know about your child and give examples. Your knowledge of your child’s strengths, interests, preferences, and needs is important data that will contribute to the development of the IEP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in with your child’s teacher(s), if you would like, and share any changes you are noticing, including your child’s new skills and achievements or new areas of need. • As you deem appropriate, communicate with your child and other adults in your child’s life, such as family members, about changing hopes and concerns over time. • Communicate with the IEP Team leader if you have any new concerns.

Student participation may start at age 3.

Research tells us that students who learn to advocate for themselves are more likely to grow into successful adults. For this reason, the new IEP form encourages students as young as age 3 to participate in their own IEP Team meetings.

Students who will turn age 14 and older while the IEP is in effect must be *invited* to attend the IEP Team meeting if the team is considering postsecondary goals or transition services. However, students of any age (3 – 22) are not required to attend their IEP Team meetings. DESE encourages students to participate in their own IEP Team meetings and recommends that schools and families work together to create strategies and supports that enable children and youth to participate in their IEP Team meetings as much as possible.

Gradually, the student may learn to take a more active role in understanding and contributing to the IEP Team’s discussion and planning their own IEP goals and services.

Very young children may participate in the IEP Team process as much as developmentally appropriate, sharing what they want to learn, what they are good at, what they are concerned about, and what they are looking forward to. In middle or high school, it may be possible for some students, with training and support, to lead

their own IEP Team meetings. Others may choose to participate in various ways such as introducing IEP Team members, making a statement, or giving a presentation on their strengths, interests, and needs.

Tips and Resources for You to Consider

<i>Before the Meeting</i>	<i>During the Meeting</i>	<i>After the Meeting</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your child will be participating in the IEP Team meeting, partner with your child’s teacher(s) and/or other trusted adults in your child’s life to prepare your child. • Consider asking questions and offering suggestions about the amount of time your child may be present and how they may participate in the IEP Team meeting. • Help your child to practice their role in the IEP Team meeting. • The Virginia Department of Education’s I’m Determined project offers many self-advocacy resources to be used by educators, parents, and students, including tools to help students participate in their own IEP meetings. One tool is the Student Rubric for IEP Participation. • As you deem appropriate, talk with your child and others, such as family members, about your hopes for your child for this year, your vision for your child’s future, and any concerns relating to your child. • Notice your child at home and in the community. Help them to communicate with you about their strengths, interests, preferences, and needs. What do they enjoy? What is hard for them? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the beginning of the meeting, you and your child can share specific concerns you want the IEP to address. After the student shares their vision, other IEP Team members can also offer their ideas for the student’s upcoming school year and beyond. • You and the student can contribute to the rest of the IEP meeting with other IEP Team members, as you and/or your child deem appropriate. • Support and encourage your child to participate in the meeting. • Model active participation in the meeting for your child, including asking questions and sharing information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with your child about how it felt to participate in the meeting and help them plan for the next meeting.

The new IEP form guides the IEP Team to discuss data from multiple sources to develop an individualized plan.

The new IEP form guides the IEP Team through a process of sharing qualitative and quantitative data that is specific to the student so that the Team can develop an IEP that is individualized. The Team uses information from a variety of sources – including families, parents, and students.

The **Student Profile** section helps the IEP Team to move from the general to the specific, narrowing down to discuss the individual student’s unique disability(ies), language needs, and assistive technology needs. If the IEP Team determines that your child has language and assistive technology needs, the Team will use this information to address those needs in the relevant sections of the IEP.

The four “**Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance**” sections help the IEP Team to document and discuss your child’s strengths, interests, preferences, and disability-related needs in four areas: Academics, Behavioral/Social/Emotional, Communication, and Additional Areas. The IEP form encourages the Team to document the student’s strengths in each of these areas. The IEP Team can discuss how to build upon these strengths to support your child’s growth and development and consider how to address disability-related needs. Because you know your child at home and in the community, you have important data and information to contribute to the discussion.

The **Accommodations and Modifications** sections help the IEP Team to discuss and document the accommodations or modifications the student needs in various places (for example, classroom, recess or extracurriculars) to make progress. Accommodations allow the student to access the general education curriculum by removing barriers or challenges. Modifications change what the student is taught and/or how the student shows what they have learned, to match the student’s abilities and learning goals.

The **Measurable Annual Goals** section prompts the IEP Team to discuss and write annual goals for your child that specify how everyone will know the goal has been achieved, how progress will be measured, how frequently progress will be measured, and who will measure it. This change in the goals section gives the IEP Team essential data for understanding your child’s learning and skill development, and for setting future goals.

Tips and Resources for You to Consider

<i>Before the Meeting</i>	<i>During the Meeting</i>	<i>After the Meeting</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review DESE’s family curriculum guide for your child’s grade and consider whether they know and are able to do what is expected of them.Learn more about Best Practices in Equitable Data and Assessment in this Equitable Data and Assessment RLO.Observe your child at home and in the community and take notes about any of your child’s strengths, interests, preferences,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Offer information and ask questions, especially if the evaluation results and other information do not sound to you like your child.Seek clarification if terms or information are unclear.Ask how you can support your child’s learning and growth at home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Communicate with your child about the accommodations and modifications that are included in the IEP. As your child develops, they may outgrow some accommodations or modifications; communicate back to the school if you would like to discuss any of the strategies on the IEP.For additional information on data in the IEP, see the IEP Technical Guide.

<p>and needs that you want to talk about at the IEP Team meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with your child about data and information they may want to share about themselves. Talk about specific tasks or settings they find challenging, and what strategies make it easier for them to succeed. • Review your child’s IEPs from recent years (if any), as well as progress reports. Think about how your child performed this past year and consider what might be continued or changed. • If the school has conducted new assessments (for example, for a three-year re-evaluation), contact the school at least two days before the IEP Team meeting to ask them to send you summaries of assessment reports. 		
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Secondary Transition is embedded within the new IEP.

The new IEP form includes transition planning, and Massachusetts no longer uses the Transition Planning Form (TPF). Massachusetts resources created before the new IEP form was released may still refer to the “Transition Planning Form” until they are updated.

IEP Teams begin transition planning for students who are age 13 and will turn 14 while the IEP is in effect, or at an earlier age if the IEP Team thinks that is appropriate. The IEP Team then plans for transition every year until the student leaves high school by graduating or reaching the age when they are no longer eligible for special education (22).

Using the **Vision/Postsecondary Goals** section, the student shares their hopes for learning, working, and living when they become adults. “Postsecondary Goals” are the student’s goals for life after high school. They are different from “Measurable Annual Goals”, which address skills your child will be working on this year.

In the **Postsecondary Transition Planning** section, the IEP Team focuses on life after high school by discussing data on the student’s employment, community, independent living, and education and training skills. What are the student’s strengths, interests, and preferences in these areas? What are the impacts of the student’s disability(ies)? Then the IEP Team notes how the student’s needs in these areas will be addressed by the IEP.

In the **Projected Date of Graduation/Program Completion and Course of Study** sections, the IEP Team discusses whether the student is on track for completing high school, and whether the student will earn a

regular high school diploma. The IEP Team documents what the student will be studying now and over the next few years to help them achieve their vision/postsecondary goals.

In the **Community and Interagency Connections** section, IEP Teams discuss and document any supports the student will receive that are provided through partnerships with other organizations such as the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, the Department of Developmental Services, employers, public transit agencies, Independent Living Centers, etc.

The **Transfer of Rights** and **Decision-Making** sections help the IEP Team discuss and document who will make educational decisions for the student when they reach the Age of Majority (18).

For students with severe disabilities who will need adult services, the IEP Team uses the **688 Referral** section to discuss and document that the school has submitted a 688 referral to the appropriate state agency.

Tips and Resources for You to Consider

<i>Before the Meeting</i>	<i>During the Meeting</i>	<i>After the Meeting</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become familiar with the secondary transition planning process, including strategies to support self-determination and postsecondary success. • Learn more about secondary transition through brochures for parents, jointly created by DESE and the Federation for Children with Special Needs. • Learn about Chapter 688 on DESE's webpage and in this 688 brochure. • Talk with the school to see whether and how they are using DESE's Discussion Questions to Get Ready for My Yearly IEP Meeting form with your child. • Ask your child what they are proud of, what they want to learn, and how they want to learn, work, and live in the future. Help your child prepare to participate in the IEP meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support your child to participate in the meeting by using prompts, scripts, or other visual cues as appropriate. • Model active participation in the meeting for your child, including asking questions and sharing information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As much as possible, continue to communicate and partner with the school to monitor your child's progress and to support your child to develop self-advocacy and independent living skills at home and in the community.

The new IEP form leads the IEP Team through a discussion about participation in general education and the life of the school.

The new form helps IEP Teams consider how the student will be intentionally included in general education programming to the greatest extent possible.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) uses the term “Least Restrictive Environment (LRE),” which means that students with disabilities must be educated with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. Students are put in special classes, separate schooling, or otherwise removed from the regular education environment *only* if their disabilities make it impossible for them to be educated in regular classes with supplementary aids and services.

In the **State and/or Districtwide Assessment/Alternate Assessment** section, the IEP Team should first consider whether your child can take assessments without accommodations under routine conditions. Your child may not require accommodations because many accessibility features are available to all students, not just students with disabilities. The IEP Team may then consider whether your child can take assessments *with* accommodations. If appropriate, the IEP Team may then consider whether your child *may* be eligible to take an alternate assessment. Only students that meet DESE’s definition for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are eligible to participate in alternate assessments.

In the **Participation in the General Education Setting** section, the IEP form prompts the IEP Team to prioritize your child’s inclusion in general education to the greatest extent possible, with or without supports. If the IEP Team decides that your child cannot participate in all or some general education settings, then the form requires the IEP Team to explain.

In the **Service Delivery** section for both the regular and extended school years, the new form asks the IEP Team to specify the type of location where your child will receive services. This is another opportunity for the IEP Team to discuss how to maximize your child’s inclusion in general education settings, with or without supports, to the greatest extent possible.

Tips and Resources for You to Consider

<i>Before the Meeting</i>	<i>During the Meeting</i>	<i>After the Meeting</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicate with your child about their feelings regarding school, their peers, and how they learn best.• Consider what supports, services, or aids your child may need to participate in the general education settings.• Learn about Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborate with other IEP Team members to share information and ideas on ways to promote your child’s inclusion in general education to the greatest extent possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As much as possible, continue to communicate and partner with the school to let them know from your perspective what is working well and what the challenges are.