COLORADO
Department of Education

Colorado IEP Parent Training

Module 4, Part 1: IEP Development, Review, and Revision

May 15, 2026

Module 4 overview

- Part 1
  - Overview of IEP process
  - Parent participation
  - IEP meetings
  - IEP team members
- Part 2
  - IEP components
  - IEP amendment



Review of acronyms

- **IDEA**: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- **ECEA**: The Exceptional Children's Educational Act
- **CDE**: Colorado Department of Education
- **AU**: Administrative Unit, which includes school districts and Boards of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES), etc.
- **FAPE**: Free Appropriate Public Education
- **IEP**: Individualized Education Program
- **PSN**: Procedural Safeguards Notice
- **PWN:** Prior Written Notice

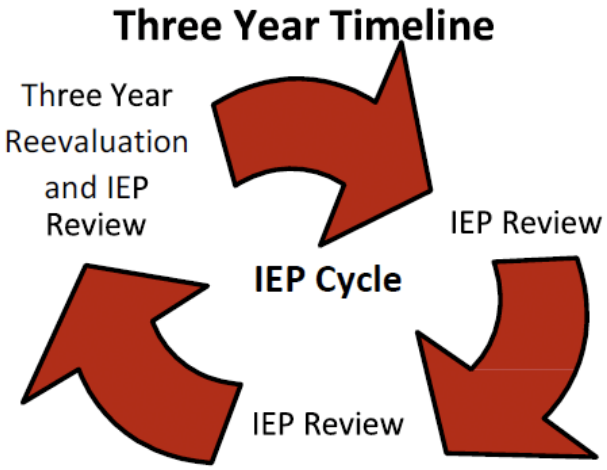
Overview

About the IEP

- Children with disabilities have the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE).
- For eligible students, FAPE is delivered through the development and implementation of an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- The IEP is the legal document that outlines the plan for the child's special education and related services.
- The IEP is developed in a meeting of a multidisciplinary team that includes the parents.
- **Module 1** gives more information about FAPE.

Overview of IEP process

1. Notice of IEP meeting.
2. Multidisciplinary team (the IEP team) meets to develop the IEP.
3. All staff members responsible for implementing services are given access to the IEP.
4. Services are delivered.
5. Progress is monitored and reported.
6. The IEP is reviewed annually in a meeting on or before its anniversary date.
7. A reevaluation is done at least every three years.



Parent Participation

Key principle of IDEA

- Parent participation is a key principle of IDEA.
- Parents must be given an opportunity to participate in the IEP Team meeting.
- Parents are equal participants in team processes.
- Parents and students provide input to the IEP to enhance the child's education.
- Parents are the protectors of the child's rights. (More on Parent and Student Rights in **Module 7**)
- In Colorado, parents do not consent to or otherwise approve the IEP. (A parent's signature on the attendance sheet has no meaning other than that they were at the meeting.)
- Parents have the right to challenge decisions related to their child's evaluation (via an IEE) or educational program (via dispute resolution) as described in the PSN.
- Parents can revoke consent to special education.

Impact of decisions outside of the IEP process

- Parent decisions made **outside** of the IEP process can impact the IEP process or the right to special education and related services.
- When parents independently choose to enroll students in private school, it affects the child's right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Learn more: Q&A on Serving Children with Disabilities Placed by Their Parents in Private Schools (US ED)
- The Colorado rules on "abbreviated school days" do not apply when a child's parent has requested an abbreviated school day. (More on abbreviated school days in **Modules 7 and 8**.)

Meaningful participation

- IDEA says that **"the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective** by . . . strengthening the role and responsibility of parents and ensuring that families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home." 24 USC § 1400(c)(5).



What meaningful participation is and is not

- Meaningful participation happens when the IEP team listens to parental concerns with an open mind. It is exemplified by answering questions, incorporating some requests into the IEP, and discussing privately obtained evaluations, preferred methodologies, and placement options, based on the individual needs of the student.
- Meaningful is more than having parents present and being given an opportunity to speak at an IEP meeting. An AU being “receptive and responsive at all stages” to the parent’s position, even if it ultimately rejects it, is illustrative of parental participation.
- Meaningful participation does **not** require that an AU simply agree to whatever a parent has requested.
- Meaningful parent participation does **not** give a parent the right to dictate all aspects of the child’s education. Parents do not have “veto power” over IEP Team decisions.

A few examples

- Some practices that support parent participation are required by IDEA and ECEA. Other practices are helpful but not required by law.
- **Examples of required practices** (not a complete list)
  - Offer to translate the IEP into the dominant language of parents at no cost.
  - Consider and respond to a parents request to hold an IEP meeting.
  - Get parent consent when inviting a transition agency representative to a meeting.
- **Examples of helpful practices**
  - Provide drafts before the IEP meeting.
  - Plan for extra time when interpretation is needed.
  - Involve parents in preparing the agenda for the meeting.

IEP Meetings

Notice of meeting

- Parents must be given a **notice of meeting** before the IEP meeting.
- The notice must include:
  - The purpose, time and place of the meeting.
  - Who will be attending. This could be by role rather than names.
  - That parents may invite others.
- The notice must be given early enough for parents to have an opportunity to attend and to invite others. It is common practice, but not required, to give notice at least 10 days before the meeting.
- The AU must ensure that parents whose native language is not English understand the notice.

Extra notice requirements for transition

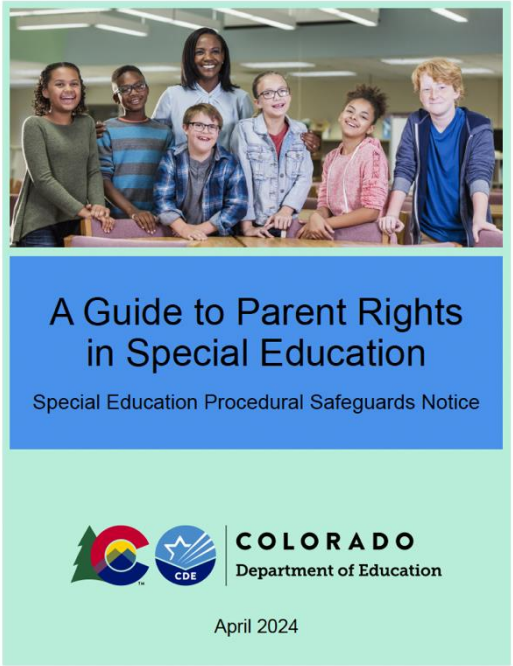
- When transition services will be discussed (age 15, or earlier if determined by the IEP team), the notice must:
  - indicate that a purpose of the meeting will be consideration of the postsecondary goals and transition services for the child, and
  - state that the child will be invited.
- The notice must also identify any other agency that will be invited to send a representative. 34 CFR § 300.322(b)(2).
- Parent consent is needed before a representative of a transition services agency can be invited.

Preparing for the meeting

- Ask when you will receive evaluation reports (if applicable) and a draft of the IEP. A draft IEP is helpful but is not required to be provided in advance.
- Tell the team in advance if you need an interpreter or other accommodations for the meeting. This gives them time to make the arrangements.
- Ask if there is an agenda for the meeting.
  - Some teams will prepare an agenda in advance. Others may use the IEP framework as an agenda.
  - Let the team know if you want to include something on the agenda.

Procedural Safeguards Notice

- Parents will usually be offered a copy of the Procedural Safeguards Notice (PSN) at the IEP meeting.
- The PSN explains parents' IDEA rights.
- The PSN must be given at least once a year and at certain specified times.
- You may be asked to sign a form acknowledging that you were offered the PSN.



Attendance sheet

- At the IEP meeting, you will be asked to sign the attendance sheet.
- In Colorado, parents sign an attendance sheet to show that they attended the meeting. The attendance sheet does not indicate anything other than attendance.
- In Colorado, **parents do not sign the IEP or an annual consent form**.



Meeting process

- At the meeting, the multidisciplinary team will share their interpretation of evaluation data and work together to develop the IEP.
- Each step in the IEP development process leads to the next.



Meeting notice scenario

- The school sends a notice of meeting and says that the annual IEP meeting will be held in five days at 8:00am.
- The parent cannot attend at that time even if participating by alternate means (e.g., conference call or video conference).
- The parent contacts the case manager to let them know. The case manager tells the parent how difficult it has been to schedule the meeting.
- What can the parent do?

Meeting notice scenario parent options

- The parents can let the IEP team know that they were not given enough notice of the meeting time and cannot attend. It is best practice to put this information in writing.
- The parents can ask the team to reschedule the meeting.
- The school must continue to provide the services in the existing IEP until the IEP meeting can be held.

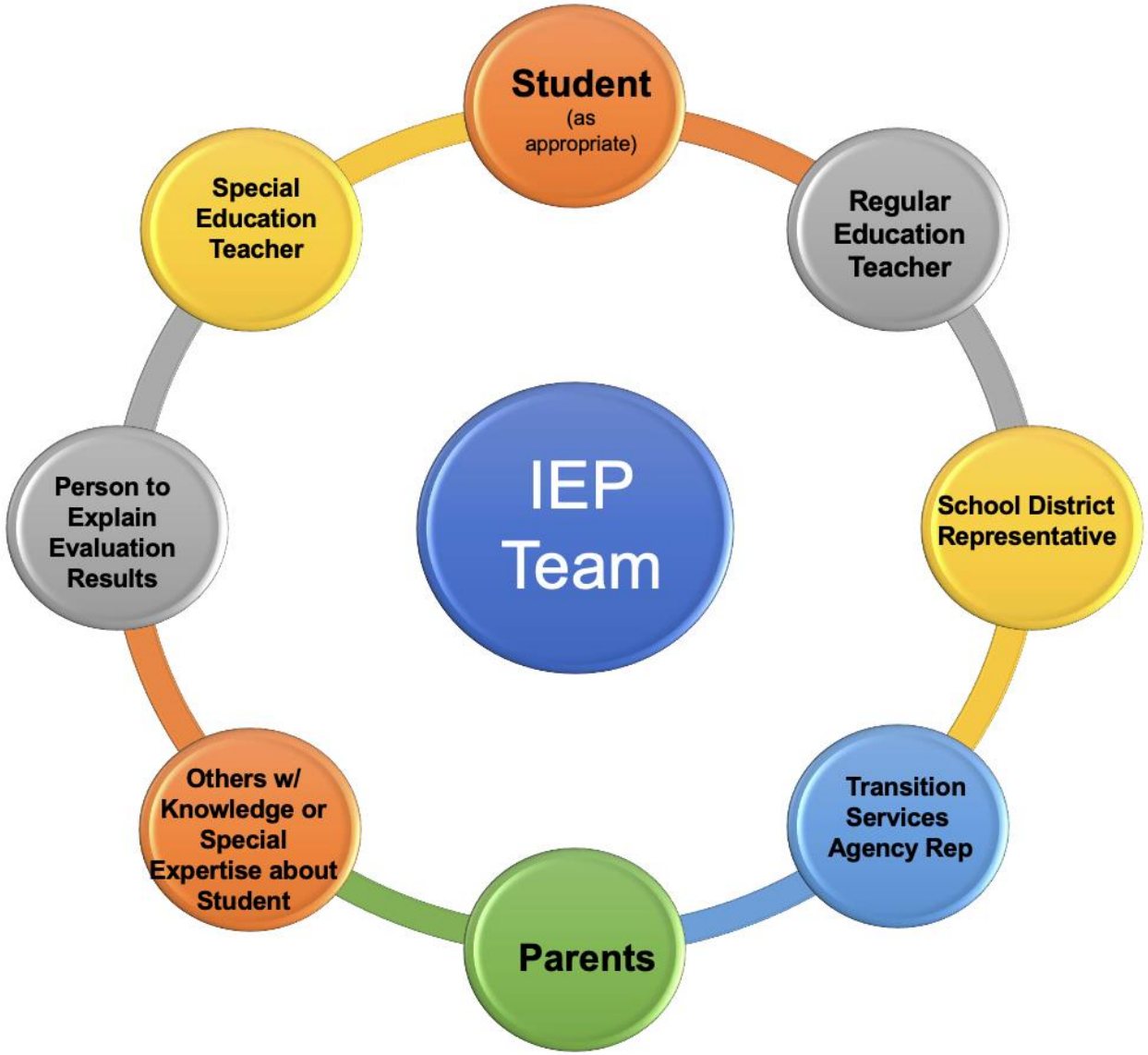
IEP Team Members

The right IEP team members must be present

- All individuals needed to develop an IEP that will meet the child's unique needs and ensure the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) should participate in the child's IEP Team meeting.
- IDEA and ECEA specify who must attend an IEP meeting. There are required participants and optional participants.
- Parents must always be invited.



IEP team graphic



Required IEP team members

- Required IEP team members:
  - Parents (or guardian) of the child.
  - Not less than one regular education teacher (if the student participates in regular education).
  - Not less than one special education teacher (or Speech Pathologist if the student is only receiving speech and language services, Colorado ECEA Rule 2.44(1)(b)).
  - Person to interpret the instruction implications of the evaluation results.
  - The Director of Special Education or designee who knows about the availability of AU resources and has the authority to commit those resources.

Required IEP team members, continued

- Transition services agency representative, if applicable. When the team is planning for the child's life after high school, the school must invite a representative of an agency that is likely to be providing or paying for transition services (with parent consent).
- If it is an Initial IEP Team meeting for a child who was previously served under Part C of IDEA, at the request of the parent, the Part C service coordinator or other representatives of the Part C system must be invited to assist with the smooth transition of services. 34 CFR § 300.321(f).
- In some cases, a child might be **publicly placed** at an approved facility school or a private school. In this situation, a representative of the approved facility or private school must attend the IEP Team meeting, either in person or through alternative means.

Optional IEP team members

- Related service providers
- Others who know the child
  - You can bring a friend or family member, a caregiver, an outside service provider, an advocate, or someone else that you trust.
  - Others who know the child do not replace the parent's voice.
- The child, as appropriate, for any IEP meeting.
- The child must be invited if considering postsecondary goals and transition services. If the child does not attend, the school must ensure that their preferences and interests are considered in planning. 34 CFR § 300.321(b).

Using an educational advocate - 1

- An educational advocate helps parents of children with disabilities work through the special education process.
- Advocates may have training in special education and advocacy, but advocates are not required to have any certification.
- Many advocates charge a fee. You may be able to work with an advocate for free through your local Arc chapter.
- Learn more about working with an advocate: CADRE, Educational Advocates: A Guide for Parents.

Using an educational advocate - 2

- Educational advocates are typically not attorneys. Educational advocates who are not attorneys can provide guidance and support, but they are not authorized to practice law.
- For example, an educational advocate can provide information about the special education process, but they cannot tell you how the law or procedural requirements apply to your child's unique circumstances. They cannot tell you whether the school has violated the law or how an Administrative Law Judge or State Complaint Officer might determine a specific legal issue.

Using an educational advocate - 3

- Be careful with educational advocates who:
  - Promise specific results
  - Shut down home/school communication
  - Make threats, name call, or insult
  - Encourage parents to withhold information
  - Focus discussion on him/herself
  - Encourage parents not to speak during the IEP meeting

Source: CADRE, Educational Advocates: A Guide for Parents

Meeting excusals

- If a required IEP team member will not attend the meeting, excusals must be completed before the meeting.
- Required IEP team members can be excused:
  - If the member's area of curriculum is not being changed or discussed, and the parent and AU agree **in writing**.
  - If the member's area of curriculum is being discussed and, instead of attending, **gives written report before the IEP meeting**, and the parent and AU agree **in writing**.
  - 20 USC § 1414 (d) (1) (C); 34 CFR § 300.321(e).

Meeting attendance scenario

- An IEP meeting is called to discuss concerns about a child's progress. The child's primary disability is specific learning disability. The child has a secondary disability of Speech or Language Impairment.
- The parents arrive at the meeting of the IEP team and are told that the speech language pathologist (SLP) had something come up and will not be able to attend the meeting. The SLP cannot participate by alternate means.
- The SLP provided a written report before the meeting.

Meeting attendance scenario parent options

- Parents can ask to have the meeting rescheduled to a time that the SLP can attend.
- If the parents and school agree in writing to the SLP's absence, the SLP can give a written report.

Individual support

Families, educators, and other professionals with questions about Special Education or needing assistance can contact CDE's Office of Special Education.

Phone: 720-926-1453

Email:

Parents_ESSUquestions@cde.state.co.us



CDE/Colorado resources

- CDE, Colorado Procedural Safeguards Notice (linked on CDE's Individualized Education Program page and at Dispute Resolution, Parent and Child Rights in Special Education)
- CDE, IEP Document Translation
- CDE, Secondary Transition: Special Education Services for Youth Ages 15-21
- CDE, Secondary Transition: Transition Services for 18-21 Year Olds
- CDE, Secondary Transition: 18-21 Secondary Transition Eligibility and Guidance for Concurrent Enrollment
- CDE, Related Services
- CDE, Co-Alt State Alternate Assessments
- CDE, Extended Evidence Outcomes
- CDE, Extended School Year Services: What Parents Need to Know

More resources (not specific to CO)

- Progress Center, IEP Tip Sheet Series
- Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR), Scheduling the IEP Meeting and Notifying Parents
- CPIR, When the IEP Team Meets
- CPIR, Special Factors in IEP Development
- US ED, Q&A on Serving Children with Disabilities Placed by Their Parents in Private Schools
- Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE), Educational Advocates: A Guide for Parents
- CADRE, Guiding Principles of Collaborative Advocacy
- IRIS Center, Challenging, Ambitious, Measurable Annual Goals