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What is the IDEA?

Read this page to learn about the ideas behind the law that guarantees your child an "appropriate" education.

Some schools may not know how to help your child.

Sometimes a school will refuse to give your child the special educational help he or she needs because they say:

- it costs too much money
- they don't have enough teachers
- they have too many students to worry about
- they can only put your child on a waiting list for services



This can be upsetting to you as a parent...

But there are laws that protect your child's right to go to school.

One of the most important laws is called the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**. This law was passed by the United States Congress. But the rules of the law differ from state to state.

Here are the ideas behind the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):

1. All children with disabilities or delays who need special education can get help.

2. You are entitled to "Free, appropriate public education" (FAPE).

- **"Free"** means you don't have to pay for it.
 - The school can't refuse to give your child services because of the cost.
 - You don't have to use your insurance or sign up for any federal program (like Medicaid) to get special education services.
- **"Appropriate"** means that your child has the right to make good progress in her learning. It also means that your child gets services that help her to do that.
 - It doesn't matter how much the services cost.
 - It doesn't matter who provides the services.
 - Your school has to give your child services if you and the school agree your child needs them.

- IDEA does not say that your child must receive the best education possible.
- **"Public education"** means schools that the government supports with money.
 - Public education includes public schools and charter schools.

3. The state must give your child special help.

- They can't refuse to do this because they say it costs too much money.
- They can't refuse because they say they don't have enough teachers.
- They can't refuse because they say they have too many students.
- Your child's IEP should say when the help will start. Neither the state nor the school can put your child on a waiting list.
- People who test or work with your child must have special training. For example, they must be trained to work with children with hearing loss.
 - In some states, these people may need a special certification or license to work with your child.

4. You are entitled to receive special help to keep you child from falling behind.

Here's what may be included:

- School
- Buses (transportation) to and from school
- Tests and check-ups so the school knows what help your child needs. These are also called **evaluations** (ee-val-yoo-A-shuns). If your child needs an audiogram, the school has to pay for it.
- Other services, like speech therapy, physical therapy or occupational therapy
- Any equipment to help your child with hearing

5. Your child is entitled to be educated in the "Least Restrictive Environment" (LRE)

- IDEA says that children should be educated in the "least restrictive environment" to the "maximum extent appropriate." This means that a team of people (including you, the parents) should first decide if your child can learn in a place where there are no other children with disabilities or delays.
- If your child needs more help, then this team must decide where your child can learn. Read our pages on [school choices](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/learning/choices/) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/learning/choices/>).

You can also decide HOW you want your child to be taught.

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You can find this page online at:

<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/learning/rights/intro.jsp>