

Fostering a Child with an IEP

Many children who are in foster care experience difficulties in school. Traumatized by the abuse and neglect which brought about their placement in foster care, along with the trauma of being removed from their families, most of these children have difficulty directing their attention and energies to learning in school.

In addition, frequent transfers from school to school may add further strain to the burden some children carry.

Handling the emotional and developmental problems which are part of their young lives does not make school a primary focus for many of these children. These vulnerable children require special educational provisions for many of them to progress in school.

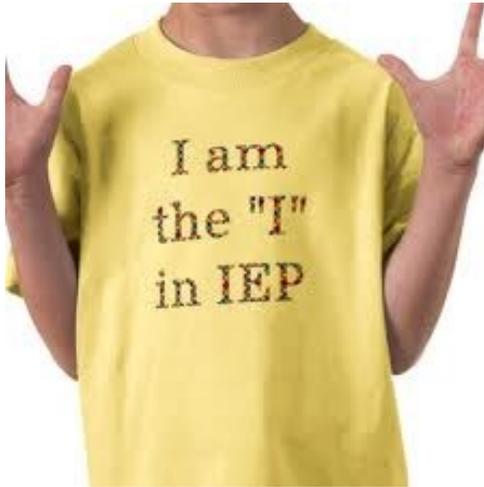
By law, children have a right to special educational services from the ages of three years old up to 21 years old or not yet graduated from high school if they are affected by disabilities based on emotional, learning, or physical disabilities.

These disabilities are categorized as:

- Autism
- Cognitive Disabilities (CD)
- Emotional Behavioral Disability (EBD)
- Hearing Impairments (HI)
- Speech and Language impairments (SL)
- Other Health Impairments (OHI)
- Orthopedic Impairments (OI)

- Significant Developmental Delay (SDD)
- Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Visual Impairments (VI)

Some children require physical or occupational rehabilitation to meet their educational goals.



When a child has such disabilities, schools are required by law to create an Individual Educational Plan (IEP), specific to that child. This plan is based on an evaluation conducted by the school to determine what disabilities the child has and which services must be in place to help a child meet individual educational goals.

The IEP is developed by a team of people, which may include teachers, guidance counselors, special education directors, social workers, nurses, administrators, and school psychologists.

Others who should be involved include: people from supporting agencies, foster parents, involved relatives, and the child when possible. An in-depth evaluation is conducted of the child prior to this meeting. Specific plans of action are then proposed to help the child meet defined educational goals.

As part of the assessment, parents may be asked for input that is often invaluable to the total assessment. You may be asked to complete a home assessment or inventory to describe the child's

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behaviors and abilities.

However, foster parents are not a part of the IEP team unless the birth parent gives written permission for the foster parents to be part of the team.

Wisconsin schools must follow strict Wisconsin and federal education laws and regulations in creating these educational plans and in implementing them. These regulations are created to protect the educational rights of all children to an education that accommodates their individual needs and abilities.

As a foster parent, make sure you have complete and detailed information about the educational rights of the children you foster and the process for obtaining appropriate education and special educational services.

You may request an evaluation for a child if you suspect that he or she has a disability which affects his or her ability to be successful in school. Ideally, you should make this request along *with* the child's parents and the child's social worker.

If the child you foster has an IEP and is involved in special educational services, it's even more important to stay in good communication with the child's teachers, the special education teachers and aides, guidance counselors, school social worker, administration and anyone else who is involved regularly with the child.

If your child has been identified as having an IEP and has been in special education in a previous school prior to a new placement, an evaluation is given to the new foster parents by the social worker. It's the responsibility of the new school to request the records. If there's an IEP, the law mandates continuity of special educational services for the child by the new school.

Complex laws govern the IEP process. However, there are excellent resources at the state and national level to help foster parents understand this process. Many can be accessed through our center. These excellent resources help foster parents navigate through the complexities of the assessment and IEP process.

One excellent resource is the Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support, Inc. or FACETS. You can reach them at 877-374-4677, or at: wifacets.org. (More resources on page three.)

Know that you are an important link in meeting the special educational needs of the children you foster. Your daily support and encouragement can make all the difference in the educational achievement of these vulnerable children.



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Resources

The following materials are available through [our lending library](#).

Books

- Every Child Deserves a Chance: A Parent's Welcome to the Special Education Process
- S.A.F.E. at School
- Writing Measurable IEP Goals & Objectives
- Our Labeled Children: What Every Parent and Teacher Needs to Know About Learning Disabilities

Other Helpful Tip Sheets

- [Helping Kids in Care Change Schools](#)
- [Helping Achieve School Success](#)

Other Resources

- [Special Education In Plain Language: User Friendly Handbook on Special Education Laws, Policies and Practices in Wisconsin, Fall 2007, Third Edition](#)
- [Educational Services for Children Placed in Foster Care](#)

Wisconsin Agencies

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

(800) 441-4563
 TTY: (608) 267-2427
 Fax: 608 267-3746
 Website: <http://www.dpi.wi.gov>

Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training and Support (WI FACETS)

(414) 374-4645
 (877) 374-4677 (toll-free)
 TDD: (414) 374-4635
 Fax: 414-374-4655
<http://www.wifacets.org>
 Email: wifacets@wifacets.org

Wisconsin Statewide Parent-Educator Initiative (WSPEI)

(877) 844-4925 (toll-free)
<http://wspei.org/>

Wisconsin Special Education Mediation System (WSEMS)

(888) 298-3857 (toll-free)
 Fax: (262) 538-1348
 (262) 538-1618 (TTY)
<http://www.wsems.us>

Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW)

(608) 267-0214
 (800) 928-8778
<http://www.disabilityrightswi.org/>

Legal Action of Wisconsin

(414) 278-7722
<http://www.legalaction.org/>

National Agencies

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

(800) 872-5327
 TTY: 800-437-0833
 Fax: (202) 401-0689
 Website: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/index.html?src=oc>



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