



Disability Law Center's Self-Advocacy Materials

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Special Education

This document is designed for people with disabilities.

The information is about your legal rights and how to advocate for yourself as a resident in Massachusetts.

Contact us to request this information in an alternative format.

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Funding

DLC receives funding from government grants, private foundations, and individual contributions. For details about our funding and programs, please visit our website:

<https://dlc-ma.org>



What Is An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) And How Should I Sign It?

You Will Learn About:

- Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
- Signing an IEP

This document includes general information about legal issues and is intended to be used for informational purposes only. These informational materials should not be taken as legal advice, and do not create an attorney-client relationship. The outcome of any particular matter will depend on a variety of factors. For specific legal problems you would need to contact an attorney.

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)

What Is An Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?

It is a contract between you and the school district about your child's special services and placement.

Signing an IEP

What Should I Do If I Disagree With The IEP?

Always remember that until you sign, an IEP is only a *proposal* about two things: what special education services your child will get and where your child will get them. You have a legal right to be part of the team that prepares the IEP, but you do *not* have the legal right to make the final decision. After you receive an IEP, you have a few choices about how to sign the placement page and the page that lists the suggested services.

How Should I Sign The IEP Placement Page?

This page has a few choices of the type of classroom or school your child should attend:

- a **general education** classroom with students who are not on IEPs;
- a **separate classroom** in the same school with other special education students;
- a **separate day school** with other special education students; or
- a **residential school** where your child stays overnight.

The IEP will mark one of these boxes. If you *agree*, you should check the box stating that you **accept** the placement. If you *disagree*, you should check the box that **rejects** it. Your child can then **stay put** in the current placement until you and the school either work it out or go to an administrative hearing.

How Should I Sign The Response Section?

You have three choices:

1. You may sign the IEP to **accept** everything
2. You may **reject** the entire IEP by signing that box. Usually, you should only do this if you already have a signed IEP from a previous year that you like. That earlier IEP will control. Otherwise, rejecting an IEP tells the school that you do not want *any* special education services for your child. **This is usually not a good idea.**
3. Finally, you may **partially accept** an IEP, which is your best choice if you do not agree with everything. For example, it might only give your son 3 hours per week of speech therapy instead of the 5 hours you want. In this case, you should sign the box that says you reject certain parts of the IEP and explain why. Then the school must still provide all the other services you have not rejected. So, in this example, your son would get the 3 hours of speech therapy and you still have the right to try to convince the school that he needs more.