

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD IS HAVING TROUBLE LEARNING IN SCHOOL?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, the federal law commonly referred to as IDEA, has established a process for determining your child's educational needs, determining whether or not your child has a disability, and obtaining special education services, if your child's disability requires them. Here is that process, in roughly the order it will be carried out:

1. **Request for assistance**—This step helps you begin a relationship with your school district so that together you can address any early warning signs that your child may have difficulty in school.
2. **Request for evaluation**—School districts have qualified personnel who have a lot of experience determining how well children learn and function in school. Because of this, they can bring valuable resources to the task of assessing your child.
3. **Evaluation**—This is the step that allows the school district to pinpoint whether your child has a disability that will require special education services (not all disabilities do). The evaluation will suggest what kinds of special education services your child will need or confirm that your child will be able to learn in a general education classroom with other students. You will be a partner in the evaluation process and a member of your child's evaluation team.
4. **Development of an individualized education program (IEP)**—If the evaluation reveals that your child has a disability that requires special education, this customized program will be designed to set goals for your child's learning and keep your child on track.
5. **Annual review**—Each year the public school district will review with you and the IEP team how well your child's IEP is working and will be prepared to adjust the plan to ensure that your child is making appropriate progress.
6. **Reevaluation**—The IDEA law provides for your child to be evaluated again every three years to detect any important changes in his or her ability to learn. This "reevaluation" also tells you and the school district whether the supports and services your child is receiving are the right ones. The school district can then act accordingly.
7. **Independent educational evaluation (IEE)**—If you do not agree that the school district's evaluation of your child is accurate, you can arrange an evaluation of your child by a qualified professional or professionals who are not employed by the school district. In certain cases, this can be done at the school district's expense.