

Special Education Roadmap

A parent-friendly overview from concern to services and ongoing review

The basic path

Step	What happens	Parent action
1 Identify a concern	A family or school notices a learning, behavior, communication, physical, or functional concern.	Write down specific examples and collect work samples or records.
2 Request support or evaluation	Interventions may begin, but they may not be used to delay an evaluation when one is warranted.	Submit important requests in writing and keep a dated copy.
3 Evaluate	The school gathers information in all suspected areas of disability using multiple tools and sources.	Share history, outside reports, strengths, and concerns.
4 Decide eligibility	The team determines whether the student meets IDEA eligibility criteria and needs specially designed instruction.	Ask what data support each decision.
5 Develop the IEP	The team identifies needs, goals, services, supports, accommodations, and placement.	Connect every service to a documented need and goal.
6 Implement and monitor	Staff provide the agreed services and report progress.	Track progress reports, work samples, and concerns.
7 Review and reevaluate	The IEP is reviewed at least annually; reevaluation generally occurs at least every three years unless exceptions apply.	Prepare priorities and review current data before each meeting.

Remember

- You are a member of the decision-making team.
- Eligibility, services, and placement are individualized decisions.
- Ask for explanations in plain language and request written documentation of decisions.

Important: This educational resource provides general information and is not legal advice or legal representation. Special education procedures and timelines may vary by state. Review your state safeguards and consult a qualified professional about your circumstances.

Primary reference: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act regulations, 34 CFR Part 300, and U.S. Department of Education IDEA resources at sites.ed.gov/idea.