



A Parents Guide to Understanding Special Education Eligibility in the State of Colorado

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that an Individual Education Program (IEP) team (a group of qualified professionals and the parents) determine if a student has a disability that requires special education services. Evaluation data and information from a variety of sources are used by the IEP team to determine if the student meets criteria in one of 13 different eligibility categories. Every eligibility determination requires that a disability prevents the student from receiving reasonable educational benefit from general education alone. Due to this, the student requires specialized instruction as well as accommodations and/or modifications to classroom instruction in order to make educational progress.

The disability categories are listed in the chart below.

Child with a Developmental Delay (3-8 years)
Autism Spectrum Disorder
Deaf-Blindness
Hearing Impairment, Including Deafness
Intellectual Disability
Multiple Disabilities
Orthopedic Impairment
Other Health Impaired
Serious Emotional Disability
Specific Learning Disability
Speech Language Impairment
Traumatic Brain Injury
Visual Impairment, Including Blindness

Once a student becomes eligible for special education services, the IEP team develops a written plan for the student that addresses all the student's needs whether or not commonly linked to their disability area. This plan will include information about educational goals and will identify who is responsible for assisting the student in reaching each goal. Additionally, the plan will address the educational setting where the student will receive these services. Least restrictive environment (LRE) is an important concept to understand when a team is talking about how to meet the educational needs of a student. LRE means that the IEP team should design educational supports and services so that the student can be educated with children who do not have disabilities to the maximum extent possible. The IEP team should provide documentation and justification whenever education in regular classes, with the use of supplementary aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Whenever you have questions about special education services, contact your child's special education case manager at the school. They are ready to assist.