

Schools' Obligations Toward Students with Visual Impairments (Related to the IDEA)

— What is the IDEA? —

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that ensures that all children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education, throughout the nation, to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living. It also ensures special education and related services to those children. The IDEA is based on six principles.

— The Six Principles of the IDEA —

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

- ▶ Educational services must be provided at public expense, under public supervision, at no cost other than the costs charged to all students.
- ▶ Educational services must meet the unique needs of each eligible student, based on the standards established.
- ▶ Educational services must be provided according to the written Individualized Education Program (IEP), to students from ages 3 to 21 years.

Appropriate Evaluation

- ▶ Parents must give their permission for evaluation and for services.
- ▶ An evaluation must be conducted within 60 calendar days of the parents living permission.
- ▶ An evaluation must be administered by trained personnel.
- ▶ A comprehensive evaluation must be completed every three years, unless both parents and educators agree it is not necessary.
- ▶ Students must be evaluated in all areas of suspected disability.
- ▶ Parents have the right to request an independent evaluation at public expense if they disagree with the results of the school

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

- ▶ An IEP is a written statement for each child with a disability. It must be developed, reviewed and revised at least once a year by a team including educators, parents and others who have knowledge or expertise needed.
- ▶ An IEP must contain measurable goals written for where you want a student's skills to be in a year.
- ▶ Parents must be involved in the development of the program and any periodic revisions.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

- ▶ Schools must provide any needed services in the general education classroom and other integrated settings.
- ▶ Students participating in music, art, physical education, school trips, clubs, extracurricular and other activities must be accommodated.
- ▶ Students must have meaningful access to same age peers.

Parents and students participation in decision making

- ▶ Schools must involve parents (and students when appropriate) in the development, review and revision of the IEP, educational placement decisions, reviewing of evaluation data, and transition planning and services starting by age 14.

Procedural Safeguards

- ▶ Schools must send to parents notice in writing of IEP meetings.
- ▶ Schools must send to parents prior written notice of any decisions that will modify the educational programming or educational placement of a student.
- ▶ Upon request, schools must give access to educational records to parents, as well as provide copies of educational records to parents.