



## What is IDEA?

IDEA, which stands for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, is a federal law that ensures children with disabilities have access to a [free appropriate public education \(FAPE\)](#) tailored to their individual needs. Let's break down what IDEA means and why it's important:

### What IDEA Means:

1. **Individuals with Disabilities:** IDEA focuses on ensuring that children with disabilities have equal access to educational opportunities. Disabilities covered under IDEA include physical, cognitive, emotional, and developmental impairments that significantly impact learning.
2. **Education Act:** IDEA mandates that eligible children receive special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs. These services are provided at no cost to the child's family and are available through public schools and other educational settings.

### Key Principles of IDEA:

1. **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** Under IDEA, every eligible child with a disability is entitled to FAPE. This means they receive education and related services that are provided at public expense, meet state educational standards, and are tailored to their individual needs.
2. **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** IDEA emphasizes educating students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their needs. This means that, to the maximum extent possible, children with disabilities should be educated alongside their peers without disabilities.
3. **Individualized Education Program (IEP):** IDEA requires schools to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each eligible student with a disability. The IEP is a personalized plan that outlines the student's educational goals, the services they will receive, and how progress will be measured.

### Why IDEA Matters:

IDEA is crucial because it guarantees educational rights and protections for children with disabilities and their families. It ensures that these children have the opportunity to receive an education that meets their unique needs and prepares them for further education, employment, and independent living.

## **Who Qualifies Under IDEA:**

Children who have disabilities that adversely affect their educational performance may qualify for services under IDEA. Eligibility is determined through a comprehensive evaluation process conducted by the school district, and services are provided from birth through age 21.

## **Enforcement and Compliance:**

IDEA outlines procedural safeguards to protect the rights of children with disabilities and their parents. It requires schools to provide parents with notice of their rights, opportunities to participate in decisions about their child's education, and avenues for resolving disputes.

If you have any more questions, feel free to reach out to [hello@loveyourschool.org](mailto:hello@loveyourschool.org)! We want to hear from you!

## **More Resources**

[What is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)? - Understood.Org](#)

[About IDEA - DOE](#)

[IDEA - Center for Parent Information and Resources](#)

[What Is IDEA? A Guide for Educators and Parents](#)