



Understanding the Differences Between Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Program (IEP)

	Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) Birth to Age 2	Individualized Education Program (IEP) Ages 3 to 22*
Law	Part C of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Sec. 303.1 to 303.734	Part B of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Sec. 300.1 to 300.818
Focus	Under Part C of IDEA, the focus is on helping the family meet the developmental needs of their child through early intervention services.	Under Part B of IDEA, the focus is on addressing the child's unique needs as he or she learns the skills needed for school.
Referral	Referral may be initiated directly by a parent or other interested persons. Upon receipt of any referral, a public agency will appoint a service coordinator.	<p>Referral may be initiated directly by a parent, school, or other interested persons to the local educational agency (LEA)**.</p> <p>If the child is currently receiving services from Part C, the Part C provider refers the child, unless otherwise determined.</p> <p>The student may only be referred after the resources of the regular education program have been considered and where appropriate, utilized.</p>
Timeline for Initial Assessment	<p>Within 45 days of the referral, the regional center or local educational agency shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign a service coordinator to assist the family through evaluation and assessment procedures. Obtain parental consent for evaluation. Schedule and complete evaluations and assessments of the child's development. If an infant or toddler is eligible for early intervention services, an IFSP will be developed 	<p>Within 15 days of receiving the referral, the school will develop an evaluation plan for the parent to consider.</p> <p>Within 60 days of the school receiving parental consent, the IEP team will complete assessments for all areas of suspected disability and convene to discuss the results of the assessment. If the child is eligible, an IEP will be developed. (Note: this does not include school breaks in excess of 5 days.)</p>
Parental Consent	Families must be involved in the IFSP process. An IFSP meeting may not be held without the parent or surrogate parent's participation. Written parental consent is necessary for a child's evaluation and delivery of services.	Families must be involved in the IEP process. The LEA must take steps to ensure that the parents are afforded the opportunity to participate. Written parental consent is necessary for a child's evaluation and delivery of services.

*As defined in California Education Code 56026.4

**Local Educational Agency (LEA): This term is often referred to as the district, and may also refer to as a charter school.



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Parental Consent (continued)	<p>An assessment of the family’s resources, priorities, and concerns are a voluntary part of the evaluation/assessment process.</p> <p>Parents may refuse any service offered and maintain their right to any services they choose.</p>	<p>When offered an IEP, the parent can consent to, or decline the offer.</p> <p>If they give partial consent, the LEA must implement the parts consented to, but they may have to resolve the difference through a dispute resolution process.</p>
Eligibility	<p>A child with a disability, under Part C of IDEA, means a child is identified as having a:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. developmental delay, as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures, in one or more of the following areas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Cognitive development; b. Physical development, including vision and hearing; c. Communication development; d. Social or emotional development; e. Adaptive development; or 2. diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay 	<p>A child with a disability, under Part B of IDEA, means a child is identified as having:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intellectual disability • Deafness • Hard of Hearing • Speech or language impairment • Visual impairment (including blindness) • Emotional disturbance • Orthopedic impairment • Autism • Traumatic brain injury • Other health impairment • Specific learning disability • Deaf-blindness • Multiple disabilities
	<p>Infants and toddlers from birth to age 36 months may be eligible for early intervention services through Early Start through Regional Centers if, through documented evaluation and assessment, they meet one of the criteria listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a developmental delay of at least 25% in one or more areas of cognitive, communication, social or emotional, adaptive, or physical and motor development; or • have an established risk condition of known etiology, with a high probability of resulting in delayed development; or • be considered at high risk of having a substantial developmental disability due to a combination of biomedical risk factors of which are diagnosed by qualified personnel. • if parent is a client of the regional center, the child is automatically eligible. 	<p>For a child to be eligible for Part B services, the child must (1) have a disability (i.e., meet eligibility requirements) and (2) be in need of special education and related services.</p> <p>A team of qualified professionals and the parent of the child shall make the determination of eligibility and determine the educational needs of the child.</p>



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Eligibility (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The eligibility criteria differs for infants and toddlers served by local educational agencies from those served by regional centers. For local education agencies, the infant or toddler must be identified as requiring intensive special education and services by meeting one of the following criteria: The child has a developmental delay as determined by a significant difference between the expected level of development for their age and their current level of functioning in one or more of the following five developmental areas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> cognitive development; physical and motor development, including vision and hearing; communication development; social or emotional development; or adaptive development. A significant difference is defined as a 33 percent delay in one developmental area before 24 months of age, or, at 24 months of age or older, either a delay of 50 percent in one developmental area or a 33 percent delay in two or more developmental areas. <p>Or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child has a medical condition or congenital syndrome which the IFSP team determines has a high predictability of requiring intensive special education and services. 	
Plan	An IFSP is a document for children from birth through age 2 (until their third birthday).	An IEP is an education document for children ages 3 to 22 .
	Includes information about the child's current abilities in their development.	Includes information about the child's present levels of educational performance and participation in developmentally appropriate activities.
	With the family's approval, it may also include information regarding the family's resources, priorities, and concerns related to the development of their child .	Includes information about the family's concerns for enhancing the child's education .



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Plan (continued)	After the team determines a list of priorities and concerns, the family determines which outcomes will be included on the IFSP.	The IEP team, including the parents or guardians and related service providers who work with the child, determines the goals .
Services	Includes the early intervention services and supports necessary to meet the unique needs of the child and family in order to achieve the identified outcomes .	Includes the special education, related services, supplemental aids and services, modifications and supports to be provided to help the child make progress and participate in developmentally appropriate activities.
Service Location	Includes the natural environments where services will be provided. Natural environments mean settings that are natural or typical for a same-aged infant/toddler without a disability (e.g., family’s home, childcare, private program).	Describes services provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and an explanation of the extent, if any, that the child will not participate with typically developing children.
Provider	For Early Intervention Services, they can be provided by various agencies . It varies from region to region in California, based on decisions that date back to the 1980s. Services providers may be a regional center, a vendor, a local educational agency (LEA), or a combination of them.	The local educational agency provides the services.
Annual Timelines	IFSPs are reviewed annually , with periodic reviews to provide updates. The annual reviews are typically within 12 months of the last annual meeting. Periodic review meetings occur around every six months.	IEPs are reviewed every year (365 days). Progress reports are provided to the parent at least as frequently as the school reports progress (typically around report card times).
Calendar	The Early Start program is open 200 days , however, children typically receive services on a portion of those days.	The school calendar is 180 days . Although preschoolers may not require all 180 days, some may. Starting in kindergarten, students are expected to attend school each day.
Transition	As the IFSP ends on the child’s third birthday, the IFSP team considers the child’s needs afterwards. This discussion of transitioning from an IFSP may begin for the child as early as 2 years, 3 months, but must begin no later than 2 years, 9 months . If the child is being evaluated for Part B services through an IEP, the Initial IEP meeting must be held by the child’s third birthday.	As an IEP ends upon the student receiving a high school diploma, or aging out at age 22, the IEP team considers the student’s needs afterwards. This discussion of transitioning from an IEP may begin as early as 14, but must begin no later than age 16 .



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Transition (continued)	<p>To prepare for the transition at the third birthday, the Part C provider will invite the Part B LEA to the Transition Planning Conference.</p> <p>Unless otherwise determined, the Part C provider will make a referral for evaluation to the Part B local educational agency.</p>	
Team Members	<p>Required IFSP Team membership includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A parent or parents of the child • Service Coordinator • A person or persons involved in conducting evaluations and assessments, as applicable 	<p>Required IEP Team membership includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent(s) of the child • General education teacher • Special education teacher/provider • Representative of the school district who can commit resources • A person who can interpret results of the evaluations and assessments, as applicable
Contact	Service Coordinator is typically a main point of contact.	Case Manager is typically a main point of contact.
Parental Rights	Part C Parental Rights	Part B Parental Rights
Funding	<p>There is no cost for evaluation, assessment and service coordination. Public or private insurance is accessed for medically necessary therapy services including speech, physical and occupational therapies. Services that are not covered by insurance will be purchased or provided by regional centers or local education agencies. An Annual Family Program Fee may be assessed for Regional Center services in some circumstances.</p>	<p>The local educational agency is required to provide the special education evaluation and services free of charge to the families. This is referred to as a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE).</p>

Sources:

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