

3-5 TRANSITION TOOLKIT

A guide to Washington services for
3-5 year olds with disabilities

A USER-FRIENDLY TOOLKIT FOR FAMILIES

Our mission

PAVE provides support, training, information and resources to empower and give voice to individuals, youth and families impacted by disabilities.

Our vision

We envision an inclusive community that values the unique abilities, cultures, voices, contributions and potential of all individuals.



Last updated
October 7, 2026



Text highlighted in blue serves as a hyperlink to access supplementary content and/or additional information.

[Pathways to Support: Where to Begin](#) 4

Accessing services through the transition from an IFSP, or beginning with evaluation for an IEP

[Differences Between Part B and Part C Services](#) 5-6

A cheat sheet to the major differences in eligibility, delivery, and maintenance of IFSPs and IEPs

[What to Expect at the Transition Conference Going from Part C to Part B](#) 7

A guide to help you prepare for the transition planning process

[Your Child has Met the Eligibility for an IEP: Preparing for the IEP Meeting](#) 8

Practical steps and information to help you prepare for discussions about your child's strengths and challenges

[Today Our Partnership Begins](#) 9

A letter to introduce your child to evaluators, educators, and service providers

[What You Need to Know About My Child](#) 10

A one-pager sharing your child's strengths, challenges, effective strategies, and red flags

[Timeline of IEP Evaluation and Development](#) 11

A worksheet to track your student's progress from the point of referral for evaluation to the development of the IEP.

[Steps to Read, Develop, and Understand an IEP](#) 12-13

A worksheet to help you understand the components of the IEP and what they mean for your child

[Common Accommodations and Modifications in an IEP for 3-5 year olds](#) 14

Understanding the difference between accommodations and modifications

[Preparing for Productive and Effective Conversations with Education and Service Providers](#) 15

A worksheet to help you understand the components of the IFSP and what they mean for your child

<u>Educational Program Options for Children Aged 3-5 Years Old</u>	16-18
Exploring preschool programs and alternatives	
<u>Communication Log</u>	19
A tool for tracking your conversations with members of the IEP team	
<u>Who's Who of the IEP Team</u>	20
An easy to implement form for identifying members of the IEP team and organizing their contact information	
<u>How and Who to Tell When Your Child is Exceptional</u>	21-22
A guide to enrollment in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) for dependent children of active-duty servicemembers	
<u>Your Child's Application for Supplemental Security Income (SSI)</u>	23
A step-by-step guide to submitting an SSI application on behalf of your child	
<u>Your Child's Application for Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)</u>	24
A step-by-step guide to submitting an application for DDA on behalf of your child	
<u>Resources to Help You Be the Best for Your Child</u>	25-26
Emotional and respite support programs designed for caregiving family members	
<u>Abbreviation Cheat Sheet</u>	27
Index of Printables/Fillables/Sample Letters	
<u>Today Our Partnership Begins Worksheet</u>	28-29
<u>What You Need to Know About My Child</u>	30
<u>Sample Letter to Request an IEP Evaluation</u>	31-32
<u>Sample Letter to Request an IEP Meeting</u>	33
<u>Sample Letter to Request a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)</u>	34-35
<u>Sample Letter to Request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)</u>	36-37
<u>Communication Log</u>	38
<u>Who's Who on the IEP Team Contact Sheet</u>	39
<u>Glossary of Terms</u>	40-42
<u>Frequently Asked Questions</u>	43

If Your Child Receives Services through Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT)

As your child approaches age 3, planning begins for what services may come next. If your child receives services through Washington's [Early Support for Infants and Toddlers \(ESIT\)](#), your Family Resource Coordinator (FRC) will guide this process. If your child may be eligible for special education, a transition conference will be held to decide if an evaluation is needed. If your child is found eligible, a plan called an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be developed based on your child's individual needs.

TRANSITION BEGINS 6-9 MONTHS BEFORE YOUR CHILD'S THIRD BIRTHDAY

Transition Planning Begins

- The FRC starts talking about the transition out of ESIT services with the family
- A transition plan is added into the IFSP
- If your child is potentially eligible for an IEP, the FRC schedules a transition conference 6 months to 90 days before your child turns 3
- The FRC identifies and shares community resources

Transition Conference

- Explanation of parent's rights in special education
- Discussion early childhood special education and other service options
- FRC transmits your child's records to the school system, with your written consent, including the most recent IFSP and evaluations/assessments
- Development of a transition timeline
- Transition plan is updated

Evaluation for an IEP

- Begins with parent's signature of consent for evaluation
- School receives the records from ESIT
- Family provides information and concerns
- Child is evaluated for eligibility for an IEP
- Eligibility meeting is held within 35 school days

Not all children who qualified for early-learning support will qualify for an IEP. Children who are not eligible for IEP services might be eligible to receive accommodations and support through a [Section 504 Plan](#).

Support for School Readiness Before Kindergarten

If a student is having a hard time in their preschool or learning program and has a known or suspected disability, [the school district evaluates to see if the student qualifies for special education](#). This process is called [Child Find](#). In Washington State, a request for special education evaluation has to be in writing ([WAC 392-172A-03005](#)). Anyone who knows the student can make this request. The state provides a [form](#) you can use, but it is not required—any written request is acceptable.

- ☐ Use the [Sample Letter to Request an Evaluation](#) to write your request.
- ☐ Make a copy for your records.
- ☐ Call or go on the website of your local school district to identify the correct office, person, and address to mail (signed, return receipt requested), email, or hand-deliver your request.
- ☐ Track your child's progress through the evaluation process on the [IEP Referral Timeline](#).

The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) ends when a child turns 3. Transitioning to a services under an Individualized Education Program (IEP) requires a new evaluation and is a team-led process. Let this handout serve as your cheat sheet for the differences between the IFSP and IEP.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

Ages: Birth (0) to 3 years old

Governed by: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C; *also known as early intervention services (EIS)*

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Ages: 3-22 years old

Governed by: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B; *also known as special education services*

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

25% or 1.5 SD (Standard Deviation) below the mean in one or more of the following areas of development:

1. Cognitive
2. Physical (fine or gross motor)
3. Communication (receptive or expressive language)
4. Social or Emotional
5. Adaptive

- or -

Diagnosed physical or medical condition that has a high probability of resulting in delay, such as but not limited to:

- Chromosomal abnormalities
- Genetic or congenital disorders
- Sensory impairments
- Inborn errors of metabolism
- Neurodevelopmental disorders
- Conditions that are a result of exposure to substances
- Conditions identified on the

ESIT provides a [Qualifying Diagnosis List](#) of conditions that automatically meet the requirements for services

2 SD (Standard Deviation) below the mean in one or more areas of development

- or -

1.5 SD below the mean in two or more areas of development

- meaning -

Has one or more of the following disabilities

1. Developmental Delay (ages 3-8)
 - Upon his/her 8th birthday, your child must be eligible under a different category
2. Specific Learning Disability
3. Intellectual Disability
4. Autism
5. Hearing Impairment
6. Emotional Disturbance
7. Deaf-blindness
8. Multiple Disabilities
9. Orthopedic Impairment
10. Other Health Impairment
11. Deafness
12. Speech/Language Impairment
13. Traumatic Brain Injury

- and -

The disability/disabilities adversely affect his/her educational performance

- and -

His/her unique needs cannot be addressed through education in general education classes alone, with or without individual accommodations, and require specially designed instruction (SDI)

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

Administered by: [Early Support for Infants and Toddlers \(ESIT\)](#)

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Administered by: [Washington Office of Superintendent of Special Instruction \(OSPI\)](#)

FOCUS SUBJECT OF SERVICES

The [IFSP](#) outlines the family's needs in supporting the child's developmental progress. During the first three years of development, the child's needs are closely related to the needs of the family. Recognizing parents as major contributors in development, the IFSP builds upon the individual strengths of the family to address the needs of the child.

The IEP is a comprehensive plan for school-age children, addressing their educational needs and academic goals. The IEP specifies the special education services, goals, and accommodations necessary for the child's education. Goals are typically related to academic, functional, and behavioral areas.

LOCATION OF SERVICES

Infants and toddlers usually spend their days at home or in childcare settings. These are their "natural environment". By receiving their IFSP services in the natural environment, the family learns to use natural learning opportunities (like playtime, meals, or baths) to create countless opportunities for the child to practice and develop delayed skills. [It also includes the family's social and cultural networks, promoting full participation in community life.](#)

At age 3, a child becomes eligible for special education and related services. They may receive services through a preschool, center-based and family childcare center, [Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program \(ECEAP\)](#), or [Transitional Kindergarten](#). IEP services must be provided in the "least restrictive environment", meaning that the child should be with typically developing peers (those without disabilities) as much as the team agrees is appropriate for the child.

FREQUENCY OF REVIEW AND RE-EVALUATION

The IFSP has [two different types of reviews](#):

- The periodic review occurs at least every six months, or more frequently if necessary for the child's condition. During the review, the team discusses progress toward family outcomes (goals), any new assessment information, and whether the IFSP needs to be changed or updated.
- At the annual meeting, the team will update the present levels of development, develop new outcomes bearing in mind the family's priorities, and consider services that will be needed and provided moving forward.

The IEP must be reviewed, at a minimum, yearly. This annual review allows the IEP team to assess the student's progress, make any necessary adjustments to goals and services, and ensure that the IEP continues to meet the student's needs. Every three years, a reevaluation is conducted if deemed necessary. This reevaluation can help determine if the student's disability and needs have changed and if the services and goals in the IEP need modification.

*Parents may request an IEP meeting at any time.

You can utilize this document when preparing for the transition planning process to collect essential Part C data that will be taken into account during the Part B evaluation and eligibility determination phase.

- 1. The team will review the documentation of current needs from all sources, including:**
 - A. Medical documentation and diagnosis
 - B. IFSP assessment information
 - C. Other sources
- 2. The team will review the present levels of development described in the IFSP, including:**
 - A. Documentation of IFSP Services Provided
 - B. Present levels of development in each of the following domains:
 1. Physical Development (vision, hearing, and health)
 2. Cognitive Development
 3. Communication Development
 4. Social-Emotional Development
 5. Adaptive Development
- 3. During the transition conference, the team will discuss the child's individual status for the following three measurements to help understand how well they are doing compared to what is typically expected for their age.**
 - A. Social Relationships
 - B. Knowledge and Skills
 - C. Action to Meet Needs
- 4. At the transition conference, the team will determine whether the child meets the eligibility criteria for Part B, Section 619 services based on the child's developmental needs. These needs can be identified in physician's statements and family member interviews regarding -**
 - A. Health (diagnosed conditions)
 - B. Vision
 - C. Hearing
 - D. Social-Emotional Status
 - E. Cognitive
 - F. Academic Readiness Skills
 - G. Communication
 - H. Motor Abilities

Adapted from the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA).

Use this checklist to prepare for the meeting to discuss special education and related services with your child's IEP team.

- ☐ **Request a copy of the evaluations and draft of the IEP.**
- ☐ **Use the [Steps to Read, Develop, and Understand an IEP Worksheet](#) to get to know your child's IEP and what each section contains.**
- ☐ **Prepare a letter of introduction, such as the "[Today Our Partnership Begins](#)" letter, to help the team get to know your child as an individual.**
- ☐ **Prepare a one-pager of "[What You Need to Know About My Child](#)" to share essential needs, concerns, and challenges with anyone working with your child.**
- ☐ **Email the letter of introduction and one-pager to those who will attend the transition conference at least one week prior to the meeting.**
- ☐ **Make copies of anything you will share in-person at the transition conference.**
- ☐ **Start [a home file, binder, or other recordkeeping system](#) to keep copies of evaluations, IEPs, progress notes, work samples, letters of introduction, and on-pagers.**
- ☐ **Make a list of your concerns and questions to discuss with the team.**

Today Our Partnership Begins

Sample Letter to the IEP Team

Introduce your child to members of the IEP team by sharing their strengths, personality, disability-related needs, and helpful support strategies. Use the [Today Our Partnership Begins Worksheet](#) to write an introductory letter for your child.

Dear Mr./Mrs./Mx. Teacher,

Today, our partnership begins.

Here are some things about (NAME) that you may not otherwise learn about him/her from his/her file. I invite you to contact me by phone (###-###-####) or email (email@domain.com), anytime you have questions about and how best to reach him/her.

(NAME) **is** (describe his/her culture and heritage). **He/She has lived in Washington State for # months/years.** (If you are new to the state, describe where your child has been raised up until this point.)

(If you are a military family, include information about your branch of service and how military moves or operations have impacted your child.)

(NAME) **is actively involved in his/her community and he/she enjoys** (describe any community participation groups, clubs, activities, or events). **Outside of school, (NAME) is interested in** (provide a short list of main hobbies, skills, and interests).

Some of my favorite things about (NAME) are his/her (personality and character traits). **When he/she has trouble with something, he/she** (describe your child's strengths and existing coping strategies).

(NAME) **has** (name of disability), **which affects him/her by** (describe symptoms, challenges, and limitations). **He/she has trouble with** (list activities and skills that are impacted as a result of the disability). (Use this section to address common assumptions or miscommunications about the diagnosis, such as, "When it seems like he/she is being rebellious, it is really his/her way of showing he/she needs an opportunity to move around for sensory regulation.")

At home, (NAME) responds well to (explain strategies for supporting your child's needs, behaviors, sensory regulation, etc.).

I share this with you to start a conversation and share with you what our family has found helpful. We appreciate what you will bring to (NAME)'s life and we want to partner with you to make this a successful school year!

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and get to know (NAME) a little better. Please feel free to reach out at any time, and know that I will contact you as well when I have questions or concerns

Sincerely

Parent's Name

Phone number

Email

Using the guiding questions below, prepare a one-pager of skills, challenges, concerns, and interests of your child on the next page. Make your own [print-friendly one-pager](#).

Hello! My name is .

I am **years old.**

My strengths are...

What does your child do well (i.e. feeds self, imitates modeled behaviors)?

What skills does your child have (i.e. knows their colors)?

What characteristics help them to be successful with difficult tasks or nonpreferred activities?

Which personality traits do you appreciate in your child (i.e. very social, a thinker)?

Things that challenge me (but I am still working on) are...

What are some things you are working on at home or in other settings (i.e. making eye contact, responding to my name)?

What skills are starting to show, but still need work (i.e. turn-taking, signing/speaking to indicate a need or want)?

What are some current problem behaviors and how are you addressing them (i.e. stuffing too much food in mouth - giving a handful at a time)?

Attach a picture of your child

I respond well to...

What behavioral strategies are working at home?

What visual or physical supports have been successful in the past?

What do you do to ease transitions at home and in other settings (i.e. two-minute warning)?

What are some methods to make challenges easier (i.e. setting a timer, playing music)?

My likes and interests are...

What does your child like that can be used as reinforcement for expected behaviors (i.e. bubbles, tickling, trains)?

What might your child find comforting during or following an upset (i.e. preferred character or item)?

What causes your child to self-stimulate (stim) (i.e. magnets, stacking blocks, twinkle lights)?

Some important things you should know about me are...

What are the most concerning behaviors or needs (i.e. wander risk, no fear of danger or pain)?

What should a caretaker know before being left alone with your child (i.e. allergies, health concerns)?

What behaviors does your child do that might be misunderstood (i.e. echoes a question when they don't understand)?

Initial Evaluation and Individualized Education Program (IEP)



A written referral is submitted to the school district.



School district has 25* school days from referral to decide to evaluate

Calendar days are all days of the week, including weekends, and school, state, federal and religious holidays.



Parent signs consent for evaluation

School days are weekdays with attendance during the regular school year, excluding district planning, inservice, or weather closure dates when offices are closed to non-employees.

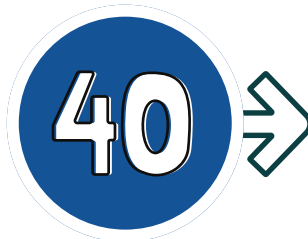


District has up to 35 school days to complete evaluation and provide a copy to parents/guardians

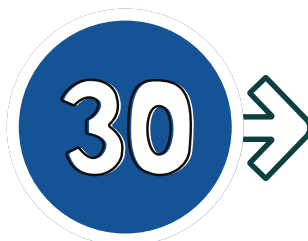
***25 school days:** OSPI rulemaking is in progress to change referral timeline to 20 school days, anticipated by Fall 2026.



District must wait 5 school days after providing evaluation report to hold eligibility meeting



School district has up to 40 school days from consent to hold an eligibility meeting



School district has 30 calendar days from eligibility determination meeting to develop IEP

IEP services begin ASAP with signed parent consent.

The IEP document is a lot to absorb. You will be better prepared to support your child when you review the IEP draft before meeting with the IEP team for the first time. A child's education is worth taking time to read for understanding.

1. Identify Your Child's Eligibility Category

Take note of the eligibility category that entitles the student to an IEP. The eligibility category is listed on the "Cover Page" of the IEP document, near the name, birth date, and other personal details about the student. This category is decided during the evaluation review meeting.

My child's eligibility category is .

2. Read the IEP Draft Before the IEP Meeting

Be sure to ask for a copy of the IEP draft with enough time to look it over before the meeting.

I requested a copy of the IEP draft on .

Remember, the school's first version is a DRAFT IEP, and family members of the IEP team have the [right to participate](#) in program development.

The amount of time a family needs for review also might depend on whether the document is translated into a language besides English. Under state and federal law, parents have the right to information about their child's education in a language they can understand.

☐ Yes, I require that the IEP be translated to .

I requested translation of the IEP on .

☐ No, I do not require that the IEP be translated to another language.

3. Review the Service Matrix

Located halfway through the IEP, the Service Matrix looks like a chart or grid. These are the suggested services and they are how a student receives Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) in each area where the student has significant deficits that make them eligible for special education.

How many minutes are being offered to support the student in each area of specially designed instruction? (The SDI supports at least one goal for each subject area.)

Subject	Service	Minutes
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

[Learn more about Steps to Read, Develop, and Understand an IEP in this PAVE article.](#)

What Related/Ancillary Services is your child eligible to receive? (These are therapeutic services, such as occupational, physical, or speech therapy. Mental health counseling and parent training may be listed as Related Services.

Service	Frequency	Minutes

Sometimes Related Services are offered through “consultation,” meaning that a specialist will make recommendations to school staff but won’t work directly with the student. Are any of your child’s services being provided through consultation?

Service	Frequency	Minutes

4. Review the Present Level Statement

The Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLOP for short) are within the first few pages of the IEP. This section of the IEP explains why the student needs services.

Does the information in the present level statement reflect your student’s current abilities and needs?

☐

Yes

☐

No

What, if anything, should be added?

5. Review the proposed goals

Are the goals [Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound \(SMART\)](#)?

☐

Yes

☐

No

*Highlight goals that are not written as SMART goals to discuss during the IEP meeting.

Are any of the goals too easy for your child?

☐

Yes

☐

No

*Highlight goals that are too easy to discuss with the IEP team.

6. Review the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Statement

Read and review information about where your child will spend their day. *Note any concerns or feedback to discuss with the team.

7. Review the accommodations and modifications

Read and review information about [accommodations and modifications](#). *Note anything that may need to be added and any questions you have about how they will be provided in the educational setting.

Accommodations and modifications for 3-5-year-olds should be tailored to meet the unique needs of each child. These young children may have various developmental, cognitive, and sensory challenges, so it's important to work closely with a team of educators, therapists, and parents to create an effective IEP.

- **Accommodations** are changes in how a student learns and demonstrates their knowledge without altering the curriculum's content.
- **Modifications** are changes made to the curriculum or expectations, often involving a reduction in content, complexity, or grading standards.

Examples of accommodations and modifications

Accommodations

1. **Extended Time:** Provide additional time for completing assignments, tests, or in-class activities.
2. **Frequent Breaks:** Allow short breaks during lessons or assessments to help manage attention and focus.
3. **Small Group or One-on-One Instruction:** Offer personalized instruction to address specific learning needs.
4. **Use of Assistive Technology:** Provide access to technology tools or devices like text-to-speech software, screen readers, or speech recognition software.
5. **Visual Supports:** Use visual aids like charts, diagrams, or graphic organizers to enhance comprehension.
6. **Verbal or Visual Cues:** Give verbal or visual reminders and cues to help with task initiation or transitions.
7. **Preference for Seating:** Allow the student to choose their seating arrangement to optimize learning conditions.

Modifications

1. **Modified Grading:** Adjust grading criteria to reflect the student's individual progress and abilities.
2. **Altered Assignments:** Modify the content or format of assignments to match the student's skill level.
3. **Individualized Goals:** Develop personalized learning objectives based on the student's unique needs and abilities.
4. **Support from Specialized Staff:** Utilize the expertise of special education teachers, speech therapists, or occupational therapists to provide additional support.

*Remember that the specific accommodations and modifications included in an IEP should be based on the student's individual needs and goals. Regular IEP team meetings and ongoing communication with teachers and specialists are essential to ensure that the plan remains effective and responsive to the student's changing needs.

Here are our top three tips for making every conversation with your child's IFSP or IEP team an opportunity to show them what makes your child the remarkable human being you know and love.

1. SHARE YOUR CHILD'S STRENGTHS AND NEEDS

Every conversation with your child's IFSP or IEP team is an opportunity to show them what makes your child the remarkable human being you know and love. As you work together to develop a plan to address their needs, it's equally important that you share your child's strengths. They are more than the sum of their symptoms, challenges, and disabilities. Your child's interests are a part of who they are and their current abilities can help to identify the best support strategies for their individual needs.

Strengths	Needs
Things my child does that make me feel happy or unconcerned	Things my child does or cannot do that make me feel concerned
Smiles back at me or others	Doesn't smile back at me or others
Responds to his or her name	Doesn't respond to his or her name
Likes to play with other children	Prefers to play alone
Makes sounds, babbles, or talks	Seldom attempts to make sounds
*Adapted from PACER Center	

While it's true that children develop differently, at their own pace, and that the range of what's "normal" development is quite broad, it's hard not to worry and wonder. If you think that your child is not developing at the same pace or in the same way as most children his or her age, it may be helpful to review established guidelines, such as the Early Learning and Development Guidelines. This booklet includes information about what children can do and learn at different stages of development, focused on birth through third grade. [A free downloadable version](#) is available in English and Spanish from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

2. ASK QUESTIONS

No single person knows everything. You are not expected to know or understand every word or acronym used. Parents have the right to ask questions before, during, and after meetings. Although the professionals may know about child development, you are the expert in your child. It is important for you to ask questions for clarification and understanding; learning as much as you can helps you to be a better advocate for your child.

3. TAKE NOTES AND SHARE YOUR REFLECTIONS

Write down your questions before meetings and make note of anything that remains unanswered to follow up on. During the meeting, take notes that highlight concerns, resolutions, and unresolved issues. As soon as possible after the meeting, or at least within the next 24 hours, write down everything you remember from the meeting. Then, email a quick thank you note with your notes attached, asking them to let you know if you misheard or misinterpreted anything that was discussed. This allows for clarification and understanding before frustration can take root and interrupt the team's effectiveness.

Developmental Preschool Programs

A developmental preschool is a specialized early childhood program for children aged 3 to 5 with special needs. These preschools provide custom-tailored instruction to meet each child's individual requirements, led by a team of special education professionals, including teachers, teaching assistants, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, school psychologists, and school nurses. The goal is to help children develop skills that prepare them for kindergarten and beyond. These services are free and provided by the school district.

The Washington Administrative Code (WAC) requires that at least half the class in a regular early childhood program must not have disabilities, ensuring children with disabilities learn alongside their peers without disabilities as much as possible ([WAC 392-172A-02050](#)). However, placement in a developmental preschool is based on the child's [Individualized Education Program \(IEP\)](#), which sets specific educational and developmental goals. The IEP team considers the [least restrictive environment \(LRE\)](#) to place the child in a setting where they can interact with peers without disabilities whenever appropriate, meeting their unique needs while promoting inclusion.

Most developmental preschools operate from Monday to Thursday, with sessions lasting 2 1/2 hours, either in the morning or afternoon. Some programs offer different schedules, such as half-day sessions from Tuesday to Friday or full-day sessions from Monday to Friday, depending on the school district.

To find out if your child is eligible for a developmental preschool, contact your local school district for enrollment information. For a complete listing of schools in your area, you can visit the [OSPI's Washington state school explore map](#).



Alternatives to Developmental Preschool Programs

When exploring alternatives to developmental preschools, parents and caregivers should consider factors such as the school's location, tuition costs, acceptance of working connections, the physical setting (home-like or classroom), adult-to-child ratios, operating hours, cultural competence of staff, and their experience in caring for children with developmental delays and disabilities. Some alternatives to developmental preschools include ECEAP programs, center-based options, family childcare centers, and family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) programs.

ECEAP Programs

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is Washington's no-cost pre-kindergarten program, aimed at preparing 3- and 4-year-old children from families facing more significant challenges for success in school and life. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) oversees the program. Families with children aged 3 or 4 by August 31st may be eligible for this free opportunity. To find out more and locate an [ECEAP program in your area](#).

ECEAP Programs (Pierce County)

The Tacoma school district operates eight ECEAP classrooms distributed across seven locations in Pierce County, which include Bonney Lake, Buckley, Eatonville, Orting, South Hill, Sumner, and University Place. Additionally, a dual language program that teaches both Spanish and English is offered at the South Hill location. Families in Pierce County can also access the ECEAP program provided by the Multicultural Child and Family Hope Center, located in Tacoma. For more information on their programs and services please visit the [Multicultural Child and Family Hope Center website](#).

Center-Based Childcare Centers

When families seek alternatives to developmental preschools, they can decide between center-based childcare providers and family childcare homes. Childcare centers offer care to groups of children, typically organizing them into classrooms based on their age. These centers usually have several staff members responsible for looking after the children. Childcare centers are commonly situated in commercial facilities and can be run by various entities, including individual owners, for-profit chains, government agencies, public schools, or nonprofit organizations like faith-based or community organizations.

Family, Friends, and Neighbors

Family Childcare Centers

Family childcare providers offer personalized care to a small group of children in their own private residence, which can be a house, apartment, or condo unit. If families prefer smaller group sizes and a homely environment with flexible hours, including evenings and weekends, family childcare can be an excellent choice. It's worth noting that family childcare providers may be a more cost-effective option than certain center-based programs, although rates may differ depending on your local community. For information on how to find a center-based or family childcare center for your child, please contact your local childcare resources and referral agency- [Brightspark](#). You can also find additional information on childcare options by visiting [Childcare Aware of Washington](#), and [Childcare.gov](#).

Family, Friends, and neighbors (FFN)

Family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) providers encompass a diverse group, including friends, neighbors, older siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles, elders, and other individuals who support families by offering childcare services. FFN care is the most commonly chosen form of childcare for children from birth to age five, as well as for school-age children both before and after school hours. Many parents and caregivers opt for FFN care, especially when their child has special health or developmental needs, as they may already have an established relationship with a family member, friend, or neighbor who shares their language and culture. To learn more about FFN childcare, please visit the [DCYF website](#).



Maintaining a clear record of who said what and when is simplified with a school communication log. This tool streamlines the organization and retrieval of your notes pertaining to phone calls, letters, face-to-face meetings, emails exchanged with your child's teachers, and any other interactions involving the school.

For parents of children with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), meticulous record-keeping of all communication with the school or IEP team is particularly crucial. Insert this chart at the forefront of the "Communication" section in your IEP binder. Utilize it to promptly log specifics following discussions or when engaging in written communication

Use [the printable log](#) to track your conversations with members of the IEP team, as you see in the sample below.

Date	Name of Contact	Issue Resolved ☐ Yes ☒ No ► Follow-Up Date <div>11/13/2023</div>
11/06/2026	Mrs. Teacher	
Means	Role/Position	Next Steps If I haven't heard from teacher by this date, I will request an assistive technology evaluation from the school district.
☐ Call ☒ Email ☐ Text ☐ In-person ☐ Other: <div></div>	Language Arts teacher Summary of Conversation I asked that student be allowed to use notetaking software during class. Mrs. Teacher will find out if this requires an assistive technology evaluation.	

The IDEA requires that certain individuals be included in the IEP team, and their input is valuable in creating a plan that addresses the unique needs of the student. Here are the key members of the IEP team. The team works together to develop a comprehensive plan that addresses the unique needs of the student and ensures access to an appropriate education.

Key members of the IEP team include:

- Parents or Guardians
- Student (when appropriate)
- Special Education Teacher
- General Education Teacher
- School Representative, Administrator
- Specialist or service providers
- Additional Individuals (A parent advocate, a friend, PAVE PTI)

Use [this printable](#) to identify each member of the IEP team and how to contact them, as you see in the sample below.

School Year <input type="text" value="2026-2027"/>		School or Program <input type="text" value="ECEAP Pierce County"/>	
Name of Contact	Phone Number	Text Messages	
<input type="text" value="Mr. Teacher"/>	<input type="text" value="123-456-7890"/>	☒ Yes ☐ No	
Role/Position	Email Address		
<input type="text" value="Room # Teacher"/>	<input type="text" value="teach@esd000.edu"/>		
Name of Contact	Phone Number	Text Messages	
<input type="text" value="Mx. Therapist"/>	<input type="text" value="234-567-8901"/>	☒ Yes ☐ No	
Role/Position	Email Address		
<input type="text" value="Speech Therapist"/>	<input type="text" value="speech@esd000.edu"/>		

[Read this article to learn more about who is included in the IEP team.](#)

Follow this guide to enroll your dependent child of an active-duty servicemember in the [Exceptional Family Member Program \(EFMP\)](#) or the Coast Guard's Special Needs Program (SNP).

Eligibility

Enrollment in EFMP is mandatory for eligible dependents of active-duty service members (ASDMs). It is not an age-limited or age-specific program; dependent children and adults, including spouses, incapacitated adults (unmarried adult children with disabilities, parents and parents-in-law, and other adult dependents), must be enrolled in EFMP if they meet [one of the following criteria](#):

- ▶ Have special medical needs, including chronic and/or mental health conditions, that require ongoing treatment from medical specialists
- ▶ Are eligible for or receive early intervention services (EIS) through an [Individualized Family Service Plan \(IFSP\)](#) for infants and toddlers (ages 0-3)
- ▶ Are eligible for or receive special education services through an [Individualized Education Program \(IEP\)](#) for students aged 3 through 22
- ▶ Have significant behavioral health concerns

Family members of National Guard and Reserve personnel may be eligible during the time period when the service member is called for active-duty orders under Title 10 (10 U.S.C.).

Enrollment

Enrollment in EFMP or SNP begins with [two enrollment forms that are available for download from Military OneSource](#):

DD FORM 2792 “FAMILY MEMBER MEDICAL SUMMARY”

This form must be completed by the family member's TRICARE-authorized primary care provider. This can be either the primary care manager or a specialty care provider.

DD FORM 2792-1 “SPECIAL EDUCATION/EARLY INTERVENTION SUMMARY”

The instructions state that the child's IFSP or IEP must also be provided with this form. If the child has an IFSP, is not yet enrolled in school, or is home-schooled, the parents may complete and sign the fields reserved for the educational authority.

- ☐ When you call to schedule an appointment with your medical provider, ask about the provider's policy for completing paperwork and how to submit the forms before the visit while scheduling the appointment.
- ☐ Make a copy of the completed forms for your home files.
- ☐ Hand-deliver the forms to your installation's enrollment department, or submit the forms electronically if your branch of service is listed below:
 - ▶ [Army's Enterprise EFMP \(E-EFMP\)](#)
 - ▶ Air Force and Space Force [My Vector](#)
 - ▶ [Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System \(NFAAS\)](#)

- ☐ **Determine Eligibility**
Check if you or your family member have a special medical or educational need that qualifies for EFMP enrollment.
- ☐ **Contact Your EFMP Coordinator**
Reach out to your local EFMP coordinator or the EFMP office on your military installation. They can provide guidance and assistance throughout the enrollment process.
- ☐ **Gather Required Documents**
Collect necessary documents, such as medical records, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and other relevant paperwork supporting the special needs of the family member.
- ☐ **Complete DD Form 2792 (Family Member Medical Summary)**
Fill out this form to provide detailed medical information about the family member with special needs. This form is used to assess medical eligibility for EFMP.
- ☐ **Complete DD Form 2792-1 (Special Education/Early Intervention Summary)**
If applicable, complete this form to provide information related to educational needs and services received by the family member with special needs.
- ☐ **Attend EFMP Briefing**
Attend an EFMP informational briefing or orientation session to learn more about the program and its services.
- ☐ **Medical Evaluation**
The military medical authorities will review the DD Forms 2792 and 2792-1 to assess the family member's medical and educational needs.
- ☐ **Assignment Coordination**
EFMP coordinators work with assignment managers to ensure your family is assigned to a location where the necessary support and services are available.
- ☐ **Update Information as Needed**
Keep your EFMP coordinator informed of any changes in your family member's medical or educational needs, as well as changes in your contact information.
- ☐ **Enroll in EFMP Respite Care, if Available**
If respite care is offered at your installation, inquire about enrolling in this program to access short-term relief for caregivers.
- ☐ **Access EFMP Family Support Services**
Utilize the support services provided by EFMP Family Support, which may include counseling, information, referrals, and assistance with navigating resources.

Specific procedures may vary by branch of service and location. Work closely with your EFMP coordinator for personalized guidance throughout the enrollment process.

A step-by-step guide to submitting an SSI application on behalf of your child.

[Supplemental Security Income \(SSI\)](#) is a monthly financial benefit from the Social Security Administration (SSA) to people with limited income and resources who are age 65 or older, blind or disabled. Blind or disabled children, as well as adults, can get SSI.

Eligibility for disability is determined by a team that includes a disability examiner and a medical or psychological consultant at a state agency known as the Disability Determination Service (DDS). The team will review medical and financial documents, and determine eligibility based on the documents provided or request more documents be provided.

Learn more about [Supplemental Security Income](#) for adults and children in this PAVE article. Here's a step-by-step checklist to help you get started:

- ☐ **[Determine Eligibility](#):** Complete the SSA's Benefit Eligibility Screening Tool (BEST) to determine if your child's condition qualifies for SSI benefits.
- ☐ **[Gather Required Documents](#):** Review the list of required documents and gather these items to submit with your application.
- ☐ **[Complete the Application](#):** Apply online, call (1-800-772-1213, TTY 1-800-325-0778) to make an appointment, or complete the application by phone.

SSI will call you within 3 – 5 business days to get more information about your child and family. You will then be sent to the application to a Disability Determination Services (DDS) office.

SSI takes between 3 to 6 months to review an application. After their review, your child will get a letter in the mail with the decision. If your child is approved, SSI will check the financial documents you provided within your application. Then, your child will get another letter in the mail that says how much money they'll receive every month.

In order to receive SSI, the applicant must have limited income and resources. If the applicant has too much income, their application will be denied, and they will be ineligible for SSI payments. A child does not earn income so part of their parent's income will be attributed to the child. Different [sources of income](#) are treated differently and some have greater exclusions than others. When an adult applies on behalf of a child, the parent or guardian's income is considered "deemed" income to the child. SSA will prorate the adult's income among the family members to determine the amount applicable to the child.

Family to Family Health Information Center (F2FHIC), a program of PAVE, provides technical assistance, information, and training to families of children, youth, and adults with special healthcare needs. [The F2F website](#) contains invaluable information and resources to help family members, self-advocates, and professionals navigate complex health systems and public benefits, including SSI. After reviewing F2F's article about [how to apply for SSI](#), if you have questions and would like to speak with an F2F team member, please submit a [Support Request](#).

A step-by-step guide to submitting an application for DDA on behalf of your child

The Washington State Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) is responsible for administering services and supports to children and adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Applying for DDA services can take some time and involves two main steps:

1. First, you'll submit an application to see if your child meets DDA's eligibility requirements.
2. Once they're enrolled, you can either request services right away or wait until you're ready.

Since each step can take a while, it's a good idea to apply early, even if you don't have an immediate need for services.

Before you begin the process of applying for DDA services, it's important to understand the eligibility criteria and gather the necessary information. Here's a step-by-step checklist to help you get started:

- ☐ **Verify Eligibility:** Review the Eligible Conditions With Age and Type of Evidence to confirm that your child's condition qualifies for DDA support.
- ☐ **Complete Required Forms:** Fill out the Request for DDA Eligibility Determination form. This form is crucial for starting the DDA process.
- ☐ **Consent Form:** Fill out the Consent Form to authorize the release of necessary information for your application.
- ☐ **Acknowledge Privacy Practices:** Agree to the DSHS Notice of Privacy Practices for Client Medical Information to ensure that your child's medical information is handled in compliance with privacy regulations.
- ☐ **Submission:** Submit all the completed forms and required information to your local DDA office.

*Eligibility can be established as early as birth and can continue throughout a person's life. There are a couple of ages where the eligibility requirements change, and re-application may be required. See DDA's [Eligible Conditions](#) chart for more detail on eligible conditions, age ranges, acceptable tests for diagnoses, and assessments to show substantial limitation.

*For more information on filing the right paperwork, view [PAVE's DDA Access Eligibility video](#). Informing Families also has [a video about Applying for DDA](#).

If you have additional questions, contact your local DDA office by calling:

- 1-800-462-0624 for: Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman, and Yakima Counties
- 1-800-788-2053 for: Island, King, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom Counties
- 1-800-248-0949 for: Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, and Wahkiakum Counties

PARENT-TO-PARENT: EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND NAVIGATION GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS

The aim of the parent-to-parent program is to offer assistance, counsel, and mentorship to parents dealing with particular challenges or situations related to their children's health, disabilities, or special requirements. The objective is to empower and help parents gain a deeper understanding of their children's distinct needs, promote a sense of mutual support, and alleviate the sense of isolation that often accompanies parenting difficulties.

[Pierce County Parent to Parent](#) is a program of PAVE and partners with Pierce County Human Services and The Arc of Washington State to provide No Cost training and support.

PAVE's P2P Program offers:

- **Family and Youth Support Groups**- offers a nurturing space for caregivers to connect, share experiences, and find guidance. Parents come together to discuss challenges, celebrate successes, and exchange practical strategies in raising children with disabilities. Through mutual understanding and empathy, these groups provide emotional support, valuable resources, and a sense of community, helping families navigate the unique journey of caring for their exceptional children with care and strength. Learn more about the [Pierce P2P support groups and register to attend](#).
- **Parent Match**-Experienced and well-trained parents are thoughtfully paired in one-on-one connections with newcomers to the program, with the pairings determined by shared disabilities and family concerns.
- **Education, information, and referrals**-Pierce Parent-to-parent offers educational resources and materials to help parents better understand their child's specific condition, disability, or special needs. Provides information for parents seeking guidance on various aspects of caregiving and assists parents in connecting with specialized services or professionals when necessary.
- **Training**-The training facilitated by parent-to-parent groups aims to empower families with knowledge, skills, and emotional support to enhance their ability to care for and advocate on behalf of their children with special needs or disabilities.

*Washington has a network of P2P programs that serve every corner of the state. The Arc provides support to the regional programs and links them to national P2P resources. Families can go to arcwa.org to find a list of P2P coordinators, organized by region and listed under the counties served.

RESPIRE: A SHORT-TERM BREAK FOR CAREGIVERS

What's a family caregiver? Any family member, neighbor or friend may be an unpaid caregiver to a person with whom they have a personal relationship, and who has a chronic or disabling condition. Respite is a short break for family caregivers because family caregiving is often a full-time job, or it is done in addition to paid work. If you are or have been a parent, you know how true that is! Respite can be informal (friends, neighbors, family members helping) or it can be done by using caregiving services and programs. Respite gives the family caregiver a break so they can restore and refresh themselves, but it also gives the person getting care a change of pace.

Respite care takes many forms, and care services may include:

- In-Home Services
- Recreation
- Day or Overnight Camps
- Day Services
- Education/Classes
- Retreats
- 24-Hour Care

Links for programs to help you find and afford respite care:

- [Children and Youth: Free and Low Cost Respite Care](#)
- [Creative Options for a Respite Break](#)
- [Finding Respite in Washington State](#)
- Information for [Medical and Social Services Professionals](#)

Lifespan Respite WA has a [Voucher Program](#), which awards vouchers (grants) to unpaid family caregivers for short-term respite. To be eligible for the voucher, you must:

- Live in Washington State
- Not get paid for caregiving
- Provide care for 40 or more hours a week which includes supervision
- Not be able to afford respite care on your own
- Not getting respite services through any program or agency, or through your own or your loved one's insurance.

Learn [how the Voucher Program works](#) and apply with the online voucher application.

AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AT	Assistive Technology
BIE	Bureau of Indian Education
BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan
CPIR	Center for Parent Information and Resources
CPRC	Community Parent Resource Center
DCYF	Department of Children, Youth and Families
EIS	Early intervention services
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
F2F	Family-to-Family, <i>see also F2FHIC</i>
F2FHIC	Family-to-Family Health Information Center, <i>see also F2F</i>
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FRC	Family Resource Coordinator
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Program
IFSP	Individualized Family Support Plan
LEA	Local Education Agency
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MTSS	Mutli-Tiered System of Supports
OHI	Other Health Impairment
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs
P2P	Parent to Parent
PBIS	Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports
PTI	Parent Training and Information (Center)
PWN	Prior Written Notice
RTI	Response to Intervention
SEA	State Education Agency
SDI	Specially Designed Instruction
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
UPL	Unauthorized Practices of Law

WASHINGTON STATE-SPECIFIC TERMS

DDA	Developmental Disabilities Administration
ESIT	Early Support for Infants and Toddlers
OSPI	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

MILITARY TERMS

EFMP	Exceptional Family Member Program
SNP	Special Needs Program

*Adapted from [OSEP's complete list of acronyms](#)

Dear Mr./Mrs./Mx. ,

Today, our partnership begins.

Here are some things about that you may not otherwise learn about him/her from his/her file. I invite you to contact me by phone () or email () , anytime you have questions about and how best to reach him/her.

is (describe his/her culture and heritage)

He/She has lived in Washington State for months/years. (If you are new to the state, describe where your child has been raised up until this point.)

(If you are a military family, include information about your branch of service and how military moves or operations have impacted your child.)

is actively involved in his/her community and he/she enjoys (describe any community participation groups, clubs, activities, or events). Outside of school, he/she is interested in (provide a short list of main hobbies, skills, and interests).

Outside of school, is interested in (provide a short list of main hobbies, skills, and interests).

Some of my favorite things about are his/her (personality and character traits).

When he/she has trouble with something, he/she (describe your child's strengths).

PAVE's policy is to offer support, information, and training to families, professionals, and those interested in various topics. Please note that PAVE is not a legal services agency and cannot provide legal advice or representation. The information is not intended for legal counsel and should not be used as a substitute for legal advice.

[] has (disability) [], which affects him/her by (describe symptoms, challenges, and limitations):

He/she has trouble with (list activities and skills that are impacted as a result of the disability). (Use this section to address common assumptions or miscommunications about the diagnosis, such as, "When it seems like he/she is being rebellious, it is really his/her way of showing he/she needs an opportunity to move around for sensory regulation.")

(Use this section to address common assumptions or miscommunications about the diagnosis, such as, "When it seems like he/she is being rebellious, it is really his/her way of showing he/she needs an opportunity to move around for sensory regulation.")

At home, [] responds well to (explain strategies for supporting your child's needs, behaviors, sensory regulation, etc.):

I share this with you to start a conversation and share with you what our family has found helpful. We appreciate what you will bring to []'s life and we want to partner with you to make this a successful school year!

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and get to know [] a little better. Please feel free to reach out at any time, and know that I will contact you as well when I have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

PAVE's policy is to offer support, information, and training to families, professionals, and those interested in various topics. Please note that PAVE is not a legal services agency and cannot provide legal advice or representation. The information is not intended for legal counsel and should not be used as a substitute for legal advice.

Hello! My name is .

I am years old.

My strengths are...

I respond well to...

**Attach a
picture of
your child**

**Things that challenge
me (but I am still
working on) are...**

**Some important
things you should
know about me are...**

**My likes and
interests are...**

Sample Letter to Request an IEP Evaluation

Use this sample format to write your own letter requesting an IEP evaluation.

[Read this article to learn more about the IEP evaluation process.](#)

Your Name

Your relationship to the student

Your phone number

Your email address

The date you submit the request

To: [Name of person and/or district],

I am requesting a full and individual evaluation for (NAME), (birth date: __/__/__), for assessment as a special education student as stipulated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, (IDEA, Public Law 108-446), and in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC 392-172A). My child is being evaluated for the first time (or include information if the student was previously evaluated or received IEP or Section 504 services).

My student attends (name of school) and is currently in (grade level) grade. We speak (language) in our home, and we need a qualified interpreter for all meetings where our child's eligibility and services are discussed.

I have concerns that (NAME) is not receiving the full educational benefit from school because of their struggles with (brief summary of biggest disability-related concern).

I understand that the evaluation is to be in all areas of suspected disability, and that the school district is to provide this evaluation at no charge to me. My reasons for requesting this evaluation are: (be as specific as you can/note that OSPI's form suggests possible academic and physical/behavioral concerns)

- Use bullet points.
- Use bullet points.

Here are some areas where (NAME) is struggling:

- Use bullet points.
- Use bullet points.

Based on what I know about my student, here are some supports that I think are needed:

- Use bullet points.
- Use bullet points.

Based on what I know about my student, here are some supports that I think are needed:

- Use bullet points.
- Use bullet points.

(NAME) **has been medically diagnosed with** (Diagnoses, if available... Or you might write: NAME is awaiting a medical evaluation for ... Note that a medical diagnosis is not required for schools to conduct an educational evaluation and to find a student eligible for services).

I have attached documentation from (list any outside providers who provided letters or reports). **Please take note that** (Dr. NAME) **recommends** (highlight any specific recommendations from those attached documents) **because** (reason).

I understand that I am an equal member of the team for the development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and that I will be involved in any meetings related to evaluation, identification of disability, provision of services, placement, or other decisions regarding my child's access to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). I would appreciate meeting with each person who will be doing an evaluation before (NAME) is tested so that I might share information and history. I will expect a copy of the written report generated by each evaluator so that I may review it before the team meeting.

I understand you must have my written permission for these tests to be administered, and I will be happy to provide that upon receipt of the proper forms.

I appreciate your help on behalf of (NAME).

Sincerely,

(Your Name)

CC: (Names and titles of other people you give copies to)

Use this sample format to write your own letter requesting an IEP evaluation. [Read this article to learn more about who is on the IEP team and what to expect at the IEP meeting.](#)

Your Name

Your relationship to the student

Your phone number

Your email address

To: Name (if known, otherwise use title only)

Title/Director of Special Education/Program Coordinator

School District

Street Address

City, State, Zip

Dear Name (if known, otherwise use title only):

I am requesting an IEP meeting regarding the program for my student, NAME, (BD: 00-00-0000). I have some concerns that I believe need to be addressed by the entire team. I understand that I will be involved in scheduling so I can participate fully as an equal member of the IEP team and that I will be notified in writing when a meeting is arranged.

My hope is that this meeting will provide an opportunity for collaborative problem-solving. I want to make sure (NAME's) IEP provides enough support for improvement and learning within their capabilities. I look forward to discussing my specific concerns about: (add specific concerns here).

- Use bullet points if the list becomes long.
- Use bullet points if the list becomes long.

I have attached documentation from (list any outside providers who provided letters or reports and highlight any specific recommendations from those attached documents).

I would like a copy of the most recent IEP (or amended Draft IEP) **with enough time to review it so I can prepare for our team meeting.**

I'm also requesting copies of (any other documents you wish to review before the meeting: evaluation reports, teacher progress notes, state curricula...).

I appreciate your help in behalf of my student. If you have any questions please call me at (telephone number) **or email me at** (email address, optional).

Sincerely,

(Your Name)

CC: (Names and titles of anyone else you give copies to)

Use this sample format to write your own letter requesting a [Functional Behavior Assessment \(FBA\)](#). You may request this at any time, like any other evaluation.

Your Name

Your relationship to the student

Your phone number

Your email address

To: Name (if known, otherwise use title only)

Title/Director of Special Education/Program Coordinator

School District

Street Address

City, State, Zip

Dear Name (if known, otherwise use title only):

I am requesting a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) for my child, NAME, (BD: 00-00-0000).

I have concerns that (NAME) is not receiving full educational benefit from school because of their struggles to meet behavioral expectations due to their disability circumstances. Their condition includes (brief summary of any diagnoses), **which makes it difficult to** (brief summary of the challenges). **I believe this has become a pattern of behavior that needs to be addressed with a positive behavioral support plan so my child with special educational needs can receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).**

I understand that the FBA will look for triggers and seek to understand what is happening in the environment when my child's behaviors become problematic. I have learned that these are "antecedents" that the school can identify through data tracking. I hope we can begin to understand how (NAME) may be trying to communicate their needs through these behaviors.

Here are some of my thoughts about what might be going on:

- Use bullet points if the list is long.
- Use bullet points if the list is long.

I look forward to discussing the results of the FBA and working with school staff on development of a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP). I hope we can choose a small number of target behaviors to focus on in the BIP. I understand that we will work together to identify replacement behaviors that the school can teach (NAME) to do instead. I hope these will be skills we can work on at home also. I look forward to learning how we can partner to encourage the learning that I know (NAME) is capable of.

I have attached documentation from (any outside providers/therapists/counselors who may have provided letters or reports or shared behavioral recommendations).

I understand that I am an equal member of the team for development of educational services and that I will be involved in any meetings where decisions are made regarding my child's access to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). I will also expect a copy of the FBA and a draft of the BIP before our meeting.

I understand you must have my written permission for this assessment to be administered, and I will be happy to provide that upon receipt of the proper forms.

I appreciate your help in behalf of (child's name). **If you have any questions please call me at** (telephone number) **or email me at** (email address, optional).

Sincerely,
(Your Name)

CC: (Names and titles of anyone else you give copies to)

Sample Letter to Request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)

Use this sample format to write your own letter [requesting an Independent Educational Evaluation \(IEE\)](#). You may request this at any time, like any other evaluation.

Your Name

Your relationship to the student

Your phone number

Your email address

To: Name (if known, otherwise use title only)

Title/Director of Special Education/Program Coordinator

School District

Street Address

City, State, Zip

Dear Name (if known, otherwise use title only):

I am requesting an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) for my (son/daughter), (NAME) (BD: 00-00-0000). Please provide me with information about outside agencies in our area that can provide this evaluation.

The school conducted an evaluation (date range of evaluation) **to determine whether (NAME) is eligible for special education programming. I disagree with the results of that evaluation for the following reasons:** (be as specific as you can; one reason may be that you don't believe that all areas of suspected disability were appropriately evaluated)

- Use bullet points if the list becomes long.
- Use bullet points if the list becomes long.

I have attached documentation from (list any outside providers who provided letters supporting your request). **Please note that** (highlight any particularly important recommendations from those attached documents).

I understand that the school can provide this IEE at no cost to me. I also understand that the school may initiate a due process hearing if denying my request. Upon request, I can provide more detail about my objections to the school's evaluation.

I understand that I am an equal member of the team for development and review of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and that I will be involved in any meetings regarding the identification, evaluation, provision of services, placement, or decisions regarding my child's access to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

I understand that evaluations require my written permission, and I will be happy to provide that upon receipt of the proper forms.

I appreciate your help in behalf of (NAME). If you have any questions please call me at (telephone number) or email me at (email address, optional).

Sincerely,
(Your Name)

CC: (Names and titles of anyone else you give copies to)

COMMUNICATION LOG

Date

Name of Contact

Means

☐ Call

☐ Email

☐ Text

☐ In-person

☐ Other:

Role/Position

Summary of Conversation

Issue Resolved

☐

Yes

☐

No



Follow-Up Date

Next Steps

Date

Name of Contact

Means

☐ Call

☐ Email

☐ Text

☐ In-person

☐ Other:

Role/Position

Summary of Conversation

Issue Resolved

☐

Yes

☐

No



Follow-Up Date

Next Steps

Date

Name of Contact

Means

☐ Call

☐ Email

☐ Text

☐ In-person

☐ Other:

Role/Position

Summary of Conversation

Issue Resolved

☐

Yes

☐

No



Follow-Up Date

Next Steps

Date

Name of Contact

Means

☐ Call

☐ Email

☐ Text

☐ In-person

☐ Other:

Role/Position

Summary of Conversation

Issue Resolved

☐

Yes

☐

No



Follow-Up Date

Next Steps

PAVE's policy is to offer support, information, and training to families, professionals, and those interested in various topics. Please note that PAVE is not a legal services agency and cannot provide legal advice or representation. The information is not intended for legal counsel and should not be used as a substitute for legal advice.

WHO'S WHO ON THE IEP TEAM

School Year

School or Program

Name of Contact

Phone Number

Text Messages

☐ Yes ☐ No

Role/Position

Email Address

Name of Contact

Phone Number

Text Messages

☐ Yes ☐ No

Role/Position

Email Address

Name of Contact

Phone Number

Text Messages

☐ Yes ☐ No

Role/Position

Email Address

Name of Contact

Phone Number

Text Messages

☐ Yes ☐ No

Role/Position

Email Address

Name of Contact

Phone Number

Text Messages

☐ Yes ☐ No

Role/Position

Email Address

Name of Contact

Phone Number

Text Messages

☐ Yes ☐ No

Role/Position

Email Address

Name of Contact

Phone Number

Text Messages

☐ Yes ☐ No

Role/Position

Email Address

PAVE's policy is to offer support, information, and training to families, professionals, and those interested in various topics. Please note that PAVE is not a legal services agency and cannot provide legal advice or representation. The information is not intended for legal counsel and should not be used as a substitute for legal advice.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR): also known as dispute resolution or procedural safeguards; resolves disagreements between families and school districts; Washington options include facilitation, mediation, community complaint, and due process hearing

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): the federal law that makes it unlawful to discriminate against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools and transportation

Appropriate Evaluation: IDEA requires that a child must be assessed in all areas of suspected disability to determine eligibility for special education and related services

Assistive Technology (AT): includes devices that are used by individuals in order to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible, and services that assist with the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC): “all of the ways that someone communicates besides talking”

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): a working document that the school and family build together and review regularly to make sure the child is supported with positive reinforcement and encouragement for meeting behavioral expectations

Bureau of Indian Education (BIE): offering high-quality educational opportunities from early childhood to adulthood, aligned with each tribe’s cultural and economic requirements and recognizing the unique cultural and governmental identity of Indian tribes and Alaska Native villages. The BIE aims to support holistic well-being by considering individuals’ spiritual, mental, physical, and cultural dimensions within their family and tribal or village affiliations.

Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR): the central “Hub” of information and products for the network of Parent Centers serving families of children with disabilities

Child Find: IDEA requires that public school districts identify and evaluate children with potential disabilities to determine their eligibility to receive school-based supports and services to meet their unique needs

Community Parent Resource Center (CPRC): *see also parent training and information (PTI)*; federally-funded programs that provide information, training, and resources to traditionally families of children with disabilities in traditionally underserved communities

Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF): Washington’s lead agency for providing state-funded services that help kids and families become stronger, healthier, and do better in school

Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA): Washington’s agency for long-term care supports for individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities

Developmental preschools: special classes in the school district where children aged 3-5 with special needs receive custom-tailored instruction to meet their individual requirements

Early intervention services (EIS): services to help infants and toddlers with disabilities or delays to learn and catch up in their development

Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT): *also see early intervention services*; the program under Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) that administers early intervention services in Washington state

Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP): *also see Special Needs Program (SNP)*; Department of War (DoW) programs for dependents of active-duty service members (ADSMs) of the U.S. Armed Forces with special medical or educational needs

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): the federal law that governs Kindergarten through 12th grade public education “to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps”

Family-to-Family Health Information Center (F2FHIC): also known as Family-to-Family (F2F); helps families of children and youth with special health care needs, and the professionals who serve them, to find healthcare funding

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): students with disabilities who need a special kind of teaching or other help have the right to an education that is not only free but also appropriate, designed just for them, and provided through the local education agency (public school district)

Family Resource Coordinator (FRC): *also see Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT)*; the ESIT point of contact and case manager who can answer questions, provide information, and refer to resource programs related to child development

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): the federal law that governs special education and related services for students with disabilities aged 3-22

Individualized Education Program (IEP): a dynamic program written and tailored to the needs of a student with a disability, aged 3-22, in order to help them participate in and make progress in their education; IEP team includes the parents or guardians, student (as appropriate), special & general education teachers, school rep/administrator, service providers, and others invited by the family (e.g., advocate, friend, PAVE PTI).

Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP): a whole family plan, with the child’s primary caregivers as major contributors to its development and implementation; IFSP team includes parents or guardians, service coordinator, service providers, and others invited by the family (e.g., advocate, friend, PAVE PTI)

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): IDEA requires that children who receive special education and related services be with other children who do not have disabilities as much as is appropriate for their unique needs

Local Educational Agency (LEA): also known as lead educational agency; they operate independently as 295 districts throughout the state and include a school board governance structure

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS): *see also response to intervention (RTI)*; schools support well-being for all students and offer higher levels of support based on student need by creating a structure for positive behavioral supports and trauma-informed interventions

Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP): the U.S. Department of Education program dedicated to improving results for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities aged 3-22

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI): *see also state educational agency*; the lead agency for Kindergarten through 12th grade public education, including 295 public school districts and 6 state-tribal education compact schools throughout the state of Washington

Other Health Impairment (OHI): one of the 14 eligibility categories listed in IDEA “having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that (i) is due to chronic or acute health problems... and; (ii) adversely affects a child’s educational performance...”

Parent to Parent (P2P): programs that provide hands-on support, training, and technical assistance and education to parents and caregivers of individuals with disabilities and/or special healthcare needs; [PAVE houses the P2P program for Pierce County](#)

Parent and Student Participation: IDEA and [state regulations about IEP team membership](#) make it clear that parents or legal guardians are [equal partners](#) with school staff in making decisions about their child's education, until the educational decision-making authority transfers to the student on their 18th birthday

Parent Training and Information (PTI): a federally-funded program created by IDEA that provides information, training, and support to family caregivers, youth, and professionals with questions about services for and educational rights of children and young people with disabilities; PAVE is the PTI of Washington State

Part B: also called special education; the section of IDEA that governs how special education and related services are provided to school-aged children with disabilities

Part C: also called early intervention; the section of IDEA that governs early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS): a framework schools use to organize behavior supports for students that emphasizes prevention instead of waiting for problems to happen, and ranges in intensity and duration depending on the level of behavior

Prior written notice (PWN): a document that explains school district decisions about a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Procedural Safeguards: IDEA requires schools to provide the parents/guardians of a student who is eligible for or referred for special education with a notice containing a full explanation of the rights available to them

Response to Intervention (RTI): a system for helping students with potential learning problems early and an acceptable way to identify students with learning disabilities

State educational agency (SEA): *see also Office of Superintendent of Special Education (OSPI)*; the state board of education or other agency primarily responsible for the State supervision of public elementary schools and secondary schools

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI): the "special" in special education; individually tailored curriculum, services, and delivery that meets the unique needs of the child with a disability, provided at no expense to the family through the lead educational agency (LEA)

Special Needs Program (SNP): *see also Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)*; Department of Homeland Security (DHS) program for dependents of active-duty service members (ADSMs) of U.S. Coast Guard with special medical or educational needs

Supplemental Security Income (SSI): a monthly financial payment made to persons meeting specific eligibility requirements defined by the Social Security Administration (SSA)

Team: *see also Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)*; always includes the parents or guardians;

Unauthorized Practice of Law (UPL): the crime of providing legal advice or representation as non-attorneys. Please note that PAVE is not a legal services agency and cannot provide legal advice or representation. Information provided is not intended for legal counsel and should not be used as a substitute for legal advice.

How do I know if my child has a developmental delay?

If you suspect that your child might have a developmental delay, you should talk with your child's pediatrician. They may conduct a [developmental screening](#).

Where can I learn more about tracking milestones?

The [Learn the Signs. Act Early](#) website includes tools for tracking milestones and materials for families to learn more and plan home-based activities to promote skill development.

Where can I find out about early intervention services in another state?

The US Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) provides funding for the [Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center](#), based at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The center builds state and local capacity to improve outcomes for young children with disabilities and their families.

How do I get the information and documentation for my child's IEP translated to my first language?

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) provides [guidance about language-access rights in multiple languages](#).

How do I find a program that is culturally responsive?

Call the program office and schedule a visit during which you can observe and ask questions. Communicate your family and cultural values to gauge how the program may accommodate any differences, challenges, or needs.

What is an IEP?

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a dynamic program written and tailored to the needs of a student with a disability, aged 3-2, in order to help them participate in and make progress in their education. [Read this article to learn more about the IEP.](#)

How do I request an evaluation for an IEP?

Begin by contacting your local school district to find out the correct office and person. Send [a letter requesting an evaluation](#) for an IEP to the local school district. Keep a copy of the letter for your records and refer to the [IEP Referral Timeline](#) to track your child's progress.

What do I do if the school will not evaluate my child for an IEP?

If the school refused to evaluate your child, request that they provide you with [prior written notice](#) of this decision. You may send a [letter requesting an Independent Educational Evaluation \(IEE\)](#) or pursue dispute resolution options under the [procedural safeguards](#).

How can I request more help with my child's educational and medical needs and supports?

Complete a [Get Support request](#) on the PAVE website to connect with a team member for additional support.

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU!



Completing the help request:

All fields marked with an asterisk* are required.

1. Choose your role
2. Fill out your information
3. Check the box that you are not a robot
4. Click submit and we have received your form!



WAPAVE.ORG/GET-HELP/

Essential information is your name, a phone numbers and email address. What if you don't have all of three of those? Please call 1-800-572-7368 and then follow the prompts.



PAVE's policy is to offer support, information, and training to families, professionals, and those interested in various topics. Please note that PAVE is not a legal services agency and cannot provide legal advice or representation. The information is not intended for legal counsel and should not be used as a substitute for legal advice.

Mailing:

P.O. Box 65969
Tacoma, WA 98464

Main Office :

6316 S. 12th St.
Tacoma, WA 98465
(by appt. only)

(253) 565-2266
1-800-5-PARENT
Fax: (253) 566-8052
Email: pave@wapave.org