



Special Education Problem Solving

When you have a special education concern, question, or issue there are a number of options to try. Your concerns can often be resolved informally at a classroom or school level. Avoiding more formal processes can save time and keep you involved in making decisions. Here are some options for solving special education problems:

- 1 Educate yourself on the issue.** Go to [Family Matters](#) on the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) Office of Special Education (OSE) website and look for explanations of various special education topics. Contact the OSE Information Desk at 888-320-8384 or mde-ose@michigan.gov to ask questions. Find other resources to help you understand your options.
- 2 Talk to your school or district.** People at your school or district can help address your issue. Think about approaching the following people for help:
 - General education and special education teachers
 - Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team members
 - School principal
 - District's special education director
 - District's superintendent
 - Intermediate school district (ISD) special education director
- 3 Contact the [Michigan Alliance for Families](#).** Connect with a parent mentor in your area for assistance and to find special education information.
- 4 Contact [Special Education Mediation Services \(SEMS\)](#)** about requesting a free, neutral facilitator or mediator to help guide your meeting discussions.
- 5 Pursue a formal resolution option.** The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) requires that states provide two separate complaint options to resolve special education disputes:
 - State Complaints
 - Due Process Complaints

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Resolution Options in the IDEA

Meeting Facilitation

[Facilitated Special Education Meetings Fact Sheet](#)

An independent, neutral facilitator can guide your meetings as an early dispute resolution option which promotes effective communication during meetings involving complex or potentially challenging special education issues. This option is free and provided by a trained and neutral facilitator. Participants can contact SEMS to schedule a facilitated meeting by phone at 833-543-7178 or email at info@MiKids1st.org.

Mediation

[Mediation Fact Sheet](#)

Mediation is a collaborative process offered through [SEMS](#) to resolve special education concerns.

- Free to families.
- Promotes positive communication and helps families become more informed on the education process.
- Independent and neutral; the mediators are not employed by school districts or the Michigan Department of Education.

State Complaints

[State Complaints and Due Process Complaints Fact Sheet](#)

A state complaint can be filed with the MDE Office of Special Education when a parent feels their child has been denied a free appropriate public education (FAPE). The requirements, timelines, forms, and Frequently Asked Questions related to filing a state complaint can be found in the [MDE Special Education State Complaints: Procedures and Model Forms](#) document.

Due Process Complaints

Due process complaints are resolved during a formal hearing with an impartial administrative law judge who is not an employee of the MDE Office of Special Education, any school district, or any educational program. You can file a due process complaint about issues related to your child's identification, evaluation, or placement, or the provision of a FAPE to your child. You can also request an expedited due process hearing as an appeal to a decision from a manifestation determination review (MDR) after a school suspension. See [MDE Special Education Dispute Resolution Options](#), Appendix B, for a side-by-side comparison of a state complaint and due process complaint.

Resources

- Center for parent Information and Resources (CPIR):
 - » [IDEA's Regulations on the Resolution Process](#)
 - » [The Resolution Process](#)
- [Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education \(MARSE\)](#)
- Michigan Department of Education
 - » [Special Education Dispute Resolution Options](#)
 - » [Special Education Due Process Complaint Procedures](#)
 - » [Due Process Complaints](#)
- [Special Education Mediation Services \(SEMS\)](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#)



[Michigan Alliance for Families:
Dispute Resolution](#)