



Special Education Problem Solving

When you have a special education concern, question, or issue there are several options for addressing the problem. Concerns can often be taken care of 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 Request IEP facilitation or mediation from [Special Education Mediation Services \(SEMS\)](#).** The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) requires states to make mediation available at no cost for special education issues.
- 5 Pursue a formal resolution option.** The 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

IEP Facilitation

IEP facilitation is an early dispute resolution option which promotes effective communication during meetings involving complex or potentially challenging special education issues. This option is cost free and provided by a trained and neutral facilitator. Participants can contact Special Education Mediation Services (SEMS) to schedule a facilitated IEP meeting by phone at 833-543-7178 or email at info@MiKids1st.org.

Mediation

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

- It is free to families.
- It promotes positive communication and helps families become more informed on the education process.
- It is independent and neutral; the mediators are not employed by school districts or the Michigan Department of Education.

State Complaints

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 [Michigan Department of Education \(MDE\) Special Education Dispute Resolution Options](#) 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 Mediation Services \(SEMS\)](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#)

