



Guidance

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team Roles and Responsibilities

**Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education
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This guidance provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team members and participants. “In the context of the IEP, the distinction between a member and a participant hinges on the required obligation versus discretionary involvement in the IEP. This document aims to support compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which requires IEPs to be developed collaboratively by school personnel and families to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities. Meaningful participation by all IEP Team members, especially families, is important to ensure IEPs promote access to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). By deepening understanding of each participant’s role, this document supports equitable, student-centered decision-making and fosters strong partnerships, helping every student thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

IEP Team Meeting Preparation

The IEP Team meeting process begins with identifying all required members on the IEP Team. Collaboration is necessary between participants to schedule the meeting at a mutually agreeable time and place. The IDEA does not specify the number of days required to ensure participation; however, scheduling of the IEP Team meeting needs to occur early enough to ensure all participants have the opportunity to attend. The IDEA requires notice for an IEP Team meeting and outlines specific components, including the purpose, time, and location of the meeting, and who will be in attendance [34 CFR §300.322\(b\)\(1\)](#). Excusal of an IEP Team member is addressed in the final section of this guidance document.

Required IEP Team Members

The IDEA requires that for each child with a disability, an IEP be developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting in accordance with [34 CFR §§ 300.320](#) through [300.324](#). These five subsections of the IDEA define what an IEP is, what an IEP must contain, when an IEP must be in effect, and who the required members of the IEP Team are who are responsible for developing, reviewing, and revising the IEP. IEP Teams are composed of a diverse group of people who have knowledge of the student, the meaning of the evaluation data, and placement options. IEP Team members include:

Parent/Guardian

The parent is a required IEP Team member. Parental input is a critical component of the special education process. Parents provide essential insights regarding their child's strengths, interests, abilities, and areas of concern that may impact educational performance. This includes relevant background information such as medical history, outside evaluations, changes in the home environment, and the development of social skills, as well as other information that will assist the IEP team in being able to better identify the unique needs and strengths of the child. Parental input offers a valuable perspective that must be considered by the IEP Team in accordance with legal requirements.

The public agency must ensure parent participation by exhausting all methods and possibilities, including individual or conference telephone calls, consistent with [34 CFR §300.328](#) (related to alternative means of meeting participation). [34 CFR §300.322\(c\)](#) requires other methods to ensure parent participation if neither parent can attend the IEP Team meeting.

As defined by the IDEA, a parent is a biological parent, adoptive parent, foster parent, guardian, or an individual acting in the place of a biological parent with whom the student lives, or an appointed surrogate parent.

Student

The student becomes a required IEP Team member beginning no later than the IEP that will be in effect when the student turns 16, which is considered transition age. Prior to age 16, student participation in the IEP process is both encouraged and essential. When appropriate, students with disabilities should be invited to attend and actively engage in

their IEP Team meetings to share their strengths, preferences, interests, and areas where additional support may be needed. To create a more meaningful transition plan, the district may opt to begin the transition planning process at 14 years of age, or younger if appropriate to the student, and include the student.

When the student reaches transition age, or earlier if the IEP Team determines it is appropriate, the IEP Team is responsible for developing a transition plan, identifying postsecondary goals, and determining the transition services necessary to support the student in achieving those goals. Upon reaching the age of majority (18 years old in Michigan), a student assumes full responsibility for their educational decision-making rights, unless a guardian has been appointed by court proceedings to make educational decisions or the student has granted another person a power of attorney to make educational decisions.

Consistent with [34 CFR §300.520](#) While parents must continue to be provided notice of IEP Team meetings after a student turns 18 and reaches the age of majority, parents are no longer required members of the IEP Team, as all rights previously accorded to parents transfer to the student.

General Education Teacher

The general education teacher is a required member of the IEP Team member and plays a critical role in supporting the provision of a FAPE in the LRE. The absence of a general education teacher could be perceived as predetermination of a student placement and a violation of the least restrictive environment requirements under the IDEA.

The general education teacher is the content expert who brings valuable knowledge of current and future grade-level academic, behavioral, and social expectations aligned with the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) and state standards. The general education teacher's perspective is essential in understanding the expectations for all students at the grade level. The general education teacher contributes to the IEP process by reporting on the student's ability to access and make progress in the general education curriculum. They also help identify the skills, supports, accommodations, and/or modifications necessary for the student to meaningfully participate and succeed in the general education setting. Modifications to the general education curriculum should be appropriate for the grade the student is enrolled in, rather than the student's ability level.

Special Education Provider/Teacher

The special education teacher or provider is a required member of the IEP Team and instrumental in the IEP process. This professional uses their expertise to assess the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, identify skill gaps, and develop targeted objectives to align with the student's unique needs. By collaborating with the IEP Team and implementing evidence-based strategies, the special education teacher ensures the instruction is both individualized and aligned with grade-level expectations. This structured approach supports consistent growth and helps students stay on track toward achieving their annual goals.

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) must be designed and supervised by a qualified special education teacher or professional in accordance with IDEA and *Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE)*. While special education personnel lead the design and oversight of SDI, general education teachers may deliver SDI when it is planned collaboratively and monitored by the IEP Team. This includes implementing instructional adaptations, supplementary aids, and services as outlined in the student's IEP to ensure access to and progress in the general education curriculum.

The role of the special education teacher or provider is critical in identifying and implementing appropriate interventions, accommodations, modifications, programs, and services necessary to support the student's access to, and progress in, the general education curriculum as well as achievement of their annual IEP goals. In addition to contributing to the development of the IEP, the special education teacher or provider typically facilitates the IEP Team meeting, authors the IEP document, and provides data and insights regarding the student's progress toward previously established goals.

Evaluation Team Representative

An individual who can interpret evaluation data and explain instructional implications of evaluation results is a required IEP Team member. The evaluation team representative can be someone who was part of the multidisciplinary evaluation team (MET) that completed the evaluation, or another required member of the IEP team who can use data and evaluation results to describe the impact the student's disability has on their ability to make progress in the general curriculum. Anytime an IEP Team member serves in two roles, the person's name should be listed for both roles to accurately reflect their responsibilities and contributions. The evaluation team representative plays a key role in ensuring decisions made during the IEP Team meeting are informed by a comprehensive

understanding of the student’s strengths and needs as identified through formal assessments.

District Representative

A school district representative is a required member of the IEP Team. The school district representative role can only be filled by someone who is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specially designed instruction, knowledgeable of the general education curriculum and placement options, and knowledgeable of the availability of district resources. The District Representative is responsible for ensuring all required *IEP Team members* attend the IEP Team meeting. Generally, the district representative is a principal, special education director or supervisor, or other administrator.

A district representative will attend all IEP Team meetings, including IEP Team meetings for a student whose placement is in another district or center-based program.

- For IEP Team meetings where placement in another district or intermediate school district (ISD) center-based program is being considered, the resident district representative is the person knowledgeable of the placement options available within the district and, therefore, is a required IEP Team member. Similarly, a representative of the other district or ISD center-based program should attend the IEP Team meeting, as they are knowledgeable of the alternative placements’ capacity, services, and enrollment authority.
- For IEP Team meetings where a student is already placed in another district or ISD center-based program, the resident district representative is required to attend the IEP Team meeting to ensure placement options in the resident district can be appropriately considered.

The resident district cannot designate another entity or public agency to function as the district representative. It is the resident district’s obligation to have available a full continuum of alternative placements that meet the needs of each student with a disability, as part of ensuring a FAPE in the LRE.

Participating Transition Agency Representative

A transition agency representative is a required member of an IEP Team meeting when both of the the following occur:

- A district has identified that a participating agency is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services, and
- Prior to the IEP Team meeting, the district obtained written consent to invite the transition agency representative to the IEP Team meeting from the parent or student who is of the age of majority.

Once consent has been received, the district must invite the transition agency representative to the IEP Team meeting. Once the invitation has been sent, the district has met its obligation and is not obligated to ensure the representative from the public agency attends. Just like parent participation, all attempts to get the transition agency representative to attend should be documented.

The requirement to consider the need to invite a representative from a transition agency occurs for any IEP where postsecondary goals and transition services will be discussed, and no later than the IEP that will be in effect when the student turns 16 years old. Involving a transition agency representative in IEP development as early as possible builds awareness of available resources for the family and ensures the student has opportunities for meaningful transition planning that will allow the student to make progress toward their postsecondary goals in employment, community participation, and independent living.

Waiting to include a transition agency in a student's transition planning until a student turns 16 or the student becomes a junior in high school limits the student's opportunities for meaningful transition planning and preparation for living independently after high school.

Members Who May be Identified by the IEP Team

Speech and Language Pathologist

A speech-language pathologist (SLP) may be a required IEP Team member if the student is eligible for special education as a student with a speech and language impairment or if the student has one or more speech goals and receives speech and language services. An SLP is a licensed professional who delivers specialized services to support communication and related skills in both individual and group settings. An SLP provides intervention in areas such as receptive and expressive language and may also address oral motor development and other communication-related needs.

Occupational Therapist

An occupational therapist (OT) may be a required IEP Team member if the student has one or more occupational therapy goals and receives OT services. An OT is a licensed professional who provides specialized services to support a student's access to and success within the learning environment. Services may include developing handwriting and fine motor skills, assisting with workspace organization, collaborating with educators to modify classroom environments and adapt instructional materials, supporting activities of daily living such as feeding and dressing, and addressing sensory regulation needs.

Physical Therapist

A physical therapist (PT) may be a required IEP Team member if the student has one or more physical therapy goals and receives PT services. A PT is a licensed professional who supports the improvement of mobility and motor development. Their responsibilities include designing and implementing physical therapy interventions, providing guidance to caregivers on physical management strategies, and selecting, modifying, or customizing adaptive equipment and assistive technology.

School Social Worker

A school social worker (SSW) may be a required IEP Team member if the student has one or more SSW goals and receives SSW services. An SSW is a licensed professional who also holds an additional approval through the Department of Education to provide support and services to students with disabilities. The SSW collaborates with teachers, parents, and administrators to support student success. A school social worker provides counseling and direct services to students, facilitating positive behavior interventions and supports, coordinating academic and classroom-based supports, and addressing students' social-emotional needs.

School Psychologist

A school psychologist is generally a required IEP Team member for initial and reevaluation IEPs where academic and/or psychological testing is involved. A certified school psychologist is a professional who has specialized knowledge about certain disabilities and conducts psychological and academic assessments. A school psychologist may provide direct support and interventions and may also consult with teachers, families, and other school staff.

Additional Considerations

Participation of Other Individuals

The IEP Team may also elect to consult with additional individuals during IEP development. These individuals include, but are not limited to: assistive technology specialist, blind/visually impaired consultant, Deaf/hard of hearing consultant, mobility consultant, paraprofessionals, and/or the school nurse. Additionally, under [34 CFR §300.321\(a\)\(6\)](#) parent or the district can invite other individuals:

- A parent has the right to invite other family members, outside providers, or other individuals who have knowledge of the child or the child's disability. Although recommended, the parent is not required to inform the district of additional participants.
- The district may invite additional individuals with knowledge of the student, the disability, or the meaning of the evaluation data, or other potential placement options. The district is required to inform the parent of all individuals who have been invited to attend the IEP Team meeting, which is generally done by issuing a notice of invitation to attend an IEP Team meeting.
- For students of transition age, the public agency must obtain informed consent from the student, or the parent if the student has not reached the age of majority, before inviting any outside agency likely to provide or pay for transition services to an IEP meeting, in order to protect student and family privacy, support student self-determination, and ensure compliance with IDEA procedural safeguards.

Attendance and Excusals of an IEP Team Member

Every effort must be made to ensure all required IEP Team members are invited and attend the IEP Team meeting. However, a situation may arise in which a member of an IEP Team is unable to attend the IEP Team meeting at the mutually agreed-upon date and time. The course of action to be taken when an IEP Team member is unavailable is dependent on whether the member's area of support or services is being modified or discussed.

Attendance

An IEP Team member is not required to attend an IEP Team meeting for a portion of the meeting or for the whole meeting only when:

- The member's area of support is not being modified or discussed, and
- When the parent and the district agree in writing.

Excusal

An IEP Team member must be excused from attending either a portion of the IEP Team meeting or for the whole meeting, when:

- The meeting involves a modification to or discussion of the member's area of support or services, and
- The parent and the local educational agency consent to the excusal; and
- The member submits, in writing, to the parent and the IEP Team, input into the development of the IEP prior to the meeting.

An IEP Team member cannot be excused without agreement or written consent from the parent. The parent has the right to deny the excusal, which would require the IEP Team meeting to be rescheduled.

Resource Documents

- [Appointment of Surrogate Parents for Special Education and Early Intervention Services.](#)
- [Family Matters Fact Sheet.](#)
- [Progress Center: IEP Tip Sheet for Parents.](#)
- [Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education \(MDE OSE\): Individualized Education Program \(IEP\) Development Process.](#)