

# Wayne County Parent Advisory Committee Parent Resources & Handbook



SERVICE  
LEADERSHIP  
COLLABORATION  
EXCELLENCE

Wayne County Regional Educational Services  
33500 Van Born Road  
Wayne, MI 48184  
[Wayne RESA](#)



Wayne County Parent Advisory Committee  
[Parent Advisory Committee - Wayne RESA](#)

# Wayne County Parent Advisory Committee

## Parent Resources & Handbook

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# Introduction

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*A note about this manual:* There are many valuable special education resources available online. This document uses many of these resources and provides links to the sites from which quotes and information have been taken. There are also links to sites with a star (★) that contain more information and resources about a topic. We are grateful for these resources and are pleased to share them with our readers.

Some of the most widely cited resources in this manual include:

- ★ The Center for Parent Information and Resources at <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/>
  - ★ The Michigan Department of Education Family Matters page at [https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598\\_88187\\_81739---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598_88187_81739---,00.html) **(this site contains links to info sheets in Arabic, English, and Spanish)**
  - ★ The Wayne RESA SEEIS Special Education page at <https://www.resa.net/teaching-learning/special-education>
  - ★ The Early On and Project Find Michigan site at <https://1800earlyon.org/>
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## Welcome and Purpose

*Dear Parents and Guardians:*

*Thank you for learning about our Wayne County's Parent Advisory Committee! We are here to provide support to parents and guardians of students who receive special education services. This handbook has been created as a resource to help you navigate the special education process and understand the various programs and services available to students in Wayne County. Our main goal is to facilitate positive relationships between parents, teachers, staff and the larger school communities to better address the unique needs of your child(ren).*

*In this handbook, you will find information on the special education process, the continuum of programs and services and the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians. We encourage you to engage with the various resources and supports available to you and your child. Building connections with other families and professionals in the field can provide valuable insights and support throughout your child's educational journey.*

*We hope that this handbook serves as a valuable tool and reference guide as you navigate the special education system.*

*We encourage you to consider participating in our monthly parent advisory committee meetings. For information about the WCPAC, please visit <https://www.resa.net/teaching-learning/special-education/parent-advisory-committee>. Please feel free to reach out to us at any time. We are here to support you!*

*For additional information and resources, be sure to visit Wayne RESA's website at [www.resa.net](http://www.resa.net). Please feel free to contact Wayne RESA Special Education and Early Intervention Services at (734) 334-1694 with any questions you may have.*

*Sincerely,*

*Jennifer Taiariol, Ph.D.*

*Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Early Intervention Services*

*Angela Khater*

*Chairperson of Wayne County Parent Advisory Committee*

# Get to know Wayne RESA and the Wayne County Parent Advisory Committee (WCPAC)

## Wayne RESA (WRESA)

Wayne RESA is a Regional Educational Service Agency that supports 32 local districts and 100 Public School Academies (PSAs) in 43 communities in the metro Detroit area. About 262,000 students receive school-based services in Wayne County districts and PSAs, and about 32,000 students receive special education services, making WRESA the largest such agency in Michigan.

Wayne RESA provides support and services by partnering directly with local school districts, the Michigan Department of Education, and other stakeholders to improve student learning. Wayne RESA increases cost savings for schools, expands educational opportunities, provides professional learning for teachers, and much more.

★ Find out more at [www.resa.net/about](http://www.resa.net/about).

## The SEEIS Department

Wayne RESA's Special Education and Early Intervention Services (SEEIS) Department provides support in the development, implementation, and evaluation of mandated special education programs and services.

★ Find out more at <https://www.resa.net/teaching-learning/special-education>.

## The Wayne County Parent Advisory Committee (WCPAC)

### Mission Statement

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*"Our Wayne County Parent Advisory Committee embraces all children with disabilities by dedicating ourselves to learning, so that we may teach parents and caregivers about special education law and best practices."*

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## Legal Foundation and Membership

The Wayne County Parent Advisory Committee (WCPAC) is an advisory committee appointed by the Wayne Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) Board of Education and authorized by the Michigan Revised Administrative Rules for Special Education (R. 340.1838). The WCPAC functions on a continuous, active basis to assist Wayne RESA, local districts and public school academies in the delivery of special education programs and services to all students with disabilities. The parent advisory committee and its officers consist of parents of

students with disabilities. Each constituent local school district board of education and each public school academy board of directors may nominate at least 1 parent (R. 340.1838).

## Purpose

### Parent Resources and Supports

WCPAC strives for membership to represent students in all areas and levels of disability to better meet the needs of our families. As WCPAC members, we are a resource for other parents of children with disabilities. Our purpose is to provide a network of support for parents, including access to relevant information on education, regulation, laws, and training.

As a part of our charge, we will:

- Stay knowledgeable about changes and topics in special education and give input on special education issues.
- Serve as a source of information for parents and families.
- Invite guest speakers and share other resources from statewide agencies, organizations, and programs to help educate and inform parents.
- Recognize members of the community, school support staff, medical professionals, and others who improve the lives of children with disabilities

Need assistance? Have a question, or wish to express a concern regarding your child's participation in special education? Please contact Wayne RESA Special Education and Early Intervention Services at (734) 334-1432. As needed, the consultants can put you in touch with your local WCPAC Rep.

To find the name of the person(s) representing your school district, visit <https://www.resa.net/teaching-learning/special-education/parent-advisory-committee> and click on PAC Membership in the Current PAC News section.

Many questions regarding special education programs and services can also be answered by visiting the Wayne RESA website at <https://www.resa.net/teaching-learning/special-education>.

### Advisory Role to WRESA

As WCPAC members, we also advise RESA about topics related to special education programs and services, as described in the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE). We take an active role in reviewing and providing suggestions regarding the Wayne County RESA Special Education Plan, a document that describes the delivery of special education services within the county by local school districts and public school academies, which can be found at <https://resources.finalseite.net/images/v1568641889/resanet/bo3lbk3qtfzoxznfis/WRESAPlanfortheDeliveringofSpecialEducationProgramsandServices.pdf>.

## Meetings

Meetings are open to the public and are held on the second Thursday of every month, September through June. Meetings are currently being held virtually via Zoom, but when meeting in person the meetings are held in the Arthurs Auditorium at Wayne RESA located at 33500 Van Born Road, Wayne, MI 48184. Meetings begin at 6:30 PM. For the most up to date

information please see WCPAC's website at <https://www.resa.net/teaching-learning/special-education/parent-advisory-committee>.

## How Wayne County RESA and the WCPAC work together

WRESA's SEEIS Department supports the membership of the committee by making every attempt to assure that all types of disabilities and all identifiable organizations of parents of students with disabilities within our region are represented on the parent advisory committee.

WRESA supports the procedures and processes of the WCPAC by providing SEEIS consult support to the committee, including meeting logistics and planning, as well as support for required WRESA Board of Education actions (such as committee appointments). RESA's role also consists of recommending operational procedures for parent advisory committee review and securing or allocating fiscal and staff resources to the parent advisory committee (MARSE R.340.1838).

## More Information

- ★ Find out more, including By-Laws, Agendas, and Minutes at <https://www.resa.net/teaching-learning/special-education/parent-advisory-committee>.

## Support for Infants and Toddlers

### *Early On*©

*Early On* is Michigan's system for helping infants and toddlers, birth to age 3 and their families who have developmental delays or are at risk for delays due to certain health conditions. It's designed to help families find the social, health, and educational services that will promote the development of their infants and toddlers with special needs.

*Early On* emphasizes early identification and early referral to enhance the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities, to minimize their potential for delay, and to recognize the significant brain development that occurs during a child's first three years of life.

(from <https://1800earlyon.org/about.php?ID=120>)

## Making a Referral to *Early On*©

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**If you think your infant or toddler may have a developmental delay, or a pre-existing medical condition you may make a referral by doing one of the following:**

- Anywhere in Michigan
  - Contact *Early On* at 1-800-Early-On (1-800-327-5966)
  - Email [eoreferral@edzone.net](mailto:eoreferral@edzone.net)
  - Complete the *Early On* online referral form at [https://1800earlyon.org/online\\_referral.php](https://1800earlyon.org/online_referral.php)
- Wayne County Children
  - Call the Wayne RESA Referral Hotline at (734) 334-1393

- Email [echild@resa.net](mailto:echild@resa.net),
  - Complete the WRESA Child and Student Referral form at <https://sites.resa.net/ec-referral/>
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★ Find out more at <https://1800earlyon.org/index.php>

## Support for Students

### General Education

#### Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

In this tiered, data-informed framework, educators work to ensure that the majority of students respond to core instruction. Students who need additional support for enrichment or remediation are identified by data and provided that support with the right focus and intensity. MTSS helps educators to be thoughtful about using resources appropriately and impactfully, and use data to continually monitor and improve the effectiveness of their actions.

(from <https://www.illuminateed.com/blog/2020/01/what-is-mtss-education/>)

★ Find out more at [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MTSS\\_FactSheet\\_673400\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MTSS_FactSheet_673400_7.pdf) and <https://www.resa.net/teaching-learning/special-education/curriculum-instruction>

#### Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBIS) is a proactive approach based on a three-tiered model of prevention and intervention aimed at creating safe and effective schools with a primary purpose of supporting students with disabilities within the least restrictive environment. Emphasis is placed on teaching and reinforcing important social skills and data-based problem-solving to address existing behavior concerns. SWPBIS is being implemented in thousands of schools across the country and has been demonstrated to reduce discipline problems and increase time for instruction.

(from <https://www.resa.net/teaching-learning/pbis>)

★ Find out more at [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/PBIS\\_Home\\_FactSheet\\_658198\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/PBIS_Home_FactSheet_658198_7.pdf)

#### Response to Intervention (RTI)

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all children in the general education classroom. Struggling learners are provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning. These services may be provided by a variety of personnel, including general education teachers, special educators, and specialists. Progress is closely monitored to assess both the learning rate and level of performance of individual students. Educational decisions about the intensity and duration of interventions are based on individual student response to instruction.

(from <http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/what/whatistrti>)

★ Find out more at <https://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/rti/>

## Section 504

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. This law applies to public elementary and secondary schools, among other entities. To be protected under Section 504, a student must be determined to have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or have a record of such an impairment; or be regarded as having such an impairment.

Section 504 requires that school districts provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to qualified students in their jurisdictions who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability.

(from <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/section504/>)

When a student meets the requirements under Section 504 and is also eligible for special education programs and services, the student's needs will be supported through an IEP [Individualized Education Program]. Since the IEP will include accommodations based on the student's needs, a separate 504 plan is not needed.

(from [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/504Plans\\_721430\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/504Plans_721430_7.pdf) )

★ Find out more at [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/504Plans\\_721430\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/504Plans_721430_7.pdf)

## Special Education

Under IDEA, a child with a disability means a child evaluated in accordance with IDEA §§ 300.304 through 300.311 as having an intellectual disability, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this part as “emotional disturbance”), an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, an other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services.

(from p. 28

[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MARSE\\_Supplemented\\_with\\_IDEA\\_Regs\\_3\\_79598\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MARSE_Supplemented_with_IDEA_Regs_3_79598_7.pdf))

In Michigan, programs and services are available to eligible students from birth through high school graduation or age 26, as appropriate.

(from p. 96

[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MARSE\\_Supplemented\\_with\\_IDEA\\_Regs\\_3\\_79598\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MARSE_Supplemented_with_IDEA_Regs_3_79598_7.pdf))

Special education is instruction that is specially designed to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. Special education for any student can consist of:

- an individualized curriculum that is different from that of same-age, nondisabled peers (for example, teaching a blind student to read and write using Braille);

- the same (general) curriculum as that for nondisabled peers, with adaptations or modifications made for the student (for example, teaching 3rd grade math but including the use of counting tools and assistive technology for the student); and
- a combination of these elements.

It is also important to remember that the education, services, and supports outlined in a child's IEP do not necessarily cover that child's entire education. The IEP only addresses those educational needs resulting from the child's disability.

(from <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/iep-specialeducation/>)

## Important Special Education Laws

### Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal civil rights law that ensures eligible children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Each state must follow the IDEA, and may also create additional laws and rules.

(from [https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598\\_88184---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598_88184---,00.html))

Part C of IDEA deals with early intervention services (birth through 36 months of age), while Part B applies to services for school-aged children (3 through 21 years of age).

The IDEA outlines two guiding principles for special education:

- **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** Students with a disability are entitled to a FAPE. Schools must provide a FAPE through programs and services. The FAPE must meet the student's unique needs and provide an educational benefit.  
(from [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FAPE\\_FactSheet\\_600260\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FAPE_FactSheet_600260_7.pdf))
- **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** Educational placement is the setting where your child receives his or her education and services. Schools must place students in the LRE. That means students must be placed in the general education setting to the greatest extent possible to receive supports and services as determined by the individualized education program team.  
(from [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/LRE\\_FactSheet\\_600258\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/LRE_FactSheet_600258_7.pdf))

★ Find out more at <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>

### Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE)

The MARSE outlines specific requirements regarding how special education is to be implemented in Michigan. In Michigan, special education programs and services are available to eligible students from birth through high school graduation or age 26, as appropriate.

★ Find out more at [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MARSE\\_Supplemented\\_with\\_IDEA\\_Regs\\_379598\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MARSE_Supplemented_with_IDEA_Regs_379598_7.pdf)

## Child Find

Child Find is part of the federal special education law known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), that requires schools identify, locate, and evaluate all children, aged birth through 21 years, who have disabilities and may be entitled to special education and related services. Michigan is the only state which has a state law mandating (or requiring) special education for students with disabilities birth to 26 years of age. This law is known as the Michigan Mandatory Special Education Act (MMSE) and is part of the Revised School Code.

(from [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/ChildFind\\_FactSheet\\_728496\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/ChildFind_FactSheet_728496_7.pdf))

## Making a Referral

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**To make a referral for a child ages 0-36 months, you may make a referral by doing any of the following:**

- Anywhere in Michigan
  - Contact *Early On* at 1-800-Early-On (1-800-327-5966)
  - Email [eoreferral@edzone.net](mailto:eoreferral@edzone.net)
  - Complete the *Early On* online referral form at [https://1800earlyon.org/online\\_referral.php](https://1800earlyon.org/online_referral.php)
- Wayne County Children
  - Call the Wayne RESA Referral Hotline at (734) 334-1393
  - Email [echild@resa.net](mailto:echild@resa.net),
  - Complete the WRESA Child and Student Referral form at <https://sites.resa.net/ec-referral/>

**If you suspect a student, age 3 to 25 years, in Wayne County to have a disability, you may make a referral by doing any of the following:**

- Call the Wayne RESA Referral Hotline at (734) 334-1393
  - Email [echild@resa.net](mailto:echild@resa.net),
  - Complete the WRESA Child and Student Referral form at <https://sites.resa.net/ec-referral/>
- 

## The Special Education Process and the IEP (Individualized Education Program)

### 10 Basic Steps in Special Education

- **Step 1: The student is identified as possibly needing special education and related services.** A student can be identified by making a Child Find referral, like a referral made by a doctor's office, or by a school building team identifying a possible need, or by a parent making a written request to the child's school.
- **Step 2: The student is evaluated.** Evaluation helps determine whether a child has a disability and needs special education and related services. Parent consent is needed

before the child is evaluated. In Michigan, evaluations need to be completed within 30 school days after the parent gives consent.

- **Step 3: The student's eligibility is determined.** A group of qualified professionals and the parents look at the child's evaluation results. Together, they decide if the child is a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEA and MARSE.
- **Step 4: The student is found eligible for services.** If the student is found to be a "child with a disability" and is in need of special education and/or related services, they are eligible. A team of school professionals and the parents must then meet to write an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the child.
- **Step 5: The Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting is scheduled.** Parents must be contacted and given the opportunity to participate in the meeting at a mutually agreeable time and place, which may be in person, virtually, or via phone call.
- **Step 6: The IEP meeting is held and the IEP is written.** The IEP team gathers to talk about the child's needs and write the student's IEP. Before the school system may provide special education and related services to the child for the first time, the parents must give consent for the services.
- **Step 7: After the IEP is written, services are provided.** The school makes sure that the child's IEP is carried out as it was written. Parents are given a copy and each of the child's teachers and service providers has access to the IEP and knows his or her specific responsibilities for carrying out the IEP.
- **Step 8: Progress is measured and reported to parents.** Parents are regularly informed of their child's progress toward annual goals as stated in the IEP and whether that progress is enough for the child to achieve the goals by the end of the year.
- **Step 9: The IEP is reviewed.** The child's IEP is reviewed by the IEP team at least once a year, or more often if the parents or school ask for a review. If necessary, the IEP is revised. Parents, as team members, must be invited to participate in these meetings.
- **Step 10: The child is reevaluated.** At least every three years the child must be reevaluated. Its purpose is to find out if the child continues to be a child with a disability, as defined by IDEA and MARSE, and what the child's educational needs are. However, the child must be reevaluated more often if conditions warrant or if the child's parent or teacher asks for a new evaluation.

(adapted from <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/steps/>)

- ★ Find out more information at

[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/SE\\_Process\\_FactSheet\\_599182\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/SE_Process_FactSheet_599182_7.pdf)

## The IEP

### Purpose

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document created for each student in a public school who receives special education programs and services. There are three basic reasons for the IEP: (1) to identify the student's needs, (2) to set goals that are important and possible for the student, and (3) to put services in writing that a school district will provide for a student.

(from [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/IEP\\_FactSheet\\_618030\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/IEP_FactSheet_618030_7.pdf))

The IEP is developed by a team of individuals that includes key school staff and the child's parents. The team meets, reviews the assessment information available about the child, and

designs an educational program to address the child's educational needs that result from his or her disability.

(from <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/iep-overview/>)

## Parts of the IEP

Each child's IEP must contain specific information, as listed within IDEA, our nation's special education law. This includes (but is not limited to):

- the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, describing how the child is currently doing in school and how the child's disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general curriculum
- annual goals for the child, meaning what parents and the school team think he or she can reasonably accomplish in a year. MARSE also requires measurable short-term objectives for each annual goal
- the special education and related services to be provided to the child, including supplementary aids and services (such as a communication device) and changes to the program or supports for school personnel
- how much of the school day the child will be educated separately from nondisabled children or not participate in extracurricular or other nonacademic activities such as lunch or clubs
- how (and if) the child is to participate in state and district-wide assessments, including what modifications to tests the child needs
- when services and modifications will begin, how often they will be provided, where they will be provided, and how long they will last
- how school personnel will measure the child's progress toward the annual goals.

(adapted from <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/iep-overview/>)

★ Find out more at

[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/IEP\\_FactSheet\\_618030\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/IEP_FactSheet_618030_7.pdf)

## The IEP Team

To write an effective IEP for a child with a disability, parents, teachers, other school staff - and often the child - come together at a meeting to look closely at the child's unique needs.

These individuals combine their knowledge, experience, and commitment to design an educational program that must help the child to be involved in, and progress in, the general education curriculum - that is, the same curriculum as for children without disabilities.

IDEA (at §300.321) describes the IEP team as including the following members:

- the parents of the child;
- not less than one regular education teacher of the child (if the child is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment);
- not less than one special education teacher of the child, or where appropriate, not less than one special education provider of the child;
- a representative of the public agency who is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities; is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum; and is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the public agency;
- an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results;

- other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel as appropriate (invited at the discretion of the parent or the agency); and
- the child with a disability (when appropriate).  
(from <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/iep-team/>)

★ Find out more at  
[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/EdRoles\\_FactSheet\\_627960\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/EdRoles_FactSheet_627960_7.pdf)

## The Role of the Parent

Typically, parents know their child very well—not just the child’s strengths and weaknesses, but all the little qualities that make their child unique. Parents’ knowledge can keep the team focused on the “big picture” of the child; they can help the team to create an IEP that will work appropriately for the child. Parents can describe what goals are most important to them and to their child, share their concerns and suggestions for enhancing their child’s education, and give insights into their son or daughter’s interests, likes and dislikes, and learning styles. By being an active IEP team member, parents can also infuse the IEP planning process with thought about long-term needs for the child’s successful adult life. Being actively involved in developing their child’s IEP is a parent’s right and a parent’s choice.

(from <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/iep-parents/>)

## Preparing for an IEP meeting

- **Pull and review your records.** Pull out your copies of official documents, including your child’s current IEP, recent progress reports, and report cards. Collect samples of your child’s homework, tests, and notes from the teacher. Gather your own notes and observations, too. (An IEP binder is a convenient way to keep all this stuff in one place.) Once you have everything together, look for topics that need attention. Where is your child making progress or still struggling? What supports and services are (or are not) helpful? Are there new challenges to report?
- **Invite guests and advocates.** If you think you’ll need support at the meeting, invite someone to join you. This could be a friend or a family member, a professional who works with your child, or an advocate. Explain how you think they can help. If need be, ask to meet with them before the meeting to go over your concerns, get their take, and plan your approach. If your child is going to the IEP meeting, make sure to prepare your child, too.
- **Prepare your questions and recommendations.** After reviewing your records and talking with your child, family, or invited guests, you may have a lot on your mind. It can help to make a simple list of the points you want to make during the meeting. Boil it down to the basics: your concerns, questions, and suggestions. You can refer to this list during the meeting.
- **Tell the school about your guests and requests.** Let the IEP team leader know about any guests you plan to bring to the meeting. Give their names and explain their relationship to you and your child. If you or any of your guests need special arrangements, like videoconferencing or a translator, let the team leader know in advance.
- **Relax and reflect on your child.** Once you have everything ready for the meeting, try to relax and focus on your child’s strengths, interests, and challenges. Listen to what your

child says about school and learning. Remember that you know and understand your child better than anyone else on the IEP team does. That mindset will help you approach the IEP meeting with strength and confidence.

(from <https://www.understood.org/articles/en/5-important-things-to-do-before-an-iep-meeting>)

★ Find out more at

[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Advocacy\\_FactSheet\\_656386\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Advocacy_FactSheet_656386_7.pdf)

## Know Your Rights

### Parental Rights

The federal regulations for IDEA 2004 include a section (Subpart E) called Procedural Safeguards. These safeguards are designed to protect the rights of parents and their child with a disability and, at the same time, give families and school systems several mechanisms by which to resolve their disputes. These rights include:

- The right of parents to receive a complete explanation of all the procedural safeguards available under IDEA and the procedures in the state for presenting complaints
- Confidentiality and the right of parents to inspect and review the educational records of their child
- The right of parents to participate in meetings related to the identification, evaluation, and placement of their child, and the provision of FAPE (a free appropriate public education) to their child
- The right of parents to obtain an independent educational evaluation (IEE) of their child
- The right of parents to receive “prior written notice” on matters relating to the identification, evaluation, or placement of their child, and the provision of FAPE to their child
- The right of parents to give or deny their consent before the school may take certain action with respect to their child
- The right of parents to disagree with decisions made by the school system on those issues
- The right of parents and schools to use IDEA’s mechanisms for resolving disputes, including the right to appeal determinations

(from <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/parental-rights/>)

### Procedural Safeguards

The purpose of the procedural safeguards notice is simple: to inform parents completely about the procedural safeguards available under IDEA. These represent their rights as parents and the protections they have - and their child as well - under the law and its implementing regulations.

IDEA states that schools must send the procedural safeguards notice to the parents only one time a school year, except that schools must also give a copy to parents:

- in their child’s initial referral for evaluation under IDEA, or when the parents ask for such an evaluation of their child;

- the first time in the school year that a State complaint is filed and when the first due process complaint is received in a school year;
- in accordance with the discipline procedures en §300.530(h); and
- when a parent requests a copy of the procedural safeguards notice.  
(from <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/notice-safeguards/>)

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**The Michigan Department of Education provides the Procedural Safeguards Notice in 39 languages at**

[https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598\\_88186\\_88205---.00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598_88186_88205---.00.html)

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- ★ Find out more at  
[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Safeguards\\_FactSheet\\_599179\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Safeguards_FactSheet_599179_7.pdf)

## Problem-Solving and Dispute Resolution

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*Parents are strongly encouraged to first bring their concerns regarding the need to problem-solve and resolve disputes to the attention of the appropriate school personnel, e.g., the student's case manager, building principal, special education supervisor, and/or the special education director. In most situations, the matters of concern can be resolved with the assistance of these individuals. Additional support may also be obtained by contacting a local WCPAC Representative (call (1-734-334-1432 to be directed to your WCPAC representative) or a Wayne RESA Consultant (1-734-334-1432).*

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### Informal Meeting

An informal meeting allows the parent and public agency to resolve educational issues without intervention from an outside agency. Parents may initiate an informal meeting to be held with the public agency. Informal meetings allow both parties to collaborate more effectively, reach decisions faster, preserve relationships, and avoid costly hearings. The issues discussed during an informal meeting are not limited to special education, nor must issues be limited to requirements under the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE), Michigan law, or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

(from

[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/DisputeResolutionOptions\\_727399\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/DisputeResolutionOptions_727399_7.pdf))

### Facilitation

Facilitated special education meetings can be valuable early in solving disagreements. Facilitators provide direction during special education team meetings. Facilitators encourage open communication, address conflicts, and keep the focus on the student throughout the meeting. When conflict is expected during a meeting, or the meeting is expected to be long and complex, the team should consider inviting a neutral, independent, and trained facilitator to guide the meeting process.

(from [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FacilitatedMeetings\\_FactSheet\\_710103\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FacilitatedMeetings_FactSheet_710103_7.pdf))

Parents can visit the SEMS website at <https://www.mikids1st.org/resolution-services/mediation/> for more information, complete the SEMS online form at <https://www.mikids1st.org/request-services/> to request more information or services, or call 1-833-KIDS-1ST (1-833-543-7178).

- ★ Find out more at [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FacilitatedMeetings\\_FactSheet\\_710103\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/FacilitatedMeetings_FactSheet_710103_7.pdf) and [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/DisputeResolutionOptions\\_727399\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/DisputeResolutionOptions_727399_7.pdf)

## Mediation

Mediation involves parents and schools actively working together to resolve a concern about your child's education. Mediation is part of "dispute resolution," or a problem-solving process, where all parties voluntarily come together to look at options for working out differences about a child's special education needs. Mediation is free of charge and coordinated and facilitated by a neutral (impartial) third party who is qualified and independent of parents and schools.

Special Education Mediation Services (SEMS) offers free mediation services to parents and school districts for collaborative problem solving. SEMS offers and will talk to parents about meeting facilitation, mediation, and other options to resolve special education disagreements. (from [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Mediation\\_FactSheet\\_705146\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Mediation_FactSheet_705146_7.pdf))

Parents can visit the SEMS website at <https://www.mikids1st.org/resolution-services/mediation/> for more information, complete the SEMS online form at <https://www.mikids1st.org/request-services/> to request more information or services, or call 1-833-KIDS-1ST (1-833-543-7178).

- ★ Find out more at [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Mediation\\_FactSheet\\_705146\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Mediation_FactSheet_705146_7.pdf) and [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/DisputeResolutionOptions\\_727399\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/DisputeResolutionOptions_727399_7.pdf)

## State Complaint

There may be instances where parents or other persons are concerned about whether the school is complying with certain special education procedural requirements. Anyone, including organizations, may file a state complaint if they believe a public agency has violated the requirements of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), the *Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education* (MARSE), or the Michigan Revised School Code as it pertains to special education programs and services, or failed to implement an IEP, an administrative law judge (ALJ) decision, an ISD plan, or the state application for federal funds under the IDEA.

A state complaint may be filed on behalf of an individual student, a group of students, or regarding a system-wide concern. In such cases, persons have the right to initiate a written complaint against the school district with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE).

MDE and Wayne RESA are then responsible for completing an investigation of the complaint and providing a final written decision within 60 calendar days of when the complaint is filed. In

the event of noncompliance, the MDE issues the public agency a corrective action and requires proof of compliance.

State Complaint Procedures and Model Forms are available at [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/StateComplaints\\_ProceduresModelForms\\_727396\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/StateComplaints_ProceduresModelForms_727396_7.pdf)

- ★ Find out more at [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/ProblemSolving\\_FactSheet\\_620264\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/ProblemSolving_FactSheet_620264_7.pdf) and [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/DisputeResolutionOptions\\_727399\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/DisputeResolutionOptions_727399_7.pdf)

## Due Process Complaint

A due process complaint is a dispute resolution option available under the IDEA. It is used to resolve a formal complaint regarding the identification, evaluation, educational placement, or provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to a child who needs or is suspected of needing special education and related services.

Due process complaints are resolved during a formal hearing with an impartial administrative law judge who is not an employee of the 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.

*Please note It is highly recommended, but not required, that you seek appropriate legal counsel if considering filing for due process.* School districts also have the right to file for due process against parents, if there is major disagreement. Remember: The burden of proof falls upon the person/entity filing for due process.

Due Process Complaint Procedures and Model Forms are available at [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/DueProcess\\_Complaint\\_Procedures\\_340126\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/DueProcess_Complaint_Procedures_340126_7.pdf)

- ★ Find out more at [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/ProblemSolving\\_FactSheet\\_620264\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/ProblemSolving_FactSheet_620264_7.pdf) and [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/DisputeResolutionOptions\\_727399\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/DisputeResolutionOptions_727399_7.pdf)

## Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)

According to the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), when a parent disagrees with the results of an educational evaluation of their child, which was completed by the school district (called a “public agency” in the law), the parent has the right to an independent educational evaluation (IEE). The IEE is like getting a second opinion. It is completed at no cost to the parent and is conducted by an individual who is not employed by the school district. When the IEE is completed and the results are shared with the school district, the individualized education program (IEP) team must consider the results when providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for the student. However, the IEP team is not required to implement the results or recommendations. The IEE becomes part of the student's permanent school record.

(from [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/IEE\\_FactSheet\\_669436\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/IEE_FactSheet_669436_7.pdf))

Wayne RESA maintains an Independent Educational Evaluation Resource Directory. It is meant to provide a listing of available evaluators in the Greater Wayne County Area. This listing includes persons who responded to an invitation to be included in this document but are not endorsed by Wayne RESA. The Resource Directory is available at <https://resources.finalseite.net/images/v1582824240/resanet/myknoez7n55vztcqucu2/IEEDirectory2020.pdf>

- ★ Find out more at [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/IEE\\_FactSheet\\_669436\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/IEE_FactSheet_669436_7.pdf)

## Resources

- ❖ Parent/Family Resources
  - Arc Michigan
    - <https://arcmi.org>
  - Autism Alliance of Michigan (AAoM)
    - <https://autismallianceofmichigan.org>
  - Detroit Parent Network (DPN)
    - <https://www.detroitparentnetwork.com>
  - Disability Rights Michigan (DRM)
    - <https://www.drmich.org>
  - Early On and Project Find Michigan site
    - <https://1800earlyon.org/>
  - MDE Family Matters
    - [https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598\\_88187\\_81739---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6598_88187_81739---,00.html) (this site contains links to info sheets in Arabic English, and Spanish)
  - MiABLE
    - <https://savewithable.com/mi/home.html>
  - Michigan Alliance for Families (MAF)
    - <https://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/>
  - Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education (MDE OSE)
    - <https://www.michigan.gov/mde/services/special-education/about-ose>
  - Michigan Transition Services Association (MTSA)
    - <http://www.michigantsa.org>
  - RESA List of Resources
    - <https://www.resa.net/teaching-learning/special-education/parents-family-resources>
  - Special Education Mediation Services (SEMS)
    - <https://www.mikids1st.org>
  - The Center for Parent Information and Resources
    - <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/>
  - Wayne RESA SEEIS Special Education page
    - <https://www.resa.net/teaching-learning/special-education>
  - WCPAC page
    - <https://www.resa.net/teaching-learning/special-education/parent-advisory-committee>

- ❖ Important Laws
  - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
    - <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>
  - Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE)
    - [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MARSE\\_Supplemented\\_with\\_IDEA\\_Regs\\_379598\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MARSE_Supplemented_with_IDEA_Regs_379598_7.pdf)

## Acronyms

- ❖ ALJ: Administrative Law Judge
- ❖ FAPE: Free Appropriate Public Education
- ❖ IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- ❖ IEP: Individualized Education Program
- ❖ IEE: Independent Educational Evaluation
- ❖ ISD: Intermediate School District
- ❖ LRE: Least Restrictive Environment
- ❖ MARSE: Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education
- ❖ MDE: Michigan Department of Education
- ❖ MDR: Manifestation Determination Review
- ❖ MMSE: Michigan Mandatory Special Education
- ❖ MTSS: Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
- ❖ PBIS: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
- ❖ PSA: Public School Academy
- ❖ RESA: Regional Educational Service Agency
- ❖ RTI: Response to Intervention
- ❖ SEEIS: Special Education and Early Intervention Services
- ❖ SEMS: Special Education Mediation Services
- ❖ SWPBIS: Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
- ❖ WCPAC: Wayne County Parent Advisory Committee
- ❖ WRESA: Wayne Regional Educational Service Agency

## Glossary

- ❖ MAF: Michigan Alliance for Families website holds a glossary for All Topics A-Z. Please reference the MAF website glossary page
  - [All Topics AZ – Michigan Alliance for Families](#)
- ❖ Key terms in Special Education
  - [Key Terms to Know in Special Education](#)