

First Concerns About Child Development and Learning (Ages 3-21): What Parents Need To Know

① What should I do if I am worried about my child's development or learning?

If you are worried about how your child is learning, talk to their teacher. It can be helpful to write down your concerns. The teacher may suggest ways to help your child in the classroom. You can also ask for an [educational evaluation](#) by writing or talking to the school district.

② What are "interventions"?

Your child's teacher might want to try some strategies to help before doing a formal evaluation. These strategies, called interventions, can provide information about your child's needs and give them support. After starting the interventions, be sure to ask the teacher when you should follow up to discuss how your child is doing. This should happen within a few weeks or a couple of months, depending on the concerns.

③ How do I ask for an evaluation for educational support?

If your child is over three years old, you can request an evaluation either by talking or writing, in a letter or email, to your child's teacher or school administrator. Explain your concerns about how your child is learning. The school must reply to your request within 30 days. Complete any forms the school gives you. You must sign a consent form to start the evaluation process. It can be helpful to keep a file with copies for yourself. If you need help with forms, you can contact a [parent mentor](#) in your area.

④ What happens during the evaluation process?

After you give permission for your child to be evaluated, the school district has 60 days to finish the evaluation. A team will look at your child's strengths and needs in areas like subjects, behavior, and social skills. This includes tests, observations, and interviews. You will also be asked to share your thoughts about your child. Once the evaluation is done, you will meet with the evaluation team.

② How do they decide if my child can get special education services or an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

After the evaluation, the team creates a report called an Evaluation Team Report (ETR). The IEP team, which includes you, will look at the ETR results to see if your child qualifies for special education services. If the team decides your child has a disability that affects learning, and they need special instruction to do well in school, your child will receive an IEP.

② What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

An IEP is a written plan that describes the special education services your child will get. It is a contract between you and the school. The IEP includes your child's strengths, specific services and goals, and how progress will be measured. It is designed to meet your child's unique needs.

② Who is on my child's IEP team?

The IEP team consists of you, a general education teacher, a special education teacher, a school administrator, and sometimes other experts like a speech therapist or psychologist. You will work together to create a plan for your child. You can bring anyone who knows your child and understands their needs to the IEP meeting. You can also ask a [parent mentor](#) to come with you.

② How should I get ready for my first IEP meeting?

Before the meeting, gather any information you have about your child's learning, behavior, and progress. Write down questions, priorities, or concerns you want to discuss. Be ready to talk about your child's strengths, preferences, and needs. Invite anyone who can support you at the meeting. If you need more time to look over the IEP before signing it, you can take it home for 30 days to review and sign.

② What if I disagree or want to change the IEP?

The school should give you a copy of your rights as a parent, explaining what to do if you disagree or have concerns about the IEP. If you do not agree, you do not have to sign the IEP. You can ask for more meetings or request changes to the IEP. If needed, you can also ask for [mediation or due process to resolve disagreements](#). It's important to speak up for what you think is best for your child.

❓ What if my child is not found eligible for special education services?

If your child isn't found eligible, keep working with their teacher. The school must still provide support to your child. You can also ask for an independent education evaluation if the district did not find your child eligible.

❓ Who can I contact if I need help with this process?

Contact a parent with lived experience through one of the initiatives below:

- [Ohio Parent Mentors](#) provide support related to your educational questions.
- DCY's Parent & Youth Ambassadors can help you find and gain access to services and support through the Department of Children & Youth (DCY). To get connected call: (844) 234-KIDS (5437).
- [OCALI's Family Support Specialists](#) support your navigation of early evaluation and services in your community if you have a young child ages 0-5.

For more information on this topic:

[Visit the Ohio Department of Education & Workforce Families of Students with Disabilities Webpage](#)



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