

# Types of Special Education and How to Apply

This handout will tell you about special education and other types of support in the public school system and how to apply.

## What is special education?

**Special education**, also called **special ed**, is a school program that gives extra academic support and help to students with disabilities. The **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** says that each state must provide students with special ed programs and free, appropriate public education.

## How do I request special education for my child?

If your child has trouble learning or has a medical condition that affects their ability to learn, you can ask for a **special education assessment**. It determines if your child is eligible for special ed. To ask for a special education assessment:

- Write a letter to your child's school to ask for a special education assessment. Your **HEAL Educational Specialist** can give you a sample letter.
- After your child's school receives your letter, they must send you a consent form **within 15 days**.
- Sign and return the consent form. Your signed consent form tells the school that it is OK to do a special education assessment on your child.

If you do not receive the consent form within **15 days**, call your child's school to follow up.

After your child's school receives your signed consent form, they have **60 days** to:

- Complete your child's special education assessment.
- Schedule a meeting to talk about the results of the assessment. Ask your HEAL Educational Specialist to attend the meeting with you.

**Ask your HEAL Educational Specialist to attend all special ed, IEP, and 504 meetings with you.**

## What is an IEP?

If your child is eligible for special ed, they will receive an **Individualized Education Plan**, also called an **IEP**.

**An IEP explains:**

- Your child's educational needs.
- How their school will meet those needs.

Your child's IEP is reviewed every year to make sure it still meets their needs. Children from **preschool through 12th grade** can have an IEP.

## What is a 504 plan?

If your child is not eligible for special ed, talk with the school about a **504 plan**. It allows your child to have accommodations, or extra help, in school.

The type of accommodations your child might have with a 504 plan can include:

- Extra time to finish homework and projects.
- Taking tests in a quiet room.
- Listening to a book instead of reading it.

## For more information

If you have questions or want more information, call your **HEAL Educational Specialist** at **(650) 725-2381** and leave a message. They will contact you within **7 to 10 days**. You can also email [HEAL@stanfordchildrens.org](mailto:HEAL@stanfordchildrens.org).