



IEP: What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

Massachusetts laws protect students with disabilities who are eligible for special education. The laws guarantee them an **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** designed to meet their unique needs in school. The IEP identifies the services the student needs to help them make progress in school and be successful while at school. The team will evaluate the student to identify accommodations, modifications or services to meet specific learning needs. A parent must request an evaluation or assessment of their child to find out if they're eligible for an IEP. (Modified from *A Parent's Guide to Special Education*, a joint publication of the Federation of Children with Special Needs and the Massachusetts Department of Education.)

Sample letter to request an evaluation or assessment: Click on 'Sample Letter Requesting Evaluation' at massadvocates.org/covid-emails

IEP Service Advocacy Helpline

This helpline offers help to families who have problems getting educational supports and services that they're legally entitled to. (*Mass Advocates for Children*, 2024)

Phone: (617) 357-8431
Open weekly Monday – Thursday

Website: massadvocates.org/helpline

Sample IEP request letter:



504 Plan: What is it?

A 504 plan helps a student make progress in school without the need for specialized instruction and/or related services. A 504 plan identifies and requires accommodations the student needs to gain equal access to instruction and/or the school facility. A student's 504 plan provides accommodations that allow a student with an impaired major life activity to have the same level of access to the instruction, school activities and school building as students without disabilities. (Modified from *Children's Law Center of Massachusetts* 2024.)

Sample letter: [askresource.org/filesimages/ASK%20Info%20Sheets/ SampleLettertoRequestanEvaluationfor504PlanEligibility.pdf](https://askresource.org/files/images/ASK%20Info%20Sheets/ SampleLettertoRequestanEvaluationfor504PlanEligibility.pdf)

Sample 504 request letter:



Children's Law Center of Massachusetts' Guide to Section 504 Plans

Website: robin-bison-zamj.squarespace.com/504-plans-english

Website:



Children's Law Center of Massachusetts' Quick Reference to Special Education

Learn more about special education laws, key terms and how to solve disagreements.

Website: static1.squarespace.com/static/5eba93aff8ad71474552da2d/t/64679e547f38a133c792413d/1684512340525/Special+Education+ORG+FINAL+2023.03.pdf

Learn more:



Massachusetts Early Intervention

"Massachusetts Early Intervention (EI) is a program for infants and toddlers (birth to 3 years old) who have developmental delays or are at risk of a developmental delay." (Mass.gov, 2024)

How it works: A local EI organization will come to your home to evaluate your child to see if they qualify for free services. The services depend on your child's needs. If your child qualifies, they'll get free EI services through the state until age 3.

Learn more about Early Intervention in Massachusetts, find your local organization and request an evaluation: massfamilyties.org/

If you don't live in Massachusetts, talk with your child's provider about EI services in your state or search for EI services on your state's .gov website.

Learn more:



Head Start

"Head Start is a federal program that offers early education and care programs and services for low-income families." (Mass.gov, 2024.)

Learn more about Head Start and find a program: mass.gov/quides/head-start-early-head-start

Learn more:



Massachusetts Advocates for Children

MA Advocates for Children has a variety of resources, template letters and informational videos available on their website.

Find out more: massadvocates.org/general-resources-copy

Learn more:



Family Resource Centers (FRC)

Families can access health, safety, educational, employment and other services through a local FRC.

Find your local family resource center.

Learn more: frcma.org/

Learn more:



Childcare Resource and Referral Search (CCRR)

Search for a local CCRR agency that hasave information on all licensed and licensed-exempt programs, including child care centers, family child care providers, preschools and out-of-school time programs. (Mass.gov, 2018.)

Website: childcare.mass.gov/eec_ccrrsearch

Website:



Child care vouchers through the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)/SNAP Path to Work

DTA provides child care to parents and caregivers who get SNAP and participate in a SNAP Path to Work program. (Mass.gov, 2024.)

Learn more and download facts sheets here: mass.gov/info-details/get-child-care-and-transportation-help

Learn more:



Massachusetts Family Ties

Use a directory of resources, support groups, after high school resources and educational sheets for caregivers and families of children with disabilities and/or medical complexities.

Website: fcsn.org/family-ties/

Learn more:



Boston Children's Hospital takes no responsibility and has no control over the links and information found on these sheets. You should confirm the information is accurate. You should act only if you are comfortable with the action steps. If you have any questions, you should seek the advice of experts and/or an attorney.