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IEP and IFSP 101: Everything You Need to Know - Planning to Implementation

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Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

- List at least five IDEA categories to qualify for special services.
- Define at least three key terms commonly used during IFSP/IEP meetings.
- Identify at least four IFSP/IEP legal requirements.

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IEP / IFSP – What does that mean?

- IEP is an Individualized Education Program, although it is sometimes referred to as an Individualized Education Plan.
- IFSP is an Individualized Family Service Plan and serves younger children from infancy through two years old.

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Individualized Family Service Plan

- The IFSP should guide and support the entire family as the parents are a vital part of this process.
- The IFSP team typically involves the parents, service coordinator and various specialists such as an Occupational Therapist, Speech-Language Pathologist or Physical Therapist.
- There are a wide range of services that are available for a child qualifying for an IFSP.
- The IFSP team will meet to review the plan biannually and make revisions annually.
- Progress updates should be provided to the family quarterly.
- It is important to note that parents are legally entitled to change or even decline services throughout the IFSP process.

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What happens next?

- Child will be re-evaluated before turning three years old to determine if services are still needed.
- If services are needed, the special education teacher and specialists will meet with the family to develop an IEP for the school system.

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Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), there are thirteen qualifying disability categories to identify for special education services and to receive an IEP.

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Intellectual Disability
- Deaf-Blindness
- Deafness
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impairment
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Visual Impairment
 - Includes Blindness

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Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Exhibit a wide range (spectrum) of characteristics and symptoms
- Express difficulty with social skills and communication
- Engage in excessive repetitive behaviors
- Typically diagnosed at a young age

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Intellectual Disability

- This disability category was previously referred to as Mental Retardation (MR) in 2010.
- Limited intellectual and adaptive functioning
- IQ level below 70
- Mild, Moderate, Severe and Profound are the degrees of Intellectual Disability.

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Deaf-Blindness

- Combination of sight and hearing loss
- Exhibits some vision and audible range
- Students may need additional support outside of their school program
 - Educational Audiologist
 - Speech Pathologist
 - Vision Specialist

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Deafness

- Hearing loss - Severe to profound levels
- Typically hearing loss above 90 decibels is considered deafness
- Does not necessarily impede cognitive ability for the child
- Assistive technology and hearing devices can significantly improve the classroom experience.

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Emotional Disturbance

IDEA defines emotional disturbance as:

“...a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.”
- Individuals with Disability Education Act

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Hearing Impairment

- Hearing loss – Mild to moderate levels
- Typically hearing loss below 90 decibels is considered hearing impairment
- Many students can be mainstreamed with some assistance.
 - Hearing aides, cochlear implants, speech therapy and assistive listening devices

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Multiple Disabilities

- Combination of more than one disability category
- Typically listed along with other disabilities in the IEP health section
- Students often need a variety of supports for all areas of life.

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Orthopedic Impairment

- Severe orthopedic impairment that affects the child's ability to succeed in school
- Impairments caused by birth defects, illnesses or other factors such as injuries
- Students typically need physical and communication supports.

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Other Health Impairment

IDEA defines other health impairment as:

“...having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that—

- Is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and
- Adversely affects a child’s educational performance.”
- Qualification for this disability category will occur only if health impairments severely impact the student’s education.

Individuals with Disability Education Act

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Specific Learning Disability

- “Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.”
- Typically diagnosed in elementary school

Individuals with Disability Education Act

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Speech or Language Impairment

- Communication disorder that adversely affects a child's ability to talk, understand, read and write
- Typically common traits will emerge at a young age and early intervention is key.
- This disability can be in combination with other disability categories on the IEP.

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Traumatic Brain Injury

- Injury caused to the brain from an external physical force such as falls, violence or vehicle collisions
- Hereditary brain injuries, degenerative conditions or injuries caused to the brain by birth complications do not fall under this category.

Visual Impairment

- Impairment in vision significant enough to impede educational performance
- Includes partial sight and blindness
- Assistive technology can significantly improve the classroom experience.

Individualized Education Program

- The IEP is a customized plan for school age students (3 – 21 years old) who qualify for special education services.
- Parents are legally obligated to be apart of all decision making and notified of all assessments taking place.
- Quarterly updates and annual meetings
- Schools receive additional funding
- IEP team (special education teacher, general education teacher, related services) are accountable for making progress and enhancing student goals.

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What is another option?

- If a student has significant limitations and does not qualify for an IEP, the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act might be the best option.
 - Commonly referred to as a 504 plan
- This plan provides additional support and is protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- There are not legal requirements for a written plan and parental involvement.
- Schools do not receive additional funding for students with 504 plans.

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IFSP **AT** **FAPE**
OHI EI TBI
ISP **BSP** **ASD** LRE
 SLP IDEA SLD
 SPED OT **IEP**

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What are these key terms?

- Commonly referred to as the “alphabet soup” of abbreviations during IEP meetings
 - SPED – Special Education
 - BSP – Behavior Support Plan
 - FAPE – Free Appropriate Public Education
 - EI – Early Intervention
 - LRE – Least Restrictive Environment
 - OT – Occupational Therapy
 - PT – Physical Therapy
 - SLP – Speech Language Pathologist
 - AT – Assistive Technology

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Understanding the IEP Process

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IEP Process

- **Referral**
 - Students can be referred by parents, healthcare professionals or the special education team.
- **Evaluation**
 - Assessment tools, observation and data will help determine whether a student qualifies for an IDEA disability category.
 - Must have parental permission
- **Eligibility**
 - If the student is eligible for special education services, the IEP process begins.

IEP Process

- **Development of the IEP**
 - The IEP team will start collaboratively developing the plan.
 - The IEP plan must be created thirty days from eligibility determination.
- **IEP Meeting**
 - The teacher will set a meeting date with the parents.
 - It is also a requirement to notify the parents at least two times prior to the meeting date.
 - The IEP plan is a rough draft until the meeting is complete.
 - Meetings can be held by phone with parental permission. (Not recommended unless necessary.)
 - Related services will be determined during the meeting.
- **Implementation**
 - The IEP will commence with the needed support.

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IEP Process

- Student progress is measured and evaluated based on the determined timelines set in the IEP plan.
- The IEP team should review goals quarterly and provide updates to the parents.
- The IEP plan is reviewed and revised annually with the IEP team including parents.
- The student should be re-evaluated every three years to determine if services or environments need revised.

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Legal Requirements

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Legal Requirements

- The Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law to provide rights to students with disabilities.
- The IEP plan is a legally binding document mandated by the IDEA.
- The IEP must be followed by all parties involved or legal ramifications could take place.

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Legal Requirements

Under the IDEA, the purpose is stated as ...

- “To ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living;
- To ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected;
- To assist States, localities, educational service agencies, and Federal agencies to provide for the education of all children with disabilities; and
- To assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities.”

Individuals with Disability Education Act

What must be included in the IEP?

- Present levels
 - Gain rapport with family
 - Positives are important!
- Annual goals
 - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely (SMART)
- Related services – Physical Therapy, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy
- Accommodations and program modifications

What must be included in the IEP?

- Include duration of time with general education peers
- State and district testing accommodations
- Approximate timeline of services
- Other considerations (when needed)
 - Transition Plan – Starting at 14 years old
 - Extended School Year
 - Nonacademic Services
 - Transportation Services

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Parent and Educator Roles

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Required IEP Team Members

- Family – Student if appropriate.
- General education teacher
- Special education teacher
- Administrator
- Other specialists providing services
 - PT, OT, SLP, Vision, Hearing, Nurse

Meeting Objectives

- Advocate for the student
- Teamwork
- Parental input
- Child-first language
- Prepared and organized
- Provide data documentation
- Stay calm and unbiased

Webinar Key Takeaways

- Plans should always be unique and individualized - Not one size fits all!
- IFSP - Ages infancy through 2 years old
- 13 IDEA categories
- IEP vs. 504 plans
- Be mindful of abbreviations and jargon
- Cooperation and collaboration will make for a more effective experience.

References

- Understood- Learning and Attention Issues Retrieved from <https://www.understood.org>
- Individuals with Disability Education Act Retrieved from <https://sites.ed.gov/idea>