

## BASIC ADVOCACY TIPS

- Always keep copies of letters, reports or other materials you receive from or provide to school officials. Get organized! Get a three-ring binder and keep all your papers in one place.
- Make notes of any conversations you have with school officials, including the date the conversation took place, and the person's name and position.
- Consider taking a friend or advocate with you to meetings at your child's school. Try not to go alone.
- Before you go to a school meeting, prepare for it. Write a list of issues you want to talk about at the meeting and figure out what type of resolution you would accept.
- When you attend school meetings, ask each person at the meeting to tell you their name and position, and keep a record of that information.
- If you are told "we don't do that," or "we can't do that," ask the school official for a copy of the written policy, law or regulation to which they are referring.
- Always be polite and respectful, but make sure to ask questions if you don't understand something.
- Information is available on the Nevada Department of Education's Web site at [www.doe.nv.gov](http://www.doe.nv.gov), and [www.wrightslaw.com](http://www.wrightslaw.com) is also an excellent resource for parents.
- Let the school district know if you need an interpreter.
- Don't sign anything you don't understand. You can always take papers home and read them before you sign.
- Follow up with school officials. If a school official has agreed to do something, make sure it gets done. Be persistent!

## WHERE DO I GO FOR HELP?

### **Nevada Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP)**

Workshops, parent support groups and advocacy.  
Address 2101 S. Jones Blvd., Suite 120, Las Vegas, NV 89146; phone 702-388-8899; Web site [www.nvpep.org](http://www.nvpep.org).

### **Nevada Disability Advocacy Law Center (NDALC)**

Advocacy, legal assistance. Address 6039 Eldora Ave., Suite C, Las Vegas, NV 89146; phone 888-349-3843; Website [www.ndalc.org](http://www.ndalc.org).

### **Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada**

Advocacy, legal assistance. Address 725 E. Charleston Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89104; phone 386-1070, option 5 for the Special Education Hotline; Website [www.lacsn.org](http://www.lacsn.org).

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For more information please visit:  
[www.lacsn.org](http://www.lacsn.org)

LEGAL AID CENTER OF SOUTHERN NEVADA, INC.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION AND YOUR CHILD

### Know your child's rights



Since 1958  
**LEGAL AID CENTER**  
of Southern Nevada

Providing civil legal advice and representation  
to low-income Nevadans

725 E. Charleston Blvd.  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89104  
702-386-1070 • 800-522-1070  
TDD 702-386-1029  
[www.lacsn.org](http://www.lacsn.org)  
Hours: Monday – Friday  
8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

## WHAT IS SPECIAL EDUCATION?

Special education consists of teaching, services and support for children with disabilities so that they can do well in school. Public schools (including charter schools) must teach children with disabilities by giving them special education. Special education is free and should be “appropriate.” It can help your child make meaningful progress. Special education should treat each child as an individual. Special education is services and supports — it is not a place.

## CAN MY CHILD GET SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES?

Yes, if your child has trouble learning or behaving at school and has one or more of these disabilities:

- *mental retardation*
- *emotional problems*
- *an orthopedic disability*
- *deafness or other hearing problems*
- *speech or language disability*
- *autism*
- *blindness or other vision problems*
- *traumatic brain injury*
- *a learning disability*
- *health impairment*  
(can include ADD/ADHD and Tourette syndrome)
- *deaf-blindness*

## HOW CAN I GET SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR MY CHILD?

You can write your school principal and ask for a complete evaluation for your child. The school district has 45 calendar days from receipt of your request to complete an evaluation or to provide you with written notice of its refusal to do so, and why. The school may ask you to sign a “Permission to Evaluate Consent Form” (CCF 555). The school must give you a copy of the completed evaluation report. When the evaluation is completed, a multidisciplinary team meeting will be held to discuss the results of the evaluation with you. If your child is found eligible, an (Individualized Education Program) meeting will be developed. If your child is found ineligible for special education, the school district must explain to you in writing why she is not eligible for services.

## WHAT IS AN IEP?

IEP is an acronym for Individualized Education Program. If your child qualifies for services, you and the IEP team use the evaluation to write an IEP for your child. The IEP is like a contract between you and the school. The IEP should tell you what the school will do to help your child learn (e.g., use a different way of teaching; make school materials simpler; change the amount or kind of information your child should learn; provide help on class work, homework or tests; give the child services like speech therapy, physical therapy or counseling; provide a person to support your child or her teacher.) You and the IEP team will write goals and objectives for what your child should learn. The IEP team must talk about your child’s IEP and make any changes at least once a year. You can ask for a meeting any time you have questions during the school year.

## WHO WRITES THE IEP?

The IEP is written by a team of people. The IEP team must include:

- *The child’s parents*
- *At least one special education teacher or special education provider*
- *At least one regular education teacher (if the child is, or may be, in any regular education classes)*
- *A school official qualified to provide or supervise specially designed instruction, who knows about the school’s resources, and who is familiar with the general education curriculum (usually this is the school principal or the special education teacher facilitator)*
- *Someone who can interpret the child’s evaluations as necessary*
- *The child, when appropriate.*

The IEP team can include anyone the parent or school believes has knowledge or has expertise about the child. The law places great emphasis on parents’ participation in the IEP team meeting. The school must take steps to get one or both of the child’s parents to attend the IEP meeting. That means the school must notify the parents of the meeting early enough so that they can attend, and schedule a meeting at a time and place that is convenient for all parties. The school must provide you with written notice of who will attend the IEP team meeting from the school district.

## WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN AT THE IEP TEAM MEETING?

The school may give parents a draft IEP at the meeting, or before, but it cannot ignore the parents’ input or refuse to make changes that the parents and the school agree are needed. Once completed, the IEP should reflect information discussed and decided at the IEP meeting. The team must consider the child’s strengths, the parents’ concerns, the results of the most recent evaluation and the child’s academic, developmental and functional needs in determining what services and placement are appropriate for the child.

## WHERE DOES MY CHILD GO TO GET SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES?

First, the team should think about the general education class. Many students with disabilities can learn in their general education class with supports from their school. Under the law, children with disabilities should be in general education classes as much as they can with supports. Some special education students may go to a special class, like a resource room for some or part of a day. Some students may go to a specialized class on a regular school campus. The team will decide which placement is right for your child. Note: Special education law says that children with disabilities should learn in the least restrictive environment (34 CFR Part 300.114). So even if your child needs to be in a separate class for part of the day, she/he should learn with children who do not have disabilities as often as possible.

## WHAT IF I DON’T AGREE WITH MY CHILD’S SCHOOL?

If your school says your child is not eligible for special education, you may not agree. If your child already gets special education services, you may not agree with the re-evaluation the school completed, or the program or the placement your school offers. You can set up an IEP team meeting to talk about it, ask for mediation from the State Department of Education or ask the State Department of Education for a due process hearing to deal with the issue. If your school does an evaluation of your child and tells you that your child can be in special education, you may not agree. The school cannot force your child to be in special education if you do not think it is appropriate for your child. You can also remove your child from special education at any time. You can find out more information about due process hearings on our Web site at [www.lacsn.org](http://www.lacsn.org) under Children’s Attorneys Project, Special Education.