



# Alaska Parent Guide

Education and the  
Exceptional Child



# Introduction

As the parent of a child who may be entitled to special education services you have certain rights. These rights are guaranteed by federal law. The law is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), as amended in 1997. The law protects the rights of children with disabilities and their parents.

To be eligible for special education:

- a child must experience one or more of the disabilities listed below
- the child's education performance must be negatively affected and
- the child must need specially designed instruction and related services

Children, age 3-21, with a disability, have the right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Children with a disability must be allowed to attend school and receive education services for free. The schools must provide special education and related services when they are needed to help the child learn.

The State of Alaska defines the following disabilities:

- Autism
- Deafness
- Deaf-Blindness
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability
- Mental Retardation
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Early Childhood Developmental Delay
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment

The local school district can provide parents with additional information regarding the eligibility requirements for each disability. The definitions of the Alaska State disabilities categories are included in the Glossary, Appendix A.



## Child Find and Referral

Child Find is an effort to find all children, age 3-21 who experience disabilities. Every school district must locate, identify and evaluate children in the community who are in need of special education and related services.

Anyone – parent, teacher, student, nurse, doctor, social worker – may refer a child for a special education evaluation. The school has a form designed for a referral. Anyone who has a concern about a child can go to the school and refer a child. The child's teacher, the principal, or special education teacher may. Parents can help by completing a referral form if they think that their child may need special help or have a disability. Give the referral form to your child's teacher or principal.

Possible indicators of disability include:

- delays in learning
- not seeing well
- not hearing well
- not talking well
- a serious illness
- emotional problems
- learning problems
- social skills
- behavior problems
- poor attention span
- motor problems

A child may have difficulty in more than one area.

Every child with disabilities in Alaska, age 3 - 21, has the right to public school education. When a child is referred for special education, the school must have permission from the parent to learn more about the child. The school may conduct an evaluation to help determine if the child needs special education. Parents are an important part of special education. Parents should be sure to talk openly to people at the school. Parents who understand special education and IDEA regulations are very helpful in the IEP process. Several agencies who can assist parents with training and information about these subjects are included in Appendix B.

The district may decide to try other changes in your child's classroom program before referring your child for a special education evaluation. If the district decides to do this, the changes to be made must be documented and they must inform you of your right to an evaluation. This is sometimes called "Pre-referral Intervention."

If the school decides that a referral is not appropriate, they must give you a "Prior Written Notice." The notice must explain why they are not going to refer your child for special education.

See Appendix C for a list of early warning signs of children who may need special education.



## Evaluation Procedures and Eligibility Determination

How do parents know if their child has a disability and needs special education?

After a child has been referred for special education, the child must be evaluated. The school must notify parents that their child has been referred for special education and needs to be evaluated. Parents must give written permission before their child may be evaluated. Parents will be invited to be part of the team that reviews information from the child's school records and helps decide what tests will be given. The team will also: 1) make a decision about the child's eligibility and 2) identify the educational needs of the child, after the evaluation is completed.

- The child must be assessed in all areas which might affect the child's educational needs. These areas may be, but are not limited to:
  - health
  - vision
  - hearing
  - social and emotional
  - intelligence
  - achievement
  - communication
  - language
  - motor abilities

## Testing Guidelines

- All tests must be given in a language the child understands.
- The tests must be suitable for the child's needs and must be given by trained testers.
- The tests must not discriminate culturally or racially.
- The tests must show the child's ability or achievement, not reflect the child's disability.
- More than one procedure must be used to evaluate the child including formal tests, teacher observations, parent input, and classroom work samples.
- The evaluation must be made by a team, that includes at least one person who knows about the suspected disability. This person will:
  - know your child, understand the meaning of the test results, and understand the placement options;
  - ensure that a variety of information is available to make the decision, and that the evaluation includes tests other than solely an intelligence test; and
- be sure that information from the evaluation is carefully considered.

If parents do not agree with the test results they may have the child tested by an independent evaluator. This is called an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE). The school district must tell the parents where independent testing may be obtained. The district must also provide the school's criteria. This testing must be done in a timely manner. The district may request a hearing to show its evaluation is appropriate.

Parents may choose to have testing done at their expense. The district must consider these test results in planning a special education program for the child.

Once all the evaluation information is available, a team of professionals who know the child and the parents review the information. First, this team decides if the child meets the definition of one of the disability categories. Second, if the child is found to have a disability, the group must then decide if the child needs special education. It is important that both parts of this team decision take place. Parents, being the child's first teacher, and knowing the child best, are equal partners in this process. Parents should share information openly and tell the team what they know about their child.

If the team decides the child needs special education, the team must develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The team is called the IEP team.

At least once every three years the team must decide if the child continues to be eligible for special education. This is called a reevaluation. This may occur more often if there are changes that affect the child, or if the parent or the teacher requests it.



# Individualized Education Program (IEP)

## Parents and Professionals Plan the IEP

Every child with a disability who needs special education must have a written Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP describes all the services needed for the child's special education program.

The IEP must be written during an IEP meeting. The IEP team must include:

- one or both of the child's parents
- the child's regular education teacher
- at least one special education teacher and/or provider (speech therapist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, etc.) of the child
- a representative of the school who:
  - can provide, or supervise, special education
  - knows the general curriculum
  - knows the resources of the school
  - someone (may be one of the above) who can apply the evaluation results to the child's education needs
- the child, when they are 14 yrs. old, or when secondary transition planning will occur.

Parents and the school may invite others who are involved with the child to the IEP meeting. The district must make sure that the parent understands what's going on at the IEP meeting. Schools must provide an interpreter for parents who are deaf or whose native language is other than English.

The district must be sure that one or both of the parents are at each meeting or are given the chance to be at the meeting. Parents must have enough time to plan to attend the meeting. The



meeting must be at a convenient time and place for parents. If parents cannot be at the meeting, the school must allow them to add their ideas on the phone or in a letter, or reschedule the meeting, if needed.

If parents choose not to come to the IEP meeting, the meeting can be held without the parents. The school records must show that the district made multiple attempts to have the parents at the meeting.

The school district must be sure that parents understand what happens at the IEP meeting. If parents are deaf or do not speak English, the school must have an interpreter at the meeting.

The school district must give a copy of the IEP to the parents.



## What the IEP Includes

The Individualized Education Program must include:

- A statement of what the child can do. (The Present Level of Educational Performance);
- A statement of measurable annual goals. Short term, measurable objectives must be included that tell what the child is expected to learn during the school year;
- A statement of the service the child needs, and what supports are needed for school staff to help the child;
- An explanation of why, if at all, the child will not be with other children who do not have disabilities in the regular class and other school activities;
- A statement of how the child will take state or local achievement tests that answers:
  - Will the child participate like other children?
  - Does the child need accommodations?
  - Will the child take an alternate test?
- The date special education services will begin and how long they are expected to continue;
- A way to be sure goals are being met; and,
- How and when the child's parents will be told of the child's progress.

## Placement in the Least Restrictive Environment

The IEP team decides which services the child will receive in special education. The IEP team must consider:

- parent input
- test results
- teacher recommendations
- physical condition
- social or cultural background
- adaptive behavior

The school district must have choices available for the child's placement or location for where special education services are provided. These locations include:

- regular classroom with additional support services
- regular classroom with direct services from special education personnel
- regular educational environment with special education itinerant or resource support
- regular education environment with self-contained classroom support
- full time instruction in a separate day school
- home or hospital instruction
- institutional services

A child with disabilities must be in regular programs as much as possible, with children who do not have disabilities.

A child with disabilities may be removed from regular education classes and activities. This should happen only if the child's disability is so severe that the child cannot be educated in regular classes, even with extra aids and services.

Unless stated in the IEP, the child must attend the school he/she would attend if not in special education.

Each child's placement must be:

- reviewed at least once a year
- based on the IEP
- as close as possible to the child's home



## Transition Services

When children reach 14 yrs. of age, or will turn 14 before the end of the school year, the IEP must include transition services. Transition services may be provided earlier if the IEP team decides it is necessary. Transition services help the child move successfully from school to post-school activities. This may include further education, vocational training, employment, adult education, adult services, living on their own, or community activities. Transition services must be based on the student's needs, wants and interests. Transition services are part of the IEP and must be provided according to the IEP.

Beginning with the school year during which the child reaches 14 years the IEP must include a statement of transition needs that focus on the student's courses of study.

Beginning with the school year during which the child reaches 16 years the IEP must include transition services in all identified areas of need. These areas include:

- instruction
- related services
- community experiences
- employment
- post-school adult living objectives
- daily living skills (if appropriate)
- functional vocational evaluation (if appropriate)

The IEP must also include what services other agencies, if any, will provide for the child

When transition services are being addressed in the IEP team meeting, the student, at any age, must be invited to participate in the meeting.



## Transfer of Rights

In Alaska, children reach the age of majority at 18 yrs. This means the child will be given all the rights of an adult including the right to make decisions about their education. The district must inform the student and the parents of this transfer of rights when the student is 17 yrs. old. Parents should get legal advice from an attorney if they plan to continue to make decisions for their child after age 18.

## Related Services

Related services are services that are necessary for the child to benefit from special education. Related services may include:

- transportation
- speech therapy
- psychological services
- physical therapy
- occupational therapy
- recreation
- school health services
- social work services
- counseling
- adaptive physical education
- audiology services
- orientation and mobility services
- parent counseling and training
- rehabilitation counseling

The service your child needs may not be on this list. Any service that is required to assist your child to benefit from special education should be considered by the IEP team.

## Other IEP Facts

The IEP must be written within 30 days after the IEP team decides a child needs special education.

The IEP must be written in an IEP meeting. The IEP meeting is the time when parents can tell the school what they think is important for their child. Parents can prepare for the IEP meeting by reviewing their copies of education and medical records and sharing this with the team. Parents may invite someone to go to the meeting to support and encourage them to share.

The IEP team must meet at least once a year to review each child's IEP. The IEP must be changed to show the progress the child demonstrated during the previous year.

Parents have the right to ask for an IEP meeting to change the IEP or discuss any concerns. This may be done any time during the year. Parents may see that the needs of the child have changed or that the child has reached the IEP goals. The child's teacher and other school personnel also have the right to request an IEP planning meeting.

The school district must provide the special education and related services that are written in the IEP. No teacher or school district can guarantee that a child will achieve the IEP goals. IDEA does not hold the school district responsible if the child does not reach these goals, but schools must make a good faith effort towards reaching the IEP goals and objectives



## Due Process

### Prior Written Notice and Parental Consent

The school district must give the parent Prior Written Notice before the district proposes or refuses to:

- identify a child as a child with a disability
- evaluate a child to determine if he/she experiences a disability
- determine the educational placement of the child, where will the child's learning take place?

The notice must be written in parents' native language, and be easily understood. You have the right to have the notice translated orally or provided by other means.

Informed consent means that the parent has been fully informed of all the information that applies to the activity for which consent is requested. The information must be given in your native language. Informed consent means that the parent understands and agrees to the activity. Parent consent means that parents understand that their consent is voluntary, and that they may revoke their consent at any time. Parents have the right to:

- give written consent before a school district:
- initially evaluates a child
- places a child in a special education program
- conducts any new tests as part of reevaluation of a child;
- give written consent before a child is placed in special education programs;
- refuse or revoke prior consent.

## Dispute Resolution

Parents and the school district are working together to educate the child. If parents have concerns, they and the teacher(s) should talk openly about the issues. Parents should be actively involved in the development of their child's IEP.

At times, parents may disagree with the school district's educational decisions. Every attempt should be made to resolve these differences as soon as they arise. If they cannot be resolved, there are several procedures that may be followed. While IDEA and the Department of Education and Early Development encourages the use of mediation, parents may choose to use any of the following.

## Mediation

Mediation is a process to help parents and schools in resolving disagreements about a student's special education program. Mediation is free and may be requested by either the school district or the parent. Mediation is voluntary for both the parent and the school. A trained mediator works with both the school and parents to improve communication and understanding, and to help resolve the issue in the best interest of the student. Mediation may not be used to deny or delay a parent's right to a due process hearing or any other rights under IDEA.

## Complaint Investigation

As the parent of a child with a disability, you may request a complaint investigation by EED. Simply describe your concerns about your child's



education in a letter and sign the letter. Your letter should describe your concerns and what has happened, if anything, to resolve the concerns. EED will assign your complaint to someone who will investigate your concerns. The investigator will call you and ask you questions to gain more information and understanding. The investigator will also call the school district. After gathering and reviewing all the facts, the investigator must provide a decision, in writing, to the parents and the school. If a violation has occurred, the decision will include what must happen to resolve the concern.

## Due Process Hearing

Parents may also request a Due Process Hearing. A parent may also choose to move directly to the Due Process Hearing without having used mediation or a letter of complaint. Your rights to a Due Process Hearing include the right to:

- initiate a Due Process Hearing on any matter relating to the:
  - identification of your child as a child with a disability
  - evaluation to determine if he/she experiences a disability
  - educational placement of your child, where will your child's learning take place?

- FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education) for your child
- have the hearing conducted by an impartial hearing officer (EED must keep a list of hearing officers)
- have the hearing scheduled at a time and place convenient to you and your child
- have and be advised by counsel (lawyer or attorney) and others familiar with children with disabilities
- present evidence and confront, cross-examine and compel the attendance of witnesses
- stop the use of evidence at the hearing that has not been available at least five business days before the hearing
- obtain a record of the hearing (written or audio tape)
- open the hearing to the public
- have your child present during the hearing (if appropriate)
- receive a written copy of the hearing officer's decision within 45 days of the date the hearing was requested.

To request a Due Process hearing, submit a written request to the school district administrator.

## Attorney's Fees

Attorney's fees may only be awarded by a court and must be calculated at the local rate. Attorney's fees may not be awarded for services performed after a written offer of settlement is given to you if:

- the offer is made any time more than ten days before the hearing begins,
- the offer is not accepted within ten days, and
- the court finds that the relief obtained by you is not more favorable than the settlement offer.

Attorney's fees may be awarded to a parent who prevails and was justified in rejecting the settlement offer. Attorney's fees may not be awarded for legal services relating to any meeting of the IEP team (unless the meeting is the result of an administrative proceeding or judicial action.)

In some cases, such as unreasonable delay of resolution of the conflict, a court may reduce attorney's fees.



## Appendix A

# Glossary

*This glossary may help you understand some of the terms you will hear and use during the special education process.*

**Academic aptitude:** The combination of native and/or acquired abilities needed for doing school work.

**Accessible:** Modified or designed so that persons with limited mobility (in wheelchairs or with crutches, for instance) can move into and around the structure or building.

**Achievement test:** A test that measures progress in school subject areas such as reading, spelling, and math. Examples of this type of test are the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) and the Peabody Individual Achievement Test (PIAT).

**Adaptive behavior:** The ability to fit in socially and emotionally with other people of similar age and cultural background and in a variety of situations.

**Advocacy:** A program or situation in which agencies or individuals speak or act on behalf of the interests of themselves or other individuals or groups.

**Affective:** Having to do with feelings or emotions.

**Alternative Intervention Strategies:** Modifications made to accommodate individual student needs in the regular classroom prior to any special education intervention. Also called intervention strategies; prereferral strategies.

**Annual goals:** These describe the educational performance to be achieved by the end of the school year.

**Aptitude test:** A test to measure an individual's ability to learn in a particular subject area such as music, mechanics, etc.

**Articulation:** Speaking. Disorders of articulation are shown in omissions (leaving out sounds), substitutions (teef for teeth), distortions (lispings), or additions (runnering for running).

**Assessment:** The process of testing and observing the student in order to understand the nature, personality, learning style, and abilities of the student to help make decisions about the kind of educational programming required.

**Auditory perception:** The ability to hear sounds accurately and to understand what they mean when combined into words.

**Authentic or Alternate Assessment:** Students' learning is measured by looking at how well they perform on real-life or simulated tasks, rather than by counting the number of test questions they answer correctly. Students may present information orally,

write essays, or work with other students to solve complex problems.

**Autism:** To be eligible for special education and related services as a child with autism, a child must:

- a. exhibit a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and non-verbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects educational performance; and
- b. require special facilities, equipment, or methods to make the child's educational program effective; and
- c. be diagnosed as autistic by a psychiatrist, physician, or psychologist; and
- d. be certified by a group consisting of qualified professionals and a parent of the child as qualifying for and needing special education services.

Characteristics of autism include:

- irregularities and impairments in communication.
- engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements.
- resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines.
- unusual responses to sensory experiences.

*NOTE:* A child who manifests the above characteristics after age 3 could be diagnosed as having autism.

**Behavior modification:** A method for changing specific human behaviors, it emphasizes regular encouragement or discouragement for behaviors that can be seen, and looking at what happens both before and after the behavior.

**Behavioral objective:** Statement of what a person will be able to do in measurable terms. *Example:* John will write the first ten spelling words in five minutes, correctly.

**Behavior Intervention Plan:** Includes definitions of the targeted behaviors in observable terms and identifies the goals that address the behavior.

**Change of placement:** Any modifications of a student's program, placement, or identification which significantly alters the type and/or intensity of special education services or alters the student's contact with nondisabled peers.

**Cognition:** The act or process of knowing; the various thinking skills and processes are considered cognitive skills.

**Consent:** Refers to being fully informed and agreeing to a proposed plan of educational evaluation and/or placement. Parental consent in education has three basic parts: 1) the parent is fully informed; 2) the parent agrees in writing; and 3) consent is given voluntarily.

**Contractual services:** Special education services provided via another school district and/or agency when appropriate services are not available in the student's local district.

**Cooperative learning:** Students work together in small groups. Because their goal is to make sure everyone in the group understands what they are expected to learn (e.g., a math concept, the meaning of a poem), they teach each other or put their heads together to solve a problem.

**Criterion-referenced tests:** Tests that do not produce a number or quotient, but show what a student can or cannot do. They compare a student not to other students but to a set of standards or criteria. Tests to measure a student's own progress within him/herself.

**Deafness:** *To be eligible for special education and related services as a child with deafness, a child must:*

- a. exhibit a hearing impairment that hinders the child's ability to process linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification and that adversely affects educational performance; and
- b. require special facilities, equipment, or methods to make his or her educational program effective; and
- c. be diagnosed by a physician or audiologist as deaf; and
- d. be certified by a group consisting of qualified professionals and a parent of the child as qualifying for and needing special education services.

**Deaf-Blindness:** *To be eligible for special education and related services as a child with deaf-blindness, a child must:*

- a. exhibit concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational problems that the child cannot be accommodated in a special education program solely for deaf or blind children; and
- b. require special facilities, equipment, or methods to make his or her educational program effective; and

- c. be diagnosed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist and by a physician or audiologist, as appropriate, as deaf-blind; and
- d. be certified by a group consisting of qualified professionals and a parent of the child as qualifying for and needing special education services.

**Decode:** Ability to understand or find meaning for facts, information, experiences that occur in the environment.

**Developmental delay or lag:** A delay in the appearance of some steps or phases of growth in areas such as small movement skills, large movement skills, social skills, language, etc.

**Developmental disability:** A disability that is likely to continue indefinitely; it is attributed to mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, or dyslexia; occurs before age 18; interferes with a person's ability to do something independently.

**Diagnostic test:** Test that diagnoses or locates areas of weakness and strength. There are diagnostic achievement tests which re used for skill subjects like reading, math, and spelling.

**Disability categories:** Distinct diagnostic categories for the identification and classification of students with disabilities.

**Down syndrome:** One of the most common causes of mental retardation, caused by specific chromosomal abnormalities.

**Due process:** Administrative proceedings to resolve disagreements regarding the evaluation, identification, placement of students with disabilities, or the provision of a free appropriate public education.

**Early Childhood Developmental Delay:** *To be eligible for special education and related services as a child demonstrating an early childhood developmental delay, a child must:*

- a. be not less than 3 years old nor more than 8 years of age; and
- b. be certified by a group of qualified professionals and a parent of the child as qualifying for and needing special education services by meeting the following criteria:
  - function at least two standard deviations below the national norm or 25% delayed in age equivalency in at least one of the following areas:
    1. cognitive development

2. physical development which includes fine and gross motor
3. speech or language development which includes expressive and receptive language, articulation, fluency, voice
4. social or emotional development and
5. adaptive functioning, self-help skills;

**or**

- function at least 1.7 standard deviations below the mean or 20% delayed in age equivalency in two or more of the five areas in “b” above;
- c. have learning problems that are not primarily the result of bilingualism, cultural difference, environmental disadvantage, or economic disadvantage and
- d.require special facilities, equipment, or methods to make the child’s educational program effective.

The category early childhood developmental delay should not be used when the child clearly meets the eligibility for another disability category.

**Early intervention:** Programs and services provided to infants and children with disabilities during the period of most rapid growth and development (the years from birth to five.)

**Educational goal:** The level of educational achievement accepted as reasonable and desirable for a specific student at a specific time and at a specific rate of speed.

**Eligibility criteria:** The standards used to classify a student's disabling condition; criteria are specified for each condition/category.

**Emotional Disturbance:** *To be eligible for special education and related services as a child with emotional disturbance, a child must:*

- a. exhibit one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects 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 generally pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or

- a tendency to develop physical symptoms of fears associated with personal or school problems.

b.require special facilities, equipment or methods to make his or her educational program effective; and

c. be diagnosed as emotionally disturbed by a psychiatrist or psychologist; and

d.be certified by a group consisting of qualified professionals and a parent of the child as qualifying for and needing special education services.

**Encode:** Ability to express ideas in symbols or words.

**Evaluation:** The implementation of the assessment procedures as specified in the individual evaluation plan and notice for evaluation; determination of a student's current level of functioning. An evaluation consists of a variety of tests, observations, and background information, and is done by a team.

**Expressive language skills:** Ability to produce language for communication with other individuals. Speaking and writing are expressive skills. Sign language is also considered an expressive language skill.

**Extended school year (ESY):** Education provided for students with disabilities beyond the minimum days required; primarily initiated when a student experiences a regression of skills during breaks in educational programming and when recoupment of skills takes an extended period of time.

**FERPA:** Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

**Fine motor (eye-hand) coordination:** Purposeful movements of the hand(s) and eye(s) together to achieve a specific task such as writing, sorting, and sewing.

**Functional behavioral assessment:** Is a process that seeks to identify the problem behavior a student may exhibit particularly in school, to determine the function or purpose of the behavior, and to develop interventions to teach acceptable alternatives to the behavior.

**Functional education:** The teaching of every day skills needed in every day life.

**Goal:** The level of ability accepted as reasonable and/or desirable for a specific student at a specific time; the “end result” expected at a certain point in time— e.g. student will be able to write his/her name by the end of the first semester.

**Gross motor:** Movement that involves balance, coordination, and large muscle activity as needed for walking, running, skipping, jumping, and other physical activities.

**Hearing:** The opportunity to be heard, to present one's side of the case; a session in which evidence is presented to an impartial person (hearing officer).

**Hearing Impairment:** *To be eligible for special education and related services as a child with a hearing impairment, a child must:*

- a. exhibit a hearing impairment whether permanent or fluctuating that adversely affects educational performance but which is not within the meaning of deaf; and
- b. require special facilities, equipment, or methods to make his or her educational program effective; and
- c. be diagnosed by a physician or audiologist as hard of hearing; and
- d. be certified by a group consisting of qualified professionals and a parent of the child as qualifying for and needing special education services.

**Hyperactivity:** Noticeable traits may include feeding, sleeping, and unexplained crying problems at an early age; drumming fingers, shuffling feet and the inability to sit still. Many students who experience such behavior also have great difficulty paying attention in typical classroom activities and have characteristics of inattention deficit—hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). What sets students with ADHD apart is the intensity and persistence of their behavior. They act much younger than their years. Each student behaves differently, but common traits are:

- Easy distractibility--A short attention span, sometimes with extreme mood swings, is typical of ADHD. Some students skip from one activity to another, leaving many projects uncompleted. They may be reluctant to listen or follow instructions, but can also become deeply absorbed in certain pursuits.
- Impulsiveness--Students with ADHD may act on the spur of the moment. Untidiness and risk-taking behavior are common.
- Attention-demanding behavior--The student with ADHD desires to be center stage. Actions may include virtual nonstop talking, whining, badgering, teasing and bossing of other students. Yet students with ADHD also can be emotionally "cold" and seem unresponsive to affection or discipline.

**Inclusion:** All students, including those with disabilities (whether physical or learning-related), are taught together in regular classroom settings. Specialists, teacher aides, materials, and/or equipment are provided in the classroom for students who need assistance.

**Independent living:** Carrying on day-to-day living functions either with personal attendant care services or without direct supervision.

**Individualized Education Program (IEP):** A written document developed for each identified, eligible student with disabilities which includes: present level of performance; goals and objectives; criteria for measuring achievement; amount and type of special education and participation in regular education; dates of initiation and duration of services; and signatures of IEP team participants.

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act '97 (IDEA '97):** Revision and amendment of Education of the Handicapped Act, 1997.

**Intelligence:** Ability to learn from experience, and apply it in the future to solve problems and make judgments.

**Interest inventory:** A test in which person records his likes and dislikes in a number of different situations. These do not indicate ability, only preference.

**Intelligence quotient (IQ):** A way of expressing the results, through a score, of an intelligence test. IQ scores compare a person tested with a large number of persons the same age. Must never be used by itself as a measure of intellectual capacity.

**Language disorder:** Reduced ability to comprehend or express ideas via spoken, written, or gestural language; disorders of form, content, and/or function.

**Least Restrictive Environment:** The practice of educating students with disabilities along with students who do not have disabilities in regular classrooms, "to the maximum extent possible." Impediments to learning and to the normal functioning of students in the regular school environment shall be overcome whenever practicable by the provisions of special aids and services rather than be separate schooling for students with disabilities.

**Manual expression:** Using the hands and other parts of the body to be able to show the use of some object.

**Mental age (MA):** Refers to the score a person receives on an intelligence test. Compares to those of other students of same age given same test.

**Mental Retardation:** *To be eligible for special education and related services as a child with mental retardation, a child must:*

- a. score two or more standard deviations below the national norm on an individual standardized test of intelligence; and
- b. exhibit deficits in adaptive behavior manifested during the developmental period that adversely affect the child's educational performance; and
- c. require special facilities, equipment or methods to make his or her educational program effective; and
- d. be diagnosed as mentally retarded by a psychiatrist or psychologist; and
- e. be certified by a group of qualified professionals and a parent of the child as qualifying for and needing special education services.

**Multiple Disabilities:** *To be eligible for special education and related services as a child with multiple disabilities, a child must:*

- a. exhibit two or more of the impairments described in this section, the combination of which causes such severe education problems that he or she cannot be accommodated in a special education program for solely one of the conditions; and
- b. require special facilities, equipment, or methods to make his or her educational program effective; and
- c. be diagnosed as described in this section for each condition; and
- d. be certified by a group of qualified professionals and a parent of the child as qualifying for and needing special education services.

*NOTE:* The term multiple disabilities does not include deaf-blindness. Children with multiple disabilities exhibit two or more severe disabilities that are likely to be life-long, significantly interfere with independent functioning, and necessitate environmental modifications to enable the individual to participate in school and society. A learning disability and speech/language impairment does not constitute a multiple disability. Likewise, a student with mental retardation who receives speech therapy as a related service would not be found eligible under this category.

**Multi-sensory:** Using many senses (seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, smelling.)

**Notice/Consent:** Written notification provided to parents/guardians regarding a district's intent to evaluate, place, or change placement, and the parental/guardian consent for such action.

**Norm-referenced test:** Test which compares a learner's performance to a norm, or an average.

**Objectives:** Small, measurable steps of learning that help a student reach a goal (e.g. learning to hold a pencil before learning to write.)

**Observation:** Watching and recording systematically – facts, data, behavior.

**Occupational therapy (OT):** A related service that can be part of a rehabilitation program for a person with a disability. OT is concerned with "fine" or small muscle movement, such as the use of hands and fingers, to help a person learn or re-learn how to perform daily tasks such as eating and work that requires hand and eye coordination.

**Orthopedic Impairment:** *To be eligible for special education and related services as a child with an orthopedic impairment, a child must:*

- a. exhibit a severe orthopedic impairment, including impairments caused by a congenital anomaly, disease or other causes, that adversely affects educational performance; and
- b. require special facilities, equipment, or methods to make his or her educational program effective; and
- c. be diagnosed by a physician as orthopedically impaired; and
- d. be certified by a group of qualified professionals and a parent of the child as qualifying for and needing special education services.

**Other Health Impairment:** *To be eligible for special education and related services as a child with a health impairment, a child must:*

- a. exhibit limited strength, vitality, or alertness, due to chronic or acute health problems such as a heart condition, tuberculosis, rheumatic fever, nephritis, asthma, sickle cell anemia, hemophilia, epilepsy, lead poisoning, leukemia or diabetes; or a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli due to attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), that adversely affects educational performance;
- b. require special facilities, equipment, or methods to make his or her educational program effective; and

- c. be diagnosed by a physician; and
- d. be certified by a group of qualified professionals and a parent of the child as qualifying for and needing special education services.

**Paraprofessional:** An aide assisting a special education teacher, also teacher aide.

**Parent involvement:** Parents have the right and responsibility to participate with the schools in special education planning and decisions. Federal and state regulations support parent involvement.

**Peer tutoring:** A student who understands a concept being taught used his/her knowledge and skill to help another student learn it. Researchers have found that teaching someone else is one of the best ways to remember what one has learned.

**Perception:** The process of obtaining information obtained through the senses. The mental ability to grasp or understand objects or qualities by means of the senses (hearing, seeing, smelling, touching, tasting).

**Physical therapy (PT):** A related service that can be part of a rehabilitation program for a person with a disability. PT is concerned with gross or large muscle movement such as helping a person learn how to sit, walk, and/or other movements using the body's major muscle systems.

**Placement:** The services and classes chosen by the IEP team that will provide the most appropriate program for the students. The IEP is the planning document used to describe all the details of the student's program or placement.

**Portfolio assessment:** A student's progress is measured by considering a collection of his/her work over a period of time, such as a semester. These portfolios are often reviewed by a group of teachers and evaluated or scored according to preset criteria.

**Present Level of Educational Performance (PLEP):** A narrative in the IEP describing a student's educational strengths and weaknesses based on evaluation; provides the basis for the development of individual goals. Could include academic achievement, social adaptation, prevocational and vocational skills, sensory and motor skills, self-help skills and speech and language skills.

**Procedural safeguards:** The steps taken to insure that a person's legal rights are not denied.

**Psychological test:** Covers a range of tests used for studying people and how they behave. May be intelligence tests, projective or non-projective tests to

study personality, or other tests to decide if there may be an organic impairment of functioning.

**Readiness test:** A test that ascertains if learner is ready for certain school tasks.

**Receptive language skills:** Ability to understand the language used by others, may be written, spoken, signs.

**Reevaluation:** A comprehensive assessment required every three years (minimally) of a student enrolled in a special education program.

**Referral:** Written compilation of information about a student who is experiencing problems that interfere with learning. Summary includes: results of screening and attempts to remedy student's difficulties.

**Rehabilitation:** The process of helping a person who has a disability learn or re-learn the skills needed for daily living and work activities.

**Related services:** Such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a student with disabilities to benefit from special education. Includes such services as: transportation; speech pathology and audiology; psychological services; physical and occupational therapies; recreation; counseling and medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes.

**Screening:** The process of identifying children in the general population, age three through twenty-one, who may be at risk of educational failure.

**Sensory motor:** Using the sensory perception (what one sees, hears, feels, tastes, or smells) with movement. Examples may be turning your head to see the source of a noise or closing your eyes when the light is too bright.

**Special education:** Specifically designed instruction, at no cost to the parent, to meet the unique needs of a student with disabilities, including: classroom instruction, instruction in physical education, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions.

**Specific Learning Disability:** *To be eligible for special education and related services as a child with a learning disability, all of the following six components must be addressed:*

1. The child must exhibit 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 an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.

The term **specific learning disability**:

- includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.
- does not include children who have learning problems that are *primarily* the result of a visual disability; motor disability; hearing disability; mental retardation; emotional disturbance; environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage; or lack of attendance.

The group of qualified professionals and a parent of the child must show that:

- The child demonstrates limited academic achievement for his or her age and ability levels in one or more of the following areas when provided with appropriate learning experiences: oral expression; listening comprehension; written expression; basic reading skills; reading comprehension; mathematics calculation; or mathematical reasoning; and,
- The child demonstrates a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and academic achievement in one or more of the above-mentioned areas.

The team must also ensure the following:

- At least one IEP Team member, other than the child's regular teacher, must observe the child's academic performance in the regular classroom setting;
- In the case of a child who is out of school, a team member must observe the child in an environment appropriate for a child that age; and,
- The observation report must document the name and title of the observer, as well as the date and place of the observation. This report must also be attached to the Evaluation Summary and Eligibility Report.

The group of qualified professionals and a parent of the child must prepare a written report of the evaluation results that includes statements of:

- Whether the child has a specific learning disability;
- The basis for making the determination;
- The relevant behavior(s) noted during the observation of the child;
- The relationship of these behavior(s) to the child's educational functioning;

- Medical information, if any, related to the child's educational functioning,
- The nature of the severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and academic achievement which is not correctable without special education and related services; and,
- The determination of the team regarding the effects of environmental, cultural, economic, or attendance factors on the child's academic performance.
- The report must be dated and team members must indicate their agreement or disagreement with the report's conclusions, and then sign the report. A team member who disagrees with the conclusions of this report must submit a separate statement of his or her own conclusions.
- The child must require special facilities, equipment, or methods to make his or her education program effective.
- The child must be certified by a group of qualified professionals and a parent as qualifying for and needing special education services.

**Speech or Language Impairment:** *To be eligible for special education and related services as a child with a speech or language impairment, a child must:*

- a. exhibit a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects educational performance; and
- b. require special facilities, equipment, or methods to make his or her educational program effective; and
- c. be diagnosed by a physician or speech-language pathologist as speech impaired; and
- d. be certified by a group consisting of qualified professionals and a parent of the child as qualifying for and needing special education services.

**Speech/language therapy:** The process of correcting speech and/or language problems or working to improve a person's ability to use speech or language. A specially trained speech therapist, clinician, or pathologist teaches on a one-to-one or small group basis.

**Standardized test:** A test given to a group of students under uniform conditions, with the same instructions, time limits, etc. Tests are designed by sampling the performance of a group of students to be used as 'norm' for judging achievement.

**Transfer student:** Student who transfers from one school district to another.

**Transition services:** Describes the period between preschool and school, school and adult services, or any other period where careful planning is needed to ensure the smooth transfer of records and information from one setting to another and the continuity of programming. The term commonly refers primarily to planning during high school for adult services.

**Traumatic Brain Injury:** *To be eligible for special education and related services as a child with a traumatic brain injury, a child must:*

- a. exhibit an injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial maladjustment that adversely affects educational performance. The term includes open or closed head injuries resulting in mild, moderate, or severe impairments in one or more areas, including cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. The term does not include brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or brain injuries induced by birth trauma; and
- b. require special facilities, equipment, or methods to make his or her educational program effective; and
- c. be diagnosed by a physician as having a traumatic brain injury; and
- d. be certified by a group consisting of qualified professionals and a parent as qualifying for and needing special education services.

**Visual Impairment:** *To be eligible for special education and related services as a child with a visual impairment, a child must:*

- a. exhibit a visual impairment, not primarily perceptual in nature, resulting in measured acuity of 20/70 or poorer in the better eye with correction, or a visual field restriction of 20 degrees as determined by an optometrist or ophthalmologist, which even with correction, adversely affects educational performance; or
- b. exhibit a physical eye condition that affects visual functioning to the extent that specially designed instruction is needed; and
- c. require special facilities, equipment, materials, or methods to make his or her educational program effective as determined by a teacher of students with visual impairments; and
- d. be certified by a group of qualified professionals, which includes a certified teacher of students with visual impairments, and a parent of the child as qualifying for and needing special education services.

**Vocational education:** An educational program that provides training in daily living skills, occupational skills for paid or unpaid employment and/or career preparation for students in secondary programs.

## Appendix B

# Resources

The State of Alaska, Departments of Education and Early Development and Health and Social Services jointly fund the Alaska Youth Initiative (AYI) to provide support and services to children with severe disabilities. AYI coordinates case planning, monitoring, program development, and funding “around” the youth and family. The AYI program’s goal is to keep children in their home communities and in the state.

Alaska Youth Initiative  
Division of Mental Health and Developmental  
Disabilities (DMHDD)  
P.O. Box 110620  
Juneau, AK 99811

Phone: (907) 465-3370 & (800) 465-4828  
Fax: (907) 465-2668  
TDD: (907) 465 2225

Alaska Independent Blind  
1102 W. International Airport Rd.,  
Anchorage, AK 99518

Phone: (907) 563-2525  
Fax: (907) 562-5951

Supported Services Program,  
Adult Learning Programs of Alaska  
122 First Ave Suite 201  
Fairbanks, AK 99701

Phone: (907) 452-6434  
Fax: (907) 451-6598  
TDD: (907) 452-6375  
Email: [alpa@ptialaska.net](mailto:alpa@ptialaska.net)  
Website: [www.adultlearning.org](http://www.adultlearning.org)

Additional assistance and materials are available which explain how to obtain appropriate public education for a person with a disability and what rights a parent has when advocating for a child with a disability. Materials and information on self-advocacy may be obtained through:

Disability Law Center of Alaska - Anchorage  
3330 Arctic Boulevard, Suite 103  
Anchorage, AK 99508

Phone: (907) 565-1002  
Fax: (907) 565-1000  
TDD: (907) 565-1002  
Toll Free: (800) 478-1234  
Website: [www.dlcak.org](http://www.dlcak.org)

Disability Law Center of Alaska - Bethel  
P.O. Box 2302  
Bethel, AK 99559

Disability Law Center of Alaska - Fairbanks  
250 Cushman, Suite 3H  
Fairbanks, AK 99701

Disability Law Center of Alaska - Juneau  
230 South Franklin, Suite 209  
Juneau, AK 99801

Anchorage School District,  
Special Education Parent Resource Center  
1901 South Bragaw, C&ISC Bldg.  
Anchorage, AK 99508

Phone: (907) 742-1520  
Fax: (907) 742-1515  
E-mail: [ross\\_brenda@msmail.asd.k12.ak.us](mailto:ross_brenda@msmail.asd.k12.ak.us)

PARENTS, Inc. is Alaska's only parent training and information center authorized under IDEA. It is run by families for families of children of all types of disabilities and ages and have parent mentors and advocates throughout Alaska. Contact one of these main offices for information or assistance:

Anchorage Parent Resource Center  
4743 E Northern Lights Blvd  
Anchorage, AK 99508

Phone: (800) 478-7678 or (907) 337-7678  
Fax: (907) 337-7671  
TTY: (907) 337-7629  
E-mail: [parents@parentsinc.org](mailto:parents@parentsinc.org)  
Website: [www.parentsinc.org](http://www.parentsinc.org)

Mat-Su Valley Parent Resource Center  
Wasilla and Palmer  
Phone: 1-800-478-7678

Fairbanks Parent Resource Center  
Interior and Northern Region  
Phone: 1-800-478-7678

Southeast Parent Resource Center  
P.O. Box 32613  
Juneau, AK 99803

Phone: (907) 586-6171  
Toll free: (888) 837-5537  
Fax: (907) 586-6433  
E-mail: [jans@alaska.net](mailto:jans@alaska.net)

Western Parent Resource Center  
PO Box 162  
Aniak, AK 99557  
Phone/Fax: (907) 675-4434

The South East Regional Resource Center with a staff of special education teachers and administrators, speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists and school psychologists, provide direct services to students primarily in rural, remote school districts. Staff offer a variety of inservices specifically designed to meet the needs of parents, school districts, school boards, teachers and paraprofessionals. Contact:

South East Regional Resource Center  
210 Ferry Way, Suite 200  
Juneau, AK 99801

Phone: (907) 586-6806  
Fax: (907) 463-3811  
TDD: (907) 586-6806  
Website: [www.serrc.org](http://www.serrc.org)

SESA employs Education Specialists with advanced training and experience in areas such as vision, hearing, emotional disturbance, orthopedic or health impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, and multiple disabilities. SESA consultants help schools design and implement appropriate and effective education programs for eligible students where trained personnel are otherwise unavailable because of remoteness and low student enrollments. Both short term and ongoing assistance may be provided through onsite and distance consultations, library services, and staff training. Contact:

Special Education Service Agency (SESA)  
2217 E. Tudor Road, Suite 1  
Anchorage, AK 99508

Phone: (907) 562-7372  
Fax: (907) 562-0545  
TDD: (907) 5638284  
Website: [www.sesa.org](http://www.sesa.org)

Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program  
1231 Gambell St.  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
Phone: 800-799-7570

Special Education Mediation Services  
Phone: 800-580-2209

## Appendix C

# Signs to Alert Parents That Their Child May Need Special Services

- Has difficulty handling small objects.
- Eyes are always red.
- Does not do things as well as a brother or sister did at the same age.
- Slow to learn new things.
- Does not talk or has limited speaking ability and cannot make needs or wants known.
- Is very tense, is easily upset or is extremely fearful.
- Cannot hear radio, television or voices at normal levels.
- Is very hostile, cruel to other children and enjoys hurting animals.
- Is unable to play successfully with children his own age, usually plays with younger children.
- Must be watched at all times to keep her out of danger.
- Seem to day-dream often.
- Is confined to bed.
- Speech is not clear and is hard to understand.
- Requires more than usual assistance in dressing, undressing, eating, toileting, etc.
- Has poor coordination and is extremely awkward when jumping, running or skipping.
- Does not play well with other children.
- Holds books or playthings close to his eyes.
- Squints to look at objects.
- Cannot pronounce words correctly.
- Child seeks a great deal of attention from parents.
- Is easily confused when given directions.
- Stumbles frequently or trips over small objects.
- Complains of earaches or has “running ears.”
- Shuts or covers one eye, tilts or thrusts head forward when looking at objects.
- Frequently loses his temper when not given his own way – screams, kicks, etc.
- Does not know common colors, such as red, blue, green and yellow.
- Tilts head or cups ear toward source of sounds when listening.
- Is unhappy, moody, or depressed most of the time.
- Is confined to a wheelchair, or must use braces, crutches or other aides.

Prepared by PARENTS, Inc. and  
Southeast Regional Resource Center

Funding provided by the Alaska Department  
of Education & Early Development

Written by Linda Maloney  
Design and illustrations by Elizabeth Knecht

**PUBLICATION NOTICE:**

This publication was published by the Department of Education & Early Development at the cost of \$0.46 per copy in Juneau, Alaska.

The publication is provided as a resource to Alaskan families to provide parental guidance in the area of special education.

This publication was paid for by state and federal funds.

August 2003

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This material is available on-line at [www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/sped](http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/sped)

For more information call (907) 465-8693.

