

SPECIAL NEEDS

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

For additional CHS Family Education Program materials, please call (714) 712-7888. For more information about CHS Early Learning and Education Programs, call (888) CHS-4KIDS.

Family Education Program materials and podcasts, and information on CHS programs can also be found on our website at www.chs-ca.org.



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C H I L D R E N ' S H O M E S O C I E T Y O F C A L I F O R N I A



A child with special needs is someone who requires specific support for health, intellectual, emotional, or physical development needs. All children share the same basic needs: to be accepted, cared for, loved, valued, and supported. As a parent, getting the information and help you need to support your child will promote his success.



Raising a child with special needs may be both challenging and rewarding. Remember that you are not alone. Your child's school, the state health department, and other parents are resources for you to learn more about your child's special needs. You and your child have legal rights to ensure that appropriate education and services are received.



★ WHO IS A CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS?

All children grow and develop. A child with special needs experiences some delays or differences in development. Children with special needs are also referred to as children with disabilities. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), children with special needs have physical or mental disabilities that may limit them from "major life activities," such as breathing, learning, hearing, seeing, speaking, or walking.

There are many different types of special needs. Your child may also have a combination of disabilities that may make learning or other activities more difficult. Some areas of developmental delays or disabilities are:

- Communication (stuttering, voice disorders)
- Intellectual (dyslexia, learning disability)
- Emotional and social (autism, emotional disturbance)
- Physical (allergies, being without a limb, blindness)

★ WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS? ★

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA is a federal law that protects a child with special needs by:

- Allowing parents or schools to request an evaluation for a child if they suspect that she may have special needs.
- Requiring public schools to provide free public education to children with identified special needs.
- Requiring each child with special needs to have access to an **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)** or **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**.
- Giving parents the right to a due process hearing if they disagree with any decisions regarding their child's evaluation, IFSP, or IEP.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

An IFSP is a plan to guide families and professionals in supporting the development of a child birth to 3 years who has special needs. The IFSP includes:

- Describing the child's current levels of development.
- Listing the resources, priorities, and concerns of the child and family.
- Setting measurable goals for the next 6 to 12 months.
- Determining which early intervention services, such as hearing services, home visits, or nutrition counseling, will be most beneficial to the child.

The IFSP team includes a parent or legal guardian, service coordinator, professional who is conducting the assessment of the child, and the people who will provide services. Participants may also include additional family members, a medical practitioner, therapist, social worker, or other professionals. The IFSP team meets every 6 months during the school year.

Your child can receive the care or services he needs to learn and grow.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Public school districts are required to develop an appropriate IEP for each child with special needs between ages 3 and 21 years. The IEP includes:

- Describing the child's special needs based upon an assessment.
- Outlining the child's special education.
- Setting annual, measurable goals for the child's educational and/or behavioral growth.
- Listing additional services the child may need to learn and progress in school, such as occupational and physical therapy assistive technology (AT), or special accommodations.

The IEP team includes a parent or legal guardian, caregiver or teacher, special education teacher, related service provider or specialist, such as a speech therapist or psychologist, representative, representative from the school district, and, if necessary, an interpreter. The IEP team may meet at least once during the school year.

★ LEARNING YOUR CHILD HAS SPECIAL NEEDS

It is common and understandable for parents who have learned that their child has special needs to react with strong emotions, such as denial, anger, fear, or guilt. Some parents feel alone in their experience or worry about their child's future. By recognizing and working through your emotions, you will be able to better meet the needs of your child, family, and yourself. You can manage your emotions by:

- Communicating with others about how you are feeling.
- Spending time with your child. (Be sure to have fun!)
- Seeking help from family, friends, and local support groups in your area for parents who have children with special needs.
- Learning more about your child's special needs and educational and legal rights.
- Taking care of yourself. It is difficult to meet the needs of your family and your child if your own needs have not been met. Remember to rest, exercise, eat regularly, and give yourself time to relax.
- Seeking family counseling if your emotions and responsibilities are overwhelming.

You are not alone. Ask questions and get the help you need to help your child.



★ WORKING WITH PROFESSIONALS

As a parent, you have the right to be involved in your child's education. At least once a year, you will meet with your child's IFSP or IEP team to discuss your child's progress and to set new goals for the next year. If you do not agree with the plans that the team has made, you may undergo mediation or due process in which you have an advocate or lawyer to help you settle disagreements with the team. Throughout the year, it is important to communicate with the professionals working with your child, such as your child's pediatrician and therapists. It is helpful to keep copies of academic records, IFSPs or IEPs, medical records, and all therapy notes in a folder or binder you can bring with you to meetings.

★ INCLUSION

Inclusion allows all children to learn in the same environment with the services and support they need to be successful. Children may receive special services in these settings. Some characteristics of an inclusive environment are:

- Appropriate expectations: Adults are more likely to have developmentally appropriate expectations for a child with special needs in an integrated setting, which may help intellectual, physical, and social growth.
- Understanding differences: Children learn to understand and accept each other's individual differences.
- Specialized instruction: Even though each child has different educational goals, child care providers and teachers make sure that their teaching methods meet the needs of each child.
- Focusing on strengths and abilities: The focus is on a child's strengths and abilities, providing support when necessary.
- Open communication: Child care providers and teachers communicate openly and regularly with parents and other professionals, making parents meaningful participants in their child's success. All professionals require your written, informed consent before sharing any confidential information regarding your child.
- Peer role models: Children have an opportunity to be role models for each other as they develop social skills.
- Relationships: Friendships, social relationships, empathy, and tolerance are encouraged between all children.

Inclusion benefits everyone.

TO LEARN MORE

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

SPECIAL PEOPLE, SPECIAL WAYS

Arlene Maguire, illustrated by Sheila Bailey

CAN I PLAY, TOO?

Mo Willems (author and illustrator)

BOOKS FOR ADULTS

DIFFERENTLY WIRED: RAISING AN EXCEPTIONAL CHILD IN A CONVENTIONAL WORLD

Deborah Reber

ORGANIZATIONS

FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

(800) 331-0688 or <https://fcsn.org/>

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

(800) 695-0285 or <https://www.aapd.com/>

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers

UNDERSTOOD: RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

<https://www.understood.org>