



Parent Guide:  
**Back to  
School**

The purpose of this guide is to empower parents and guardians to be actively involved in the transition of their child back to the school setting and the community.

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## Back to School

The main goal of going home from the hospital should be to help the child adjust to their health care needs and return to daily life, community and school. Going back to school can be a crucial piece of a child's healing and recovery. Additionally, having a good back-to-school plan will help with success and self-esteem. Therefore, planning for a child's return to school should start during the child's hospital stay.

### Eligibility Determination

All children from birth through age twenty who are suspected of having a disability may be referred for a special education evaluation. To determine eligibility for special education services, a parent/guardian or other appropriate individual must contact the school district or zoned campus for an evaluation for special education. The district must respond no later than 15 (fifteen) school days after receiving the request. At this time, the school district must give the parent a **Prior Written Notice** agreeing or refusing to evaluate your child along with a **Notice of Procedural Safeguards**. If the school district agrees to evaluate your child, it must give the parent the opportunity to give **Written Consent** for the evaluation. The school district must complete an initial evaluation and report no later than 45 (forty-five) school days from the day it receives a parent's written consent. However, if the parent disagrees with the results of the evaluation, the parent has the right to request an **Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)** by someone not working for the school district. Upon completion of any evaluations, the **Admission Review and Dismissal (ARD)** committee will determine the child's eligibility for special services and evaluate the educational needs of the child. The school district will provide a copy of the evaluation report and the ARD meeting documentation at no cost to the parent.

### Disability Conditions

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Texas Administrative Code (TAC) identify 13 (thirteen) disability categories. Public schools are required by law to provide special education services to eligible students.

### Eligibility Categories

- Autism (AU)
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH)
- Deaf-Blindness (DB)
- Emotional Disturbance (ED)
- Intellectual Disability (ID)
- Multiple Disabilities (MD)
- Non categorical Early Childhood (NCEC)
- Orthopedic Impairment (OI)
- Other Health Impairment (OHI)
- Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
- Speech Impairment (SI)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Visual Impairment (VI)

### School Placement

There are many choices for school placement when a child is released from the hospital and will need support. **Placement** is the amount of time in each school day that a student spends in the special education or in a general education setting. The school district is required by law to have a range of placements where your child can be taught. In deciding a child's placement, the ARD committee must make sure your child spends as much of their school day (as is appropriate) with children without disabilities in academic and non-academic settings, and in after school activities with the proper accommodations or modifications as required by your child. Talk with the school principal and the school nurse about any changes in health status, treatment goals, functional levels, medications and restrictions your child may have. Make sure to have requirements and any changes documented in the Health Care Plan, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan.

## 504 Plans

Section 504 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is designed to help parents/guardians work with educators to design personalized educational plans for students with physical or mental impairments who attend public schools or publicly funded private schools. The 504 plans legally ensure that students will be treated fairly at school. Unlike special education, a 504 plan is not supplemental in nature. Accommodations in a 504 plan are based on what the average person without a disability has access to, and not what an individual might need to reach their individual potential.

Students can qualify for 504 plans if they have physical or mental impairments that affect or limit any of their abilities to:

- walk, breathe, eat or sleep
- communicate, see, hear or speak
- read, concentrate, think or learn
- stand, bend, lift or work
- other major life activities and bodily functions

Examples of accommodations in 504 plans include:

- preferential seating
- extended time on tests and assignments
- reduced homework or classwork
- verbal, visual or technology aids
- modified textbooks or audio-video materials
- adjusted class schedules or grading
- verbal testing
- excused lateness, absence or missed classwork
- pre-approved nurse's office visits and accompaniment to visits
- occupational or physical therapy

## IEP

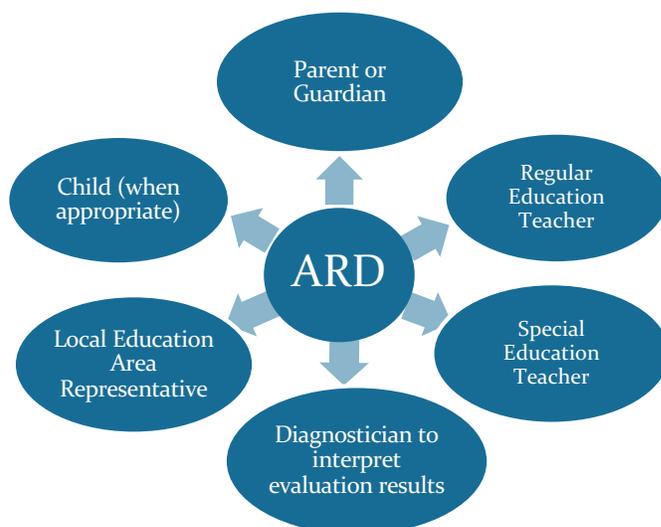
The Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) is a specialized design for instruction, provided at no cost to parents/guardians, available to students who have disabilities that fall under the 13 (thirteen) categories listed in the law

and a determination that the student's disability negatively affects their performance in school. If both of these criteria are met, the student will be eligible to receive an IEP and special education services under the IDEA. The most important part of any IEP outlines what services and supports a student with a disability will receive to help them make educational progress. All IEPs must include a statement of the "special education and related services and supplementary aids and services" that will be provided to the individual student with a disability. The IEP must also include how often, where and how long the student will receive the service.

## ARD Committee

The Admission Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee is the team that meets to determine a child's eligibility for special education services, based on a Full and Individual Evaluation report (FIE). In addition, the committee develops an IEP for the child as applicable. By law, the ARD committee must include the following members:

- Parent/Legal Guardian
- Special Education teacher
- Regular Education teacher
- Diagnostician or a person who can interpret the evaluation results
- Child (if appropriate)
- Local Education Area Representative
- Additional members (based on the student's disability and needs)



## Parents/Guardians: Helpful Tips for Preparing for the ARD Meeting

- Make a list of the progress you have seen in your child.
- Make a list of your primary concerns, and prioritize those concerns.
- Consider the child's Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP).
- Ask yourself how your child's disability impacts his or her learning.
- List your child's strengths.
- List your child's learning opportunities.
- Consider where you see your child in a year, for each goal area.
- List any goals or objectives you would like to include in your child's IEP.
- List any specific questions or concerns that you would like to discuss at the ARD meeting.
- Prior to the ARD meeting, ask for a draft copy of the IEP.
- Read the draft IEP, and make a list of any questions or concerns you have.

## Family Focus

Parents and guardians play a crucial role in helping children transition from the hospital setting to the school setting and community. You can help in this process by:

- Keeping in mind that when a child is ready, going back to school is an important part of healing.
- Visiting the school to familiarize yourself with the school and its emergency plan
- Educating all school personnel involved with your child about your child's condition. This helps prevent problems by staff knowing to watch out for signs for things like social isolation, learning or behavioral problems.
- Giving ample advance notice for absences for follow-up medical appointment.
- Advocating for appropriate accommodations and modifications for your child
- Including your child in the school re-entry plans and meetings when possible.
- Seeking help from your medical team, school counselors, school nurse and teachers to address any needs or mental issues that arise from a change in health status.
- Talking with the schools, doctors, teachers and your child to help smooth the transition.

## Parent/Guardian Resources

### Local Disability Contact

Statewide Programs and Services. Contact for 24/7 statewide information on medical care, requests for food, prescription assistance, child care and crisis counseling.

- **Website:** [211texas.org](http://211texas.org)
- **Phone:** 1-877-541-7905 or 2-1-1

### Office of Disability Services Coordination

Provides a connection to a comprehensive array of disability services, supports and opportunities in local communities.

- **Website:** [hhs.texas.gov/about/process-improvement/improving-services-texans/office-disability-services-coordination](http://hhs.texas.gov/about/process-improvement/improving-services-texans/office-disability-services-coordination)
- **Email:** [HHSCOfficeofDisabilityServicesCoordination@hhs.texas.gov](mailto:HHSCOfficeofDisabilityServicesCoordination@hhs.texas.gov)

### Texas Center for Disability Studies

Assists people with disabilities in navigating the support systems in Texas.

- **Website:** [tcds.edb.utexas.edu](http://tcds.edb.utexas.edu)
- **Phone:** 512-232-0740

### Texas Education Agency

The Texas Education Agency provides families with information regarding IDEA (Individual with Disabilities Education Act), Dyslexia and MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support).

- **Website:** [tea.texas.gov](http://tea.texas.gov)
- **Website:** [spedsupport.tea.texas.gov/topics/child-find](http://spedsupport.tea.texas.gov/topics/child-find)
- **Phone:** 512-424-6597 or 1-800-252-9668

### SPEDTex

The Special Education Information Center (SPEDTex) provides resources and interactive features for increasing family awareness of disabilities and special education processes, with the goal of improving partnership between schools and families.

- **Phone:** 1-855-773-3839
- **Email:** [inquire@spedtex.org](mailto:inquire@spedtex.org)
- **Live Chat:** [spedtex.org](http://spedtex.org)

### Attention Deficit Disorders Association (Southern Region)

The mission of ADDA-SR is to provide education, community support and resources for those impacted by ADHD and coexisting disorders, family members, mental health providers and educators.

- **Phone:** 281-894-4932
- **Email:** [addaoffice@pdq.net](mailto:addaoffice@pdq.net)
- **Spanish language assistance:** Judy German 936-293-9213