

A Parent's Guide to the IPRC and IEP

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Understanding the IPRC

The Education Act in Ontario requires that school boards provide, or purchase from another school board, special education programs and services for "exceptional" students. Exceptional students are defined as those whose "behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical, or multiple exceptionalities are such that they are considered to need placement in a special education program."

The role of the IPRC is to:

- 1) decide whether or not your child should be identified as exceptional;
- 2) identify the areas of your child's exceptionality;
- 3) decide an appropriate placement; and
- 4) review the identification and placement at least once each school year.

To start an IPRC, you must contact your child's principal, in writing, and request that your child be referred to an IPRC. Your child's principal may also make the referral on his or her own initiative. Within 15 school days of making the referral, the principal must send you written notification, including an approximate date of the IPRC meeting and a parent's guide containing information about the IPRC. The principal may also ask you for permission to obtain a psychological or health assessment of your child. While an educational assessment will also be performed, parental permission is not required for this.

At least 10 school days before the IPRC is to meet, you (and your child, if 16 or over) will receive written notice of the meeting and an invitation to attend. This letter will list the date, time, and place of the meeting, and will ask you to indicate if you can attend. Before the IPRC meets, you will also receive a copy of all information that the chair of the IPRC has received.

If you can't attend this meeting, contact the school principal immediately to arrange an alternative date or to let the principal know that you will not be attending. If, however, you cannot attend, the IPRC's written decision will be sent to you.

Either you or your child's principal may make a request for others to attend the IPRC meeting. As well, you are entitled to have a representative or advocate who may speak on your behalf.

What Happens at the Meeting?

After introductions are made, the IPRC reviews all available information about your child. They consider the educational assessments and the health or psychological assessments, if these were obtained. If they feel it will be useful, they may also interview your child (with your permission, if your child is under 16 years of age). They will also consider any information that you submit about your child or that the child, if 16 or over, submits on his or her own behalf. You are encouraged to ask questions during this meeting and to participate in any discussion.

Once all of the information has been presented and discussed, the committee will make its decision. This decision will include:

- whether or not the child is exceptional;
- if exceptional, the category and definition of the exceptionality;
- the strengths and needs of the student;
- the placement of the student. The IPRC will recommend placement in a regular class with special education services if, in the Committee's opinion, such a placement meets the student's needs and is consistent with the parent's preferences. Note that while the IPRC will consider the parent's preferences, these preferences are not binding, and the final decision about placement belongs to the IPRC.
- the IPRC's recommendations regarding a special education program and services; and
- where appropriate, the reasons for placing your child in a special education class.

What Happens Next?

You will receive a written statement of the IPRC's decision. If you did not attend the meeting, this will be mailed to you. You will be asked to sign this document to indicate that you agree with the IPRC's decisions and recommendations. If you attended the meeting, you may be asked to sign at that time. Note, however, you have 30 days to return the signed document to the IPRC. Once the document is signed and returned, the board will promptly notify the principal of the school at which the special education program is to be provided. That principal will then begin the process of developing your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

What If I Disagree with the Decision?

If you disagree with the IPRC's decision, you have 15 school days to request a second meeting of the IPRC. If after your second meeting you are still dissatisfied, you have 15 school days from the second decision to file an appeal. Your request for an appeal must be made in writing to the secretary of the school board. (The name and address of this person can be obtained from your child's principal). You must indicate the decision(s) with which you disagree and your reasons for disagreeing. If you disagree with the original decision but do not request a second meeting or file an appeal, the decision of the IPRC will automatically be implemented after 30 school days.

The Annual Review – Or Sooner

A review IPRC meeting will be held each year, during which your child's progress may be reviewed and the education plan revised. This review may be waived only with your written permission, and it is recommended that you do not waive this review. The annual IPRC is your chance to help ensure that your child begins each new school year in the most appropriate environment and with the most effective accommodations available.

You may also request a review IPRC any time after your child has been in a special education program for 3 months.

The Individual Education Plan (IEP)

The Individual Education Plan, commonly known as the IEP, is the school's written plan of action for the special education student. According to the Ministry of Education, the IEP "is a working document which describes the strengths and needs of an individual exceptional pupil, the special education program and services established to meet that pupil's needs, and how the program and services will be delivered. It also describes the student's progress."

An IEP must be prepared for all students who have been identified through the IPRC process, and a copy of this document must be provided to the parents (and the student, if 16 or over). IEPs may be prepared without the prerequisite of an IPRC, and schools are suggesting that parents of special needs students take this route. While there is a clear benefit in avoiding the delay of waiting for an IPRC meeting, it is important to note that the IEP is not binding without the IPRC. Despite the best efforts and intentions of your child's school, the written decision of the IPRC is the only guarantee that your child will receive the services he or she requires.

Within 30 school days of the student's placement in the special education program by an IPRC decision, the principal must ensure that the IEP is completed and a copy sent to the parent (and student, if 16 or over). The IEP team should ensure that everyone involved with the student is aware of the contents and requirements of the IEP.

A formal review and update of the IEP should take place at least once every reporting period; and team members should continuously monitor and adjust the plan as necessary.

View original source at <http://www.ldao.ca/introduction-to-ldsahd/ldsahs-in-depth/articles/about-education/a-parents-guide-to-the-iprc-and-iep/>