

## *“Become Your Child’s Best Advocate!”*

A properly written, maintained, and carried out IEP is your only assurance of quality appropriate services. It is the most important educational document dealing with your child. Your involvement is critical!

Good communication strategies will help you be more effective.

- Be informed! Know your rights. Knowledge is power.
- Be a good listener. Do your best to keep your emotions out of the equation and remain objective.
- Learn to negotiate. Settle things by peaceful agreement.
- List and prioritize your requests and concerns. Make your requests in writing.



*“I’ve been so overwhelmed.  
You have given me hope!”*

Tennessee mom after learning how to  
ask for services her son needed.

*“You are like a flower in the desert!”*

North Georgia mom after an IEP  
consultation meeting with LifeLine staff



*LifeLine is a Christian non-profit ministry organization based in Chattanooga, Tennessee serving families of those with special needs in the Chattanooga metropolitan area and beyond.*

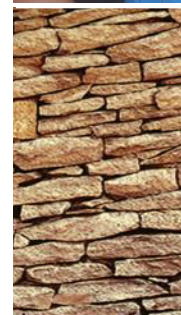
*Our purpose is to provide support, education, and resources to caregivers serving a family member living with a chronic or temporary, medical or educational, physical or emotional disability.*

**LifeLine, Inc.**

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LifeLine, Inc. on   
LifeLine Families on



*How Do I  
Navigate  
Special Education  
Services?*

  
**LifeLine**  
Reaching Families  
With Special Needs



*Unsure how to navigate the special education process?*

As with any journey, the next step depends on where you are. We will give you a very general overview of the process to receive special education services. Depending on where you are right now, depends on your next step. Are you not sure? Call us! We will help you figure out your next step.

LifeLine's staff specializes in taking the mystery out of the process and helping families resolve conflicts with the school system. Sometimes, when following the process does not get you the results you are looking for, communication strategies will help you share your child's needs. We are happy to support you as you try to resolve conflicts, or, if necessary, utilize your procedural safeguards to obtain special education services that are appropriate for your child's special needs.

## Where Do I Start?

### Referral >>>

Referral is the first step used to get special education services for a child. Referrals for initial evaluations can be received from parents, state or local education or intervention agencies.

### Written Notice & Parental Consent>>>

Schools must inform parents of their intent to evaluate or provide services. This written notice must be signed by the parents to agree.

### Evaluations >>>

Comprehensive evaluations include such things as health, motor, communication, hearing, vision, behavior, intelligence, social/emotional and academic performance. Parents should give input!

### Eligibility >>>

Students scores on these evaluations are compared to criteria in IDEA to determine if the child is eligible for special education services. If you disagree with the results, you can request additional evaluations.

### IEP Team >>>

Individual Education Programs (IEPs) are developed with input from parents, general and special education teachers, school system representatives, related service personnel, and others who might know your child. It may also include the child.

### Develop the IEP >>>

The child's IEP should include his strengths, your parent concerns, the present levels of academic and functional performance (academics, behavior, social and daily living skills), measurable annual goals, special education services, related services, any accommodations or modifications that might be necessary, transition services, assistive technology provisions as well as any other special factors. Goals and objectives are established based on evaluation results. Placement is determined based on goals the child's needs.

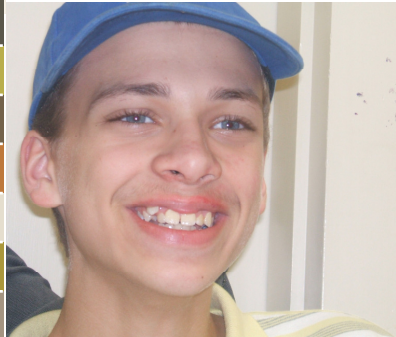
### Changing the Plan >>>

What happens if you want to change the program? You can call an IEP Team meeting with a request in writing and the meeting should be scheduled within 10 school days to address your concerns.

### IEP Tips >>>

- \*Ask questions.
- \*You do not have to sign until you have a completed copy of the IEP.
- \*You do have 14 days to review the unsigned IEP and either sign it or take the next step.
- \*Gather data.
- \*Always present your concerns in writing.

**IDEA provides for  
parental involvement in every part of  
your child's education program.**



### We are with you every step of the way >>>

LifeLine's staff and parent mentors are here to help you. With training classes that help you understand your special education rights and responsibilities under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and family consultations to help you prepare for IEP meetings, LifeLine provides the support parents need as they navigate this often confusing process. If you have questions about the process or how to increase the effectiveness of your IEP, give us a call!

### Categories Under Which Your Child Might be Eligible for Special Education Services\*>>>

Autism  
Deaf/Blindness  
Deafness  
Hearing Impairment  
Emotional Disturbance  
Other Health Impairment  
Speech/Language Impairment  
Mental Retardation (GA: Intellectual Disabilities)  
Multiple Disabilities

Orthopedic/Physical Impairment  
Specific Learning Disabilities  
Traumatic Brain Injury  
Visual Impairment/Blind

\*TN Specific—Developmental Delay,  
Functional Delay, Gifted  
\*GA Specific—Significant  
Developmental Delay