



a Family Guide to Special Education Services

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

VOLUME 6



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Family Guides for Special Education Services

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Other MDE Resources

- General resources for parents:
mdek12.org/OSE/Information-for-Families/Resources
- Parent Engagement and Support
mdek12.org/OSE/Information-for-Families
☎ 601.359.3498
- Procedural Safeguards: Your Family's Special Education Rights
mdek12.org/OSE/Dispute-Resolution

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY (ID)

ID

Definition

Intellectual Disability (ID) means significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. Significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning is defined as two (2) standard deviations or more below the mean, including a standard score of 70, on a measure of cognitive ability.

A child with an eligibility ruling of Intellectual Disability exhibits learning problems which vary in degree from mild to severe. Delays in cognitive abilities, adaptive behavior, and developmental milestones must have been evidenced during a child’s developmental period and, upon entering school, such delays must have adversely affected a child’s educational performance.



Evaluation Requirements

When the evaluation team is considering eligibility under the Intellectual Disability category, the multidisciplinary team evaluation report and/or eligibility determination report must include results of:

- A. An individual standardized achievement test;
- B. An individual standardized measure of cognitive abilities;
- C. A norm-referenced measure of adaptive behavior, which must include the home version of the measure if it is a component of the measure; completed by the primary caregiver(s). If the adaptive behavior measure allows for an informant other than the primary caregiver, the informant must be knowledgeable of how the child functions outside the school environment.



Helpful Vocabulary

Accommodation—Tool that enables a student with a disability to better access the general curriculum. Some accommodations are applicable to instruction only (for example, an assignment that is shortened but still addresses the state standard); others are permitted for both instruction and assessment (for example, change in formatting or timing).

Adaptive behavior—The collection of conceptual, social, and practical skills that are learned and performed by people in their everyday lives.

- Conceptual skills (e.g., language and literacy; money, time, and number concepts; self-direction; etc.)
- Social skills (e.g., interpersonal skills, social responsibility, self-esteem, gullibility, naïveté [i.e., wariness], social problem-solving, the ability to follow rules/obey laws and to avoid being victimized, etc.)
- Practical skills (e.g., activities of daily living, occupational skills, healthcare, travel/transportation, schedules/routines, safety, use of money, use of the telephone etc.)

Antecedent Behavioral Consequences Chart (ABC)—Tool used to create a record of disruptive behaviors that is utilized as part of a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) to determine the triggers of an undesired behavior.

Applied behavior analysis (ABA)—A method of teaching designed to analyze and change behavior in a way that can be measured to show progress. Also called behavior modification. Skills are broken down into their simplest parts and then taught to the child through a system of reinforcement.

Behavior intervention plan (BIP)—A plan of positive interventions in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) of a child whose behaviors impeded her or his learning or that of others.

Classroom management—Techniques teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive during a class.

Cognitive abilities—The brain-based skills needed in the acquisition of knowledge, manipulation of information, and reasoning. They have more to do with the mechanisms of how people learn, remember, problem-solve, and pay attention, rather than with actual knowledge.

Data-based decisions—A process that involves using information collected through observation/assessments to determine the intensity and duration of needed interventions.

Developmental milestones—A set of functional skills or age-specific tasks that most children can do at a certain age range.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)—Foundational requirement of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) stipulating that special education and related services must be provided at public expense (that is, without charge to parents), meet state requirements, include an appropriate education that leads to outcomes such as employment or higher education, and conform to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) prepared for the student.

Functional behavioral assessment (FBA)—A student behavior assessment used when developing positive behavioral interventions for a child with a disability.

Inclusion—The practice of educating children with disabilities in the general education classroom. Inclusion in special education programs is an important part of the continuum of special education placements required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In an inclusion classroom, a student with disabilities feels included, accepted, and makes friends, and the student's peers learn to better understand their classmate's disabilities.

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)—A law that makes available a free public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)—A document written for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with state and federal policies.

Modification—Adjustment to an assignment, test, or activity in a way that significantly simplifies or lowers the standard or alters the original measurement. Modifications change what a student is taught or expected to learn, and most are applicable to students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Progress monitoring—A form of assessment in which a student’s behavior is evaluated on a regular basis to provide students and teachers useful feedback about performance.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)—A schoolwide approach to improve student behavior.

Related services—Additional support services that a child with disabilities requires, such as transportation, occupational, physical, speech pathology services, interpreters, medical services, etc.

Significant cognitive disability (SCD)—In order for a student to be classified as having a significant cognitive disability, all of the following criteria must be true:

- The student demonstrates significant cognitive deficits and poor adaptive skill levels (as determined by that student’s comprehensive evaluation) that prevent participation in the standard academic curriculum or achievement of the academic content standards, even with accommodations and modifications.
- The student requires extensive direct instruction in both academic and functional skills in multiple settings to accomplish the application and transfer of those skills.
- The student’s inability to complete the standard academic curriculum is neither the result of excessive or extended absences nor is primarily the result of visual, auditory, or physical disabilities, emotional behavioral disabilities, specific learning disabilities, or social, cultural, or economic differences.

Social emotional learning (SEL)—The process of developing students' and adults' social and emotional competencies—the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that individuals need to make successful choices.

Speech-language pathologist (SLP)—A speech-language pathologist works to prevent, assess, diagnose, and treat speech, language, social communication, cognitive communication, and swallowing disorders in children and adults.

Specially designed instruction (SDI)—Universally required component that defines special education and stipulates that students with disabilities receive instruction that includes changes in content, methodology, and/or delivery. It is not dependent on setting and is a primary responsibility of special education professionals.

Ways to Help at Home

Six Skills for Success in Life With a Learning Disability

Taken from HelpGuide International
 “Helping children with learning disabilities”—
helpguide.org/articles/autism-learning-disabilities/helping-children-with-learning-disabilities.htm

Authors: Gina Kemp, M.A., Melinda Smith, M.A.,
 and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D.

A 20-year study that followed children with learning disabilities into adulthood identified the following six life success attributes. By focusing on these broad skills, you can help give your child a huge leg up in life.

1 Self-awareness and self-confidence—Self-awareness (i.e., knowledge about strengths, weaknesses, and special talents) and self-confidence are very important for children with learning disabilities. Struggles in the classroom can cause children to doubt their abilities and question their strengths.

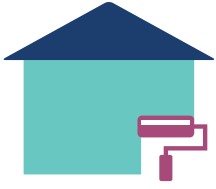


- Ask your child to list their strengths and weaknesses and talk about your own strengths and weaknesses with your child.
- Encourage your child to talk to adults with learning disabilities and to ask about their challenges and their strengths.
- Work with your child on activities that are within her or his capabilities. This will help build feelings of success and competency.
- Help your child develop her or his strengths and passions. Feeling passionate and skilled in one area may inspire hard work in other areas too.

2 Being proactive—A proactive person is able to make decisions and take action to resolve problems or achieve goals. For people with learning disabilities, being proactive also involves self-advocacy (e.g., asking for a seat at the front of the classroom) and the willingness to take responsibility for choices.



- Talk with your learning-disabled child about problem solving and share how you approach problems in your life.
- Ask your child how she or he approach problems. How do problems make your child feel? How does your child decide what action to take?
- If your child is hesitant to make choices and take action, try to provide some safe situations to test the water, like choosing what to make for dinner or thinking of a solution for a scheduling conflict.
- Discuss different problems, possible decisions, and outcomes with your child. Have your child pretend to be part of the situation and make her or his own decisions.



3 Perseverance—Perseverance is the drive to keep going despite challenges and failures, and the flexibility to change plans if things aren't working. Children (or adults) with learning disabilities may need to work harder and longer because of their disability.

- Talk with your child about times when she or he persevered. Why did she or he keep going? Share stories about when you have faced challenges and not given up.
- Discuss what it means to keep going even when things aren't easy. Talk about the rewards of hard work and the opportunities missed by giving up.
- When your child has worked hard but failed to achieve her or his goal, discuss different possibilities for moving forward.



4 The ability to set goals—The ability to set realistic and attainable goals is a vital skill for life success. It also involves the flexibility to adapt and adjust goals according to changing circumstances, limitations, or challenges.

- Help your child identify a few short- or long-term goals and write down steps and a timeline to achieve the goals. Check in periodically to talk about progress and make adjustments as needed.
- Talk about your own short- and long-term goals with your child, as well as what you do when you encounter obstacles.
- Celebrate with your child when she or he achieves a goal. If certain goals are proving too hard to achieve, talk about why and how plans or goals might be adjusted to make them possible.



5 Knowing how to ask for help—Strong support systems are key for people with learning disabilities. Successful people are able to ask for help when they need it and reach out to others for support.

- Help your child nurture and develop good relationships. Model what it means to be a good friend and relative so your child knows what it means to help and support others.
- Demonstrate to your child how to ask for help in family situations.
- Share examples of people needing help, how they got it, and why it was good to ask for help. Present your child with role-play scenarios that might require help.





6 The ability to handle stress—If children with learning disabilities learn how to regulate stress and calm themselves, they will be better equipped to overcome challenges.

- Use words to identify feelings and help your child learn to recognize specific feelings.
- Ask your child the words she or he would use to describe stress. Does your child recognize when she or he is feeling stressed?
- Encourage your child to identify and participate in activities that help reduce stress, such as sports, games, music, or writing in a journal.
- Ask your child to describe activities and situations that make she or he feel stressed. Break down the scenarios and talk about how overwhelming feelings of stress and frustration might be avoided.

Tips for Parents

Adapted from Center for Parent Information & Resources—parentcenterhub.org/intellectual

- Learn about intellectual disability. The more you know, the more you can help yourself and your child.
- Be patient, be hopeful. Your child, like every child, has a whole lifetime to learn and grow.
- Encourage independence in your child. For example, help your child learn daily care skills, such as dressing, feeding him or herself, using the restroom, and grooming.
- Give your child chores. Keep her or his age, attention span, and abilities in mind. Break down jobs into smaller steps. For example, if your child's job is to set the table, first ask her or him to get the right number of napkins, then put one at each family member's place at the table. Do the same with the utensils, going one at a time. Tell your child what to do, step by step, until the job is done. Demonstrate how to do the job and assist your child when needed.
- Give your child frequent feedback, praising your child when she or he does well.
- Find out what skills your child is learning at school and find ways to apply those skills at home. For example, if the teacher is going over a lesson about money, take your child to the supermarket with you. Help your child count out the money to pay for your groceries as well as count the change.
- Find opportunities in your community for social activities, such as scouts, recreation center activities, sports, and so on. These will help your child build social skills as well as have fun.
- Talk to other parents whose children have an intellectual disability. Parents can share practical advice and emotional support. Find out more about, and connect with, parent groups.
- Meet with the school and develop an IEP to address your child's needs. Keep in touch with your child's teachers. Find out how you can support your child's school learning at home.
- Take pleasure in your child. She or he is a treasure. Learn from your child, too. Those with intellectual disabilities have a special light within—let it shine.



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Strategies for Disciplining a Child With Learning Disabilities

What experts call *behavior management* is not about punishing or demoralizing your child. Instead, it is a way to set boundaries and communicate expectations in a nurturing, loving way. Discipline—correcting children’s actions, showing them what’s right and wrong, what’s acceptable and what’s not—is one of the most important ways all parents can show their children that they love and care about them.

Here are some strategies to help parents discipline a child who has learning disabilities.

- **Be consistent.** The benefits of discipline are the same whether children have special needs or not. In fact, children who have trouble learning respond very well to discipline and structure. But for this to work, parents must make discipline a priority and be consistent.

Correcting children is about establishing standards—whether that’s setting a morning routine or dinnertime manners—and then teaching them how to meet those expectations. All kids, regardless of their needs and abilities, crave this consistency. When they can predict what will happen next in their day, they feel confident and safe.

Yes, they will test these boundaries—all kids do. But it’s up to you to affirm that these standards are important and let your child know that you believe she or he can meet them.

- **Learn about your child’s condition.** To understand your child’s behavior, you must understand the things that affect it, including her or his condition. No matter what challenge your child faces, try to learn as much about the unique medical, behavioral, and psychological factors that affect her or his development.

Read up on the condition and ask the doctor about anything you don’t understand. Also talk to members of your child’s care team and other parents, especially those with children who have similar issues, to help determine if your child’s challenging behavior is typical or related to her or his individual challenges. For example, can another parent relate to the trouble you have getting your 5-year-old dressed each morning? Sharing experiences will give you a way to measure your expectations and learn which behaviors are related to your child’s diagnosis and which are purely developmental. You also might pick up some helpful tips about how to handle the behavior you are noticing.

If you have trouble finding parents of children with similar challenges, consider joining an online support or advocacy group for families of children with special needs. Once you know what typical behavior for your child’s age and health challenges is, you can set realistic behavioral expectations.



- **Define expectations.** Establishing rules and discipline are a challenge for any parent, so keep your behavior plan simple and work on one challenge at a time. As your child meets one behavioral goal, she or he can strive for the next one.

Here are some pointers.

- Use rewards and consequences.
- Work within a system that includes rewards (i.e., positive reinforcement) for good behavior and natural consequences for bad behavior. Natural consequences are punishments that are directly related to the behavior. For example, if your child is throwing food, you would take away the plate.

But not every child responds to natural consequences, so you might have to match the consequence to your child's values. For instance, a child with autism who likes to be alone might consider a traditional time-out rewarding. Instead, take away a favorite toy or video game for a period of time.

After correcting your child for doing something wrong, offer a substitute behavior. So if your child is talking too loudly or hitting you to get your attention, work on replacing that with an appropriate behavior such as saying or signaling help me or getting your attention using appropriate methods, such as tapping your shoulder. Active ignoring is a good consequence for misbehavior meant to get your attention. This means not rewarding bad behavior with your attention, even if it's negative attention, like scolding or yelling.



- **Use clear and simple messages.** Communicate your expectations to your child in a simple way. For kids with special needs, this may require more than just telling them. You may need to use pictures, role-play, or gestures to be sure your child knows what she or he is working toward.

Keep verbal and visual language simple, clear, and consistent. Explain as simply as possible what behaviors you want to see. Consistency is key, so make sure that grandparents, babysitters, siblings, and teachers are all on board with your messages.



- **Offer praise.** Encourage accomplishment by reminding your child what she or he can earn for meeting the goals you've set, whether it's getting stickers, screen time, or listening to a favorite song. Be sure to praise and reward your child for effort as well as success. So, a child who refuses to poop in the toilet may be rewarded for using a potty near the toilet.

Another strategy is to practice time-in. When you catch your child doing something right, praise him or her for it. In certain cases, time-in can be more effective than punishment, because kids naturally want to please their parents. By getting credit for doing something right, they will likely want to do it again.

- **Establish a routine.** Children with certain conditions, like autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), respond particularly well to discipline that is based on knowing exactly what will happen next. So, try to stick to the same routine every day. For example, if your child tends to melt down in the afternoon after school, set a schedule for free time. Maybe he or she needs to have a snack first and then do homework before playtime.

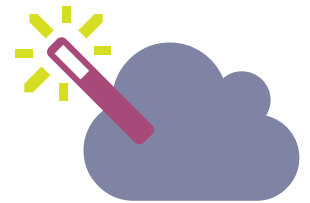
Charts can be helpful. If your child is nonverbal or preverbal, draw pictures or use stickers to indicate what comes next. Set a realistic schedule and encourage input from your child where appropriate.



- **Believe in your child.** If your child kept falling after taking her or his first few steps, would you get him or her some crutches or a wheelchair? No. So don't do the same with a child with special needs. Maybe your child can't put on her or his shoes the first time or the 10th time, but keep trying. Encourage that!

When you believe your child can do something, you empower her or him to reach that goal. The same is true for behavior. For example, if your child is too aggressive when playing with other kids, don't stop the play altogether. Instead, work with your child to limit the physicality of the play. You may want to plan for nonphysical activities during play dates, like arts and crafts projects. Use discipline where necessary in the form of time-outs, enforced turn-taking, and rules like no touching, and provide rewards when your wishes are met.

Whatever you do, do not give up on your child when the going gets tough. Bad behavior that is ignored in the early years can become unbearable, even dangerous, in the teen years and adulthood. Be patient and take the time to work with your child to help reach her or his best potential. Your vote of confidence is sometimes all your child needs to succeed.



- **Have confidence in your abilities.** Discipline is an exhausting undertaking. There will be good days when you're amazed by your child's progress, bad days when it seems like all your hard work was forgotten, and plateaus where it seems like further progress is impossible. But remember this: Behavior management is a challenge for all parents, even those of children who are typically developing. So don't give up!



If you set an expectation in line with your child's abilities, and you believe he or she can accomplish it, odds are it will happen. If your efforts don't result in changes, talk to your child's doctor, therapist, or behavior specialist to help reach your goals. She or he can work with you to develop a behavior plan tailored to your child's special needs.

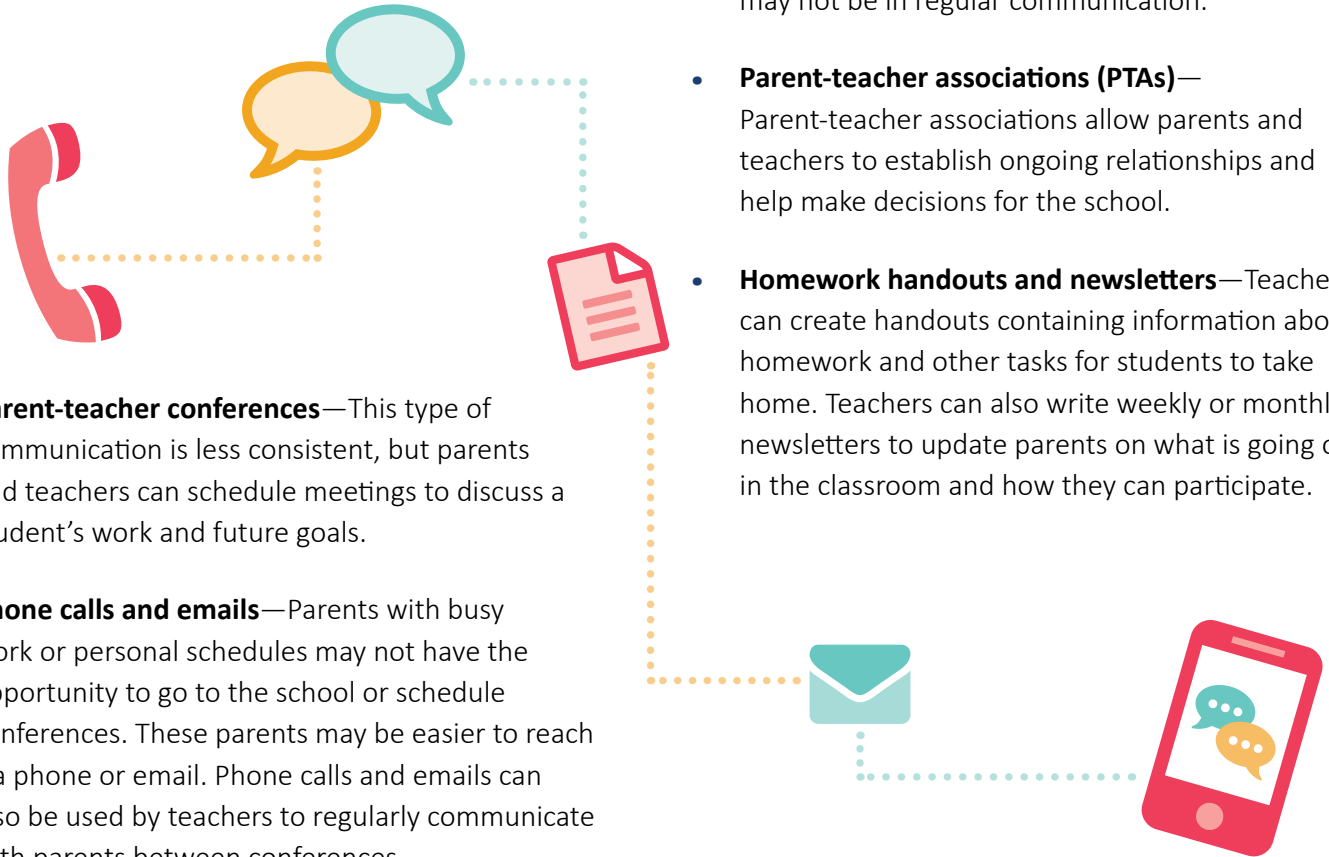


Successful Parent-Teacher Communication

Adapted from American University "Parent-teacher communication: strategies for effective parent inclusion & engagement"—
soeonline.american.edu/blog/parent-teacher-communication

Communication is key to a successful inclusion classroom. Parents, general education teachers, and special educators can try the following tactics for successful parent-teacher communication:

- Regular in-person communication**—This type of communication works great for parents who typically drop off and pick up their children from school.
- Open houses**—Most schools host annual open houses where parents can visit their children’s classrooms. This allows teachers to meet parents for the first time or meet a second parent who may not be in regular communication.
- Parent-teacher associations (PTAs)**—Parent-teacher associations allow parents and teachers to establish ongoing relationships and help make decisions for the school.
- Homework handouts and newsletters**—Teachers can create handouts containing information about homework and other tasks for students to take home. Teachers can also write weekly or monthly newsletters to update parents on what is going on in the classroom and how they can participate.
- Parent-teacher conferences**—This type of communication is less consistent, but parents and teachers can schedule meetings to discuss a student’s work and future goals.
- Phone calls and emails**—Parents with busy work or personal schedules may not have the opportunity to go to the school or schedule conferences. These parents may be easier to reach via phone or email. Phone calls and emails can also be used by teachers to regularly communicate with parents between conferences.
- Text messages**—Some teachers use mass text messages or special messaging apps to communicate with parents. Several text services, such as Remind, cater specifically to teachers.
- Class websites**—Teachers can create classroom websites to post announcements, homework, and reminders to help ensure they don’t get lost in communication between the classroom and home. Similar methods of communication include social media sites or learning management platforms such as ClassDojo.





Resources

- Best Buddies International**—A national organization dedicated to ending the social, physical, and economic isolation of people with intellectual and development disabilities. The intellectual disability community that Best Buddies serves includes, but is not limited to, people with Down syndrome, autism, Fragile X, Williams syndrome, cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, and other undiagnosed disabilities.

bestbuddies.org

800.892.8339
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**—Find information and resources for people with intellectual disabilities (e.g., definitions, signs, what to do if my child may have an intellectual disability, etc.).

cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/facts-about-intellectual-disability.html
- National Down Syndrome Congress Programs and Resources**—The leading national resource of support and information for anyone touched by or seeking to learn about Down syndrome, offering resources on a wide array of topics, some created at the center and others shared from trusted sources.

ndscenter.org/programs-resources

800.232.6372
- The ARC for People With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**—An organization that promotes and protects the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes. It shares knowledge and conducts trainings and events to help connect communities and inform efforts to broaden inclusion across the country.

thearc.org/our-initiatives/education

800.433.5255
- The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Office of Special Education**—A service-oriented office that seeks to improve the education experience for children with disabilities

mdek12.org/OSE
- Think College**—A national organization—part of the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston—dedicated to developing, expanding, and improving inclusive higher education options for people with intellectual disability. The family resources guide answers some of the most frequently asked questions that families have about college options for students with intellectual disabilities.

thinkcollege.net/family-resources

617.287.4300
- U.S. Department of Education**—Their mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

ed.gov
- U.S. Department of Education-Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services**—The mission of the Office of Special Education Programs is to lead the nation's efforts to improve outcomes for children with disabilities, birth through 21, and their families, ensuring access to fair, equitable, and high-quality education and services.

ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers

MDE-specific resources include:

- General resources for parents:**

mdek12.org/OSE/Information-for-Families/Resources
- Parent Engagement and Support**

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