Your Parent Rights at a Glance

A practical introduction to the protections families have in special education.

A Note for Families

Special education comes with protections designed to make sure families are informed and included. These are often called procedural safeguards. This guide summarizes the rights parents use most. It is a starting point, not a substitute for individualized guidance or the official Procedural Safeguards Notice.

> DEA PERSPECTIVE
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> **Your rights are tools for partnership.**
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> Knowing your rights isn't about conflict. It helps you ask better questions, stay informed, and work with the school as an equal member of your child's team.

Rights to Know

Procedural Safeguards Notice	The school must give you a copy of your rights at least once a year and at certain key points, such as an initial referral or request for evaluation.
Prior Written Notice	When the school proposes or refuses to change something about your child's identification, evaluation, placement, or services, it must explain what, why, and what it considered, in writing.
Informed Consent	The school must have your written consent before an initial evaluation and before starting services for the first time. You may withdraw consent for services in writing.
Participation	You have the right to take part in meetings about your child's identification, evaluation, placement, and services.
Access to Records	You may review your child's education records without unnecessary delay, before any IEP meeting, and within 45 calendar days of your request.
Independent Evaluation	If you disagree with the school's evaluation, you may request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) at public expense.

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When You Disagree

Talk with the Team	Many concerns can be resolved by requesting a meeting and asking for decisions in writing.
Mediation	A voluntary, confidential meeting with a neutral mediator, at no cost to families.
State Complaint	A written complaint to the state, which investigates and usually issues a decision within 60 calendar days.
Due Process	A formal hearing before a hearing officer. A resolution meeting is generally held first, within 15 calendar days.

Common Misconceptions

MYTH	WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW
I have to sign everything at the meeting.	You can take time to review documents. Consent is required for specific decisions, such as an initial evaluation and starting services.
Agreeing to an evaluation means agreeing to services.	These are separate decisions, and each requires its own consent.
Disagreeing will hurt my relationship with the school.	Respectful disagreement is a normal part of the process and often leads to better decisions.

Questions About Your Rights?

Every situation is different, and no guide can replace individualized support. If you would like help understanding a notice, preparing for a meeting, or deciding on next steps, schedule a consultation with Distributed Education Advocacy.

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