

Addressing Bullying Through the IEP

Let's face it, bullying can be pretty scary and should concern any parent who has a child attending school. It can be especially worrisome for parents who have children with disabilities. Research shows that children with disabilities are more likely to be targeted than their non-disabled peers.

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) can be a helpful tool in a bullying prevention plan. Every child receiving special education is entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and bullying can sometimes become an obstacle to receiving that education.

The ARD committee, which includes the parent, can identify strategies that can be written into the IEP to help stop bullying. It may be helpful to involve the child, when appropriate, in the decision-making process.

Here are some practical ways to work with your child's school to address bullying through their IEP.

- Ask for a copy of your school district's bullying policy and procedures.
- Talk with your child about what's happening at school and with their peers. Watch for any changes in behavior and document those changes, if they occur.
- Meet with your child's teachers and others who work with your child to discuss the situation. Ask them to monitor your child over a period of time to track any changes in their behavior or interactions with peers. Make sure monitoring occurs in structured and non-structured settings (classroom, hallways, lunch room, bathroom, bus and recess).
- Document the issue and request it be placed in your child's educational file.
- Develop a written plan with your child's ARD committee to address bullying.
- Understand the difference between a school-wide approach to bullying and a child-centered approach.
 - School-wide approaches include getting other kids involved in resolving the bullying issue like creating an inclusive environment.



Resources for Families

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Partners Resource Network



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- Child-centered approaches involve the child gaining a new skill or learning how to appropriately respond to bullying such as having a bank of responses to say to a bully. Another example might be allowing your child to leave class early to avoid bullying during passing periods in the hallway.
- Consider what is making your child vulnerable to being bullied. Identifying the specific problem your child is having makes it easier to resolve it through the IEP. For example, is it your child's inability to read social cues, inability to respond effectively, or inability to self-advocate? Once you've identified areas of concern, you can address them with specific goals and objectives in the IEP.
- Discuss with your child's school ways raise awareness and address bullying on a school-wide level.
- Identify a trusted adult in the school who your child would be comfortable going to for assistance and reporting of bullying.

When your child is being bullied at school take time to think about creative ways you can address the issue with their school. The school may initially view bullying as only a disciplinary issue, however there are specific situations that bullying should be addressed through the IEP. Consider if bullying is hindering your child's ability to learn and access FAPE. When this is the case the bullying should be addressed through your child's IEP.

Appropriate special education support and instruction for students with disabilities in public school sets children up for success in the mainstream education environment.



Have Questions about ARD Meetings?

Contact Partners Resource Network for assistance at 1-800-866-4726. Our Regional Coordinators are ready to help you with all your IEP concerns and can provide one-on-one individual assistance to fit your needs. All of our services are free of charge to parents and youth with disabilities.



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