

# *Empowered to Advocate*

## **A Family Guide to Education Support Plans**



AUTISM FAMILY  
SUPPORT CENTER



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## **A Family Guide to Education Support Plans**

Created by the Williams-Edwards Autism Family  
Support Center

Support, Structure, and Strength for Every Educational Journey





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## **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

Navigating special education can feel overwhelming. Whether you're new to this process or a seasoned advocate, this guide was created to walk alongside you every step of the way.

At the Williams-Edwards Autism Family Support Center, we advocate for autism awareness, inclusive education, and family empowerment. Our goal is to equip families with knowledge and confidence to speak up, ask questions, and be heard in every educational meeting and milestone.

This guide includes everything you need to understand, prepare for, and organize around education support plans—including IEPs, 504s, ILPs, FBAs, and BIPs.

*You are not too late. You are not too much. You are exactly what your child needs.*

***Let this guide be your companion on the journey. We're here with you.***

## **SECTION 2: UNDERSTANDING SUPPORT PLAN TYPES**

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### **IEP (Individualized Education Program)**

A legal document under IDEA for students needing specialized instruction. Includes goals, services, accommodations, and progress monitoring.

### **504 Plan**

An accommodations plan under Section 504 for students with disabilities who don't require specialized instruction but need support.

### **ILP (Individualized Learning Plan)**

Used in some schools for English Language Learners or general student goal-setting. Not legally binding.

### **FBA (Functional Behavioral Assessment)**

A structured method of identifying why problem behaviors occur and how to support positive changes.

### **BIP (Behavior Intervention Plan)**

A plan developed from the FBA outlining behavior goals, interventions, and strategies to support behavioral success.

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## **SECTION 3: HOW TO START AN IEP IN TENNESSEE**

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### **Step 1: Referral**

Submit a written request for evaluation to the school administrator or special education coordinator.

### **Step 2: Consent**

You must give signed consent. The school then has 60 calendar days to complete evaluations.

### **Step 3: Eligibility Meeting**

Held to determine if your child qualifies under IDEA. You will review the results and determine eligibility.

### **Step 4: Develop the IEP**

If eligible, the school has 30 calendar days to draft and hold the IEP meeting.

### **Step 5: Services Begin**

After signing the IEP, services begin as soon as possible (usually within 10 school days).

- ✓ You can bring support people to any meeting.
  - ✓ You can request a meeting or reevaluation at any time.
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## SECTION 4: TRANSFER GUIDANCE BETWEEN SCHOOLS & DISTRICTS

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### ***Transferring within Tennessee:***

- New school must implement comparable services immediately.
- IEP must be reviewed within 30 school days.

### ***Transferring from Out of State:***

- New school provides comparable services.
- They may adopt the IEP or perform a new evaluation.

### ***Parent Tips:***

- Keep copies of your child's latest IEP and assessments.
  - Notify the new school early and in writing.
  - Ask to meet the new support team.
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# SECTION 5: IEP MEETING TRACKER

Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

## Attendees:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.







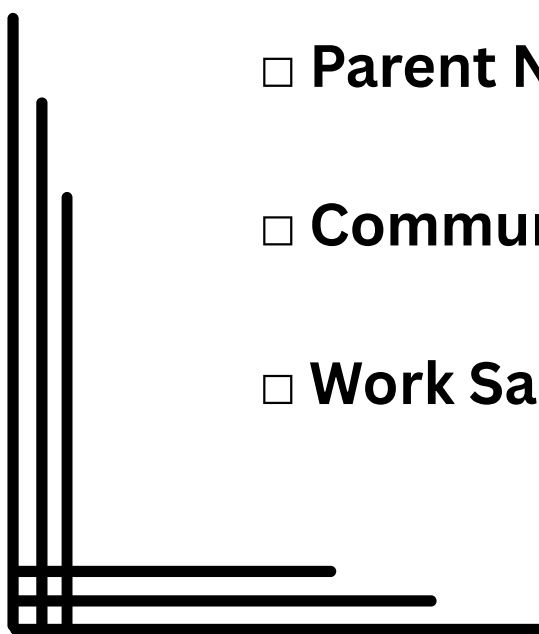


# SECTION 7: COMMUNICATION LOG

Date	Contact Person	Topic	Follow-Up



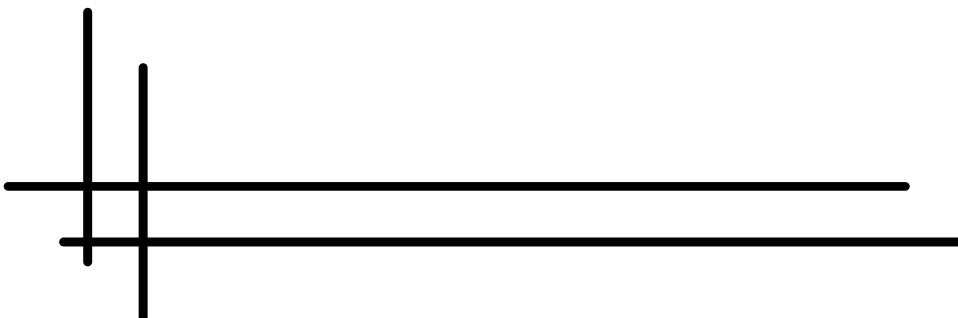
## **SECTION 8: DOCUMENT CHECKLIST**

- Evaluation Reports**
  - Draft IEP**
  - Final Signed IEP**
  - BIP (Behavior Plan)**
  - Meeting Notices**
  - Progress Reports**
  - Prior Written Notices**
  - Parent Notes & Requests**
  - Communication Logs**
  - Work Samples**
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## SECTION 9: PARENT ADVOCACY CHECKLIST



- I received the meeting notice in advance.
- I reviewed the draft IEP before the meeting.
- I shared my concerns and priorities.
- I participated in developing goals and services.
- I received a copy of the final IEP.
- I documented follow-up needs.
- I tracked service delivery after the meeting.



## SECTION 10: WINS THIS MONTH

*Take time to celebrate even the smallest progress.*

**My child showed growth in:**

**I advocated for:**

**A team member who supported us well:**

**Something I'm proud of:**

*Keep going. You're doing more than you know.*

# **SECTION 11: GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

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- **IEP – Individualized Education Program**
  - **504 Plan – Support plan for students who don't qualify for special ed but need accommodations**
  - **ILP – Individualized Learning Plan**
  - **IDEA – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**
  - **FAPE – Free Appropriate Public Education**
  - **LRE – Least Restrictive Environment**
  - **PLAAFP – Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance**
  - **PWN – Prior Written Notice**
  - **FBA – Functional Behavioral Assessment**
  - **BIP – Behavior Intervention Plan**
  - **ESY – Extended School Year Services**
  - **Transition Plan – Part of the IEP by age 14**
  - **Related Services – Services like OT, speech, counseling, etc.**
  - **Reevaluation – Every 3 years or as needed**
  - **Manifestation Determination – Review to determine if behavior was due to disability**
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## **SECTION 12: LEGAL NOTES FOR TENNESSEE FAMILIES**

### **Procedural Safeguards**

- Parents receive these at least once a year. They outline your legal rights.

### **Timelines**

- 60 days for evaluations
- 30 days to write IEP after eligibility
- Annual review of IEP
- 3-year reevaluation unless waived

### **Prior Written Notice (PWN)**

- Schools must notify you in writing before changing services, placement, or refusing a request.

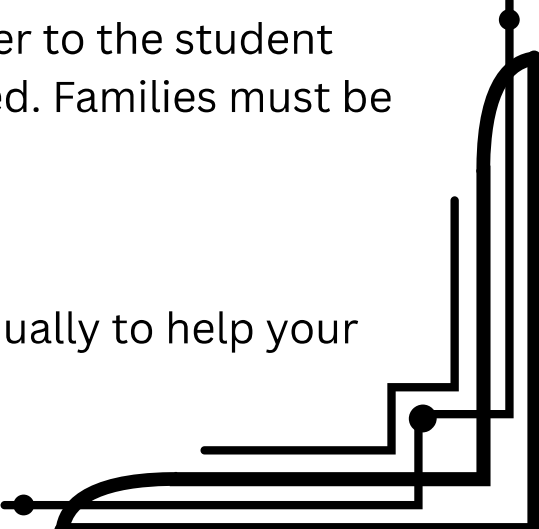
### **Transfer Rights**

- In-state: Services continue, review within 30 days
- Out-of-state: Comparable services must begin immediately

### **Age of Majority**

- At age 18, decision-making rights transfer to the student unless guardianship or POA is established. Families must be notified by age 17.

### **Transition Services**

- Must start by age 14 and be updated annually to help your child prepare for life after high school.
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# ***You Are Not Alone: A Message to Families***

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*Navigating the education system while advocating for your child can feel isolating, overwhelming, and at times, exhausting. We want you to know: you are not alone in this journey.*

*At the Williams-Edwards Autism Family Support Center (W.E. AFSC), we understand firsthand the challenges families face when trying to secure the best education and services for their children. That's why we created this guide, not just as a tool, but as a companion, to help you feel empowered, informed, and supported every step of the way.*

*W.E. AFSC is a grassroots organization founded by families, for families. We serve the autism community by offering monthly support events, educational workshops, family meetups, and advocacy resources tailored to your unique needs. Whether you're attending your first IEP meeting, transferring districts, or building a behavior plan, we're here to guide you, listen to you, and stand with you.*

*You do not have to figure it all out alone. Your questions are valid. Your voice matters. And your child deserves the support to thrive.*

*Best Wishes,  
The Williams-Edwards Autism Family Support Center*



W.E.



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