

## IFSP vs. IEP

In Nebraska, young children with disabilities birth to age 5 are entitled to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) through the school district where the family lives. FAPE means special education and related services that are provided according to the child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individual Education Plan (IEP).

For infants and toddlers who have developmental delays or disabilities, and their families, services are provided in accordance with an IFSP. According to Rule 51, children who turn 3 during the school year may continue to receive Part C services until August 31<sup>st</sup> of that year, if their family chooses to do so. This means that the child continues to have an IFSP, is entitled to a Services Coordinator, and should have uninterrupted "continuous", year-round services until school begins in the fall.

The IFSP and the IEP have some similarities but also some important differences. School districts are obligated to provide a detailed explanation of these differences at least 90 days before the child turns age three.

IFSP (Birth to 3)	IEP (Ages 3-5)
A statement of the child's levels of development across all developmental domains, including vision, hearing and health.	A statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance.
A statement of the family's and child's strengths and needs, resources and priority concerns.	A statement of the child's strengths and needs, and the concerns of the parents for enhancing their child's education.
A statement of the measureable outcomes expected for the child and family, along with the criteria, process and timeline for determining progress toward each outcome.	A statement of the measureable annual outcomes designed to ensure the child participates and makes progress in the early childhood curriculum and participates in appropriate activities with his/her peers. This includes how the child's progress will be measured and when progress reports will be provided.
A statement of services necessary to meet the needs of the child and family including services from education, health and social service agencies as well as informal networks and resources.	A statement of special education and related services to be provided to the child, along with necessary program modifications, accommodations, and/ or supports.
The projected dates for the beginning and duration of each service including how often, how much, whether it will be group or individual, and where they will be provided.	The projected dates for the beginning and duration of each service, including how often, how much and where they will be provided.
Services must be provided in the natural environment, that is, home and community settings that are natural for the child's age peers who have no disability. A written justification must be provided about the extent, if any, to which services cannot be provided in the natural environment.	Services must be provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE) to support the child's participation in the general education curriculum (preschool and other early childhood settings) with his/her peers. A written justification must be provided about the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate in regular early childhood programs and activities with nondisabled children.
A listing of persons responsible for implementation of individual services as well as parties (persons or agencies) responsible for payment of services.	A listing of individuals responsible for implementing IEP services.
Families of infants and toddlers with disabilities are entitled to a services coordinator.	_____

IFSP (Birth to 3)	IEP (Ages 3-5)
The services coordinator should facilitate and articulate steps and support for a smooth transition to preschool-age services, programs and systems if the child is to continue receiving services as part of an IEP.	At the request of the parent, the services coordinator must be invited to the initial IEP meeting for a child served with an IFSP to assure a smooth transition of services.
The IFSP must be reviewed every six months, or more often if the situation warrants or the family requests it; in addition, a meeting must be held at least annually to evaluate the IFSP for the child and family.	The IEP must be reviewed at least annually to determine if goals are being met, or more often if the situation warrants or the family requests it.
The services coordinator must make arrangements for IFSP meetings to be held in places and at times convenient for the family. The services coordinator, along with the family, is responsible for arranging the team meeting in places and times convenient for the family, and for facilitating the IFSP. The IFSP may not be held without the family.	The school district must take steps to ensure one or both parents of the child is present at the IEP, or are given the opportunity to participate by scheduling the meeting at a mutually agreed on time and place. If neither parent can attend the IEP meeting, the school district shall use other methods to ensure parent participation, including individual or conference telephone calls.
<p>Participation in the Initial and Annual IFSP meetings must include at least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The child's parents</li> <li>• Other family members as requested by parent</li> <li>• Family/child advocate at parent request</li> <li>• Services Coordinator</li> <li>• Persons involved in conducting the evaluation</li> <li>• Persons who will be involved in providing services to the child</li> <li>• Representative of the school district who can commit district funds for special education and related services.</li> </ul>	<p>Participation in the IEP meeting must include at least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The child's parents</li> <li>• The child's teacher appropriate to the age of the child, i.e. preschool, Head Start, etc.</li> <li>• A special education teacher or provider</li> <li>• A representative of the school district who can commit district funds for special education and related services</li> <li>• Persons involved in conducting the evaluation</li> <li>• Others at the invitation of the parent or the district.</li> </ul>
Year round continuous services are required such that early intervention services are not interrupted or modified for any reason unrelated to the child's needs (e.g. service provider availability or scheduling).	Extended school year services must be determined by the child's IEP team as necessary to provide a free and appropriate public education.
Parents may decide to accept or decline any early intervention service, and may decline that service after first accepting it, without jeopardizing other early intervention services, on the IFSP.	Parents may decide to accept or decline any special education or related service without jeopardizing any other service, benefit, or activity under Rule 51.