

**Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)**  
**And Individualized Education Program**  
**(IEP) A Comparison of Program**  
**Components**

Developed by the WV Early Childhood Transition Steering Committee  
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## **Comparison of the Individualized Family Service Plan and Individualized Education Program**

### **Background:**

The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) provides the mechanism for planning and documenting the early intervention services required for an infant or toddler (birth to three) with a disability and her/his family. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) provides the mechanism for planning and documenting the special education services of school aged students with exceptionalities, three through twenty-one years of age. The purpose and function of the IFSP and IEP are similar in that both provide for communication between parties, written commitment of resources, management of services and a vehicle for monitoring progress. The IFSP is also similar procedurally to the IEP in that it requires that a written plan be developed by a multidisciplinary team which includes the parents and be based on a multidisciplinary assessment of unique needs. Additionally, all early intervention services necessary to address the identified needs of the infant or toddler and the family must be reflected in the IFSP just as all special education and related services must be reflected on an IEP.

### **Use of the IFSP by School Districts:**

School districts have the option to write an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) instead of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for children with disabilities ages three through five. If this option is used, parents of children with disabilities in this age group must be provided with a detailed explanation of the differences between an IFSP and IEP and must give written consent to use an IFSP in place of an IEP. If an IFSP is used, it must be developed in accordance with Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and Policy 2419: Regulations for the Education of Exceptional Students.

### **Purposes of this Document:**

This comparison is intended to be used as a resource and guideline for explaining the differences between these two plans and for planning and documenting services to young children with disabilities. This comparison can be used:

- 1) to provide parents and staff with a detailed explanation of the differences between an IFSP and IEP;
- 2) to help parents and professionals make an informed decision when considering early childhood services;  
and
- 3) to promote common understanding among families, Birth to Three practitioners/service coordinators, school district staff and other relevant agencies/people involved in the transition of children from early intervention to preschool special education services. (WV Birth to Three to local school district services).

### **Additional Questions:**

This document contains technical terminology regarding the provisions and process of the IFSP and IEP. If you need additional information, please contact your local Regional Administrative Unit, special education director or the Parent Educator Resource Center (PERC) in your county.

### IFSP/IEP A Comparison of Program Components

Provisions of the IFSP Birth through Two Years	Provisions of the IEP Three through Five Years	Differences
<p>The IFSP is developed after eligibility is determined. The IFSP team must include the parents and those individuals involved in the multidisciplinary evaluation/assessment of the child. The IFSP is based upon a multidisciplinary team's evaluation/assessment of the child's development and the concerns, priorities and needs of the family related to the child's development.</p>	<p>The IEP is developed after eligibility is determined. The IEP team must include: the parents, not less than one general education teacher, not less than one special education teacher, a representative of the local education agency, and at the discretion of the parent or agency, other individuals who have knowledge or expertise regarding the child including related service personnel as appropriate.</p>	<p>The required team participants for an IFSP and an IEP.</p>
<p>The IFSP must include a statement of the child's functional ability across five developmental areas. The areas are: Physical (including vision and hearing), Cognitive, Communication, Social/Emotional, and Adaptive.</p> <p>The IFSP must include a statement of the family's resources, priorities and concerns relating to enhancing the development of the family's infant or toddler with a disability.</p>	<p>The IEP must include a statement of child's present level of educational performance including for preschool children how the disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the WV Early Learning Standards Framework and how the disability affects the child's participation in appropriate activities.</p>	<p>IFSP requirements are more comprehensive; they specify areas in which functional ability levels must be stated. The IFSP also requires that family strengths and concerns, priorities and resources be identified with the consent of the family.</p>

<b>Provisions of the IFSP Birth through Two Years</b>	<b>Provisions of the IEP Three through Five Years</b>	<b>Differences</b>
<p>The IFSP must include a statement of the measurable results or outcomes expected to be achieved for the infant or toddler and the family, as well as pre-literacy and language skills as developmentally appropriate for the child.</p>	<p>The IEP must include a statement of measurable academic and functional annual goals, designed to meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general curriculum; and meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability.</p>	<p>The IFSP focuses on both the child and the family within their daily activities and routines. The IEP focuses primarily on the student's educational hours.</p>
<p>The IFSP must include the criteria, procedures and time lines used to determine the degree to which progress toward achieving the results or outcomes is being made and whether modifications or revisions of the results or outcomes or services are necessary.</p>	<p>The IEP must include a statement of how the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals will be measured; and when periodic reports on the progress the child is making toward meeting annual goals will be provided.</p>	<p>Essentially the same.</p>
<p>The IFSP is reviewed six (6) months after the IFSP has been written because the needs of infants and toddlers change rapidly. Reviews may need to occur at other appropriate times. Meetings are held in places and at times that are convenient to families.</p>	<p>A meeting must be at least once a year to review this IEP. Meetings to review and revise the IEP may be held more often as necessary. Meetings are held in places and at times that are convenient to families.</p>	<p>The IFSP has more frequent required reviews. (Within 6 months of the IFSP being written) than the IEP (Annually).</p>

<b>Provisions of the IFSP Birth through Two Years</b>	<b>Provisions of the IEP Three through Five Years</b>	<b>Differences</b>
<p>The IFSP must specify the name of the service coordinator from the profession most relevant to the infant's or toddler's or family's needs who will be responsible for the implementation of the plan and for coordination with other agencies and persons, including transition services.</p>	<p>Although the law permits cooperative agreements among and within agencies, there is not a specific mechanism for service coordination. Federal law requires that States set forth policies and procedures for developing interagency agreements to define respective responsibilities.</p>	<p>The IFSP specifically requires designation of a service coordinator to ensure appropriate implementation and coordination of the plan. The IFSP should reflect coordination across the various services agencies with which the family is involved.</p>
<p>The IFSP must include steps to be taken to support the transition of the toddler with a disability to preschool or other appropriate services. The transition plan also requires supports for the family in the transition process. The Birth to Three system (Part C) is required to begin transition planning at least 10 months prior to the child's third birthday. They must coordinate a face to face transition planning meeting for a child exiting at age 3, at least 90 days prior to his/her third birthday, and earlier for a child who turn three during the late spring, summer or early fall. This meeting includes the family and other community representatives. The transition plan must also identify how information is to be shared among parties.</p>	<p>Regardless of which agency provides the services, the school system is responsible for the implementation of the IEP services for a child as of the third birthday. The local school district is responsible for designating a representative to attend the 90 day face-to-face transition planning meeting.</p>	<p>The IFSP process requires identification of family needs in addition to child needs. The family must be informed of all of their options related to movement to the next service setting for the child. The family may have needs relating to understanding the new system or setting, the child's particular needs, or where to get other kinds of support to provide for the optimal development of the child.</p>

Provisions of the IFSP Birth through Two Years	Provisions of the IEP Three through Five Years	Differences
<p>The IFSP must include a statement of specific early intervention services based on peer reviewed research, to the extent practicable, necessary to meet the unique needs of the infant or toddler and the family. Services help the child’s care givers understand and support the child’s development. Services must be delivered in the child’s natural environment to the maximum extent appropriate, and only elsewhere when early intervention cannot be achieved for the child in the natural environment. A justification of the extent, if any, to which services will not be provided in natural settings is required. Natural environment is defined as those activities and settings which are typical for the child’s same age peers who do not have disabilities. These may include home, community play groups, child care, or other community settings where children without disabilities would be typically. The IFSP may also include “other services” that are needed by the child and family. The family may receive assistance in accessing these services. The “other services” may include help with food, housing, clothing, medical care, basic education, etc.</p>	<p>The IEP must describe the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer reviewed research to the extent practicable, and program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided or on behalf of the child to enable the child to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals, to be involved in and make progress in the general curriculum and to be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and nondisabled children. Local school districts must consider the least restrictive environment (LRE) for preschoolers. For preschool children, service delivery models for LRE may range from home community programs and other preschool programs. In determining an appropriate placement in the LRE, the IEP team must consider the child’s needs and the continuum services available to meet those needs beginning with the consideration of the general education setting such as an Universal Pre K Program. Removal from the general education environment occurs only when the nature and severity of the exceptionality is such that education in general classes and other programs with children without disabilities cannot be achieved satisfactorily.</p>	<p>The IFSP focuses on family as well as child. The IEP is student focused. The IFSP and IEP differ regarding service delivery models; in the IFSP the least restrictive environment for infants and toddlers is considered to be home; community settings; or other natural environments. The least resistive environment for children in preschool may be the home, other community locations, child care settings or a school setting for IEP proposes. For school aged students the least restrictive environment is generally thought of as the regular education environment but is determined on a case by case basis depending on the individual student needs.</p>

<b>Provisions of the IFSP Birth through Two Years</b>	<b>Provisions of the IEP Three through Five Years</b>	<b>Differences</b>
<p>The IFSP must include the projected dates for initiation of services including the frequency, intensity and method of delivering services as well as the anticipated duration of services.</p>	<p>even with the use of supplementary aids and services. A child is not to be removed from age appropriate programs solely because of needed accommodations and modifications to the general education preschool curriculum.</p> <p>The IEP must include the projected dates for the beginning of services and modifications and the anticipated frequency, location and duration of those services and modifications.</p>	<p>WV Birth to Three services may, with consent of the parents, begin before the completion of the assessment.</p>
<p>Parent signature on the IFSP means informed written consent is given for the services listed in the IFSP. Parents have a right to agree and/or disagree with any service.</p>	<p>Parent signature on the IEP indicates the parent participated in the development of the IEP. Informed written consent must be given by the parents for the initial provision of special education and related services as required by State and Federal law.</p>	<p>Essentially the same.</p>