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# Your Rights as a Parent

Two federal laws regulate special education services provided by public school programs. They are PL 105-917 - Part C, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

## PL 105-917 - Part C

Originally, most states provided services to children with disabilities only after age three. PL 105-917, passed in l997, encourages states to develop coordinated programs of early intervention (birth to age three) for infants and toddlers. The law focuses on professionals who involve families in their work with the children, and who give the family, as well as the infant, support and assistance.

Evaluation of the infants, and planning for intervention are to take place with a family, and the family must approve the final plans. Families have access to a service coordinator, who helps them to decide on family needs. Then the service coordinator helps families fulfill their needs by coordinating the work of team members and community resources. The infant's team works together with the family to develop an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP). The IFSP includes several important parts:

- Assessment of the infant's current achievements
- A list of family strengths
- Major goals, or outcomes expected from the program
- Specific services needed to achieve those outcomes
- Timelines for achieving goals z A list of team members, and
- A plan for transition into preschool or some other program.

Further information about this law can be found at http://nncf.unl.edu/ifspweb

## Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)

This law, passed in 1991, requires that children with disabilities and their parents have the same legal right to a free and appropriate education as children without disabilities. It states that your child must have an evaluation by a team of professionals (called a multidisciplinary team or MDT). The MDT must collaborate with the family to develop an Individual Educational Plan (IEP).

Once your child transitions from your IFSP, the IEP includes all specific goals and objectives for a year. The IEP must be reviewed every year to be certain that the goals are still appropriate, and that you and the MDT members are seeing progress. This law also gives you the right to appeal a decision of the IEP team. There are many other rights you have a part of this law. This law applies to children from 3 to 21 years of age.