

TIP SHEET FOR RELATIVES AS PARENTS

SPECIAL EDUCATION LAWS - WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Many folks who are raising relative children feel at a loss when it comes to special education laws. Things have changed a lot over the last several years. Here is the basic information that is helpful to know if your school-aged child has a disability:

- Children with a disability may get an Individual Education Program (IEP) if three standards of criteria are met from the special education regulations. Not all children with a disability receive an IEP. There are other less formal plans that schools can also implement for a child with a disability. However, if you as a caregiver feel that your child is having difficulty learning or understanding his schoolwork then asking for an IEP meeting with the school may be a way to get things sorted out further. Be aware that a new pre-referral screening is being phased into schools prior to the first IEP meeting taking place.
- An IEP meeting is held with guardians, teachers, the child (if appropriate), and others invited who have expertise or knowledge about the child. Evaluations for the child can be requested at this IEP. Typically, the child's education plan is created at the meeting. The plan should meet the child's needs for resources and accommodations in order to learn. This IEP is a written plan that is developed, reviewed and revised according to the special education laws.
- Although an IEP may be written for *less* than one year, it can never be written for longer than one year.
- A guardian may request an IEP meeting at any time, however the school is only required to hold an IEP meeting once a year. Guardians and the school may also record the meeting.
- A guardian or the school may request a change to the IEP *without* a meeting if both parties agree to the change in writing. (An annual meeting still must be held, however).
- The school has up to thirty days to apply the changes written in an IEP, but should try to do so as soon as possible after the IEP meeting.
- IEP meetings *may* be held without the guardian present if the school is unable to convince the guardian to attend. The school must document that they have tried to get the guardian to attend without success.

Looking for more information? Here are some great resources:

Maine Parent Federation	1-800-870-7746	www.mpf.org
GEAR (Gaining Empowerment Allows Results)	1-800-264-9224	gearparentnetwork.homestead.com
Southern Maine Parent Awareness	1-800-564-9696	www.somepa.org
Learning Disabilities Association of Maine	1-877-208-4029	www.ldame.org

*Copies of our tip sheets may be found on our web site at www.mainekids-kin.org
For permission to reproduce Maine Kids-Kin materials contact us at info@mainekids-kin.org*