

At a Glance: Comparison of IDEA Part C and Part B



This table compares the key features of [Part B](#) and [Part C](#) of the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**, providing a clear overview of how these two parts of the law align and differ. Its purpose is to support local early intervention (EI) program administrators, preschool coordinators, and elementary school principals in understanding the requirements and responsibilities under each part. This resource can be especially helpful when planning and managing the transition of services for children moving from Part C to Part B, as well as when communicating these differences to families and other community members to ensure smooth and informed decision-making.

Key Features	IDEA Part C	IDEA Part B
Description	Early intervention services (EIS) for infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities.	Special education and related services for eligible school-aged children with disabilities.
Age Group Covered	Birth to when the child turns 3.	Ages 3 – 21 years old.
Lead Agency	Designated state departments of health, education, or other services	State and local education agencies (e.g., districts)
Child Find	Each system must implement a comprehensive child find system that includes a mechanism for making referrals to lead agencies or EIS providers and ensures rigorous standards for appropriately identifying infants and toddlers for EIS.	Each system includes policies and procedures to ensure that all children with disabilities, including children with disabilities who are homeless children or are wards of the State, and children with disabilities attending private schools, are identified, located, and evaluated.
Eligibility Criteria	Infants and toddlers who meet state determined eligibility criteria for Part C services and who are classified as having a developmental delay or in a disability category (e.g., autism, other health impaired).	Children who meet state or local determined eligibility criteria in disability categories (e.g., autism, intellectual disability, hearing impairment) and who, by reason thereof, need special education and related services.

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Service Delivery Plan	Individualized family service plan (IFSP) that includes present levels, a statement of the specific early intervention services and other services, statement of measurable results, and the name of the service coordinator.	Individualized education program (IEP) that includes present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, measurable annual goals, and a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services.
Service Environment	Natural environments, as defined as settings that are natural or typical for a same-aged infant or toddler without a disability, including the home or community settings.	Least restrictive environment where, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are nondisabled. Removal from regular educational environments occurs only when education in regular classes cannot be achieved satisfactorily, even with supplementary aids and services. Each public agency must ensure that a continuum of alternative placements is available.
Role of Parents/Families	Families have the right to informed consent and procedural safeguards from referral through transition. Families are not only decision-makers, but also recipients of early intervention services, and are active participants in planning and implementing services through the IFSP.	Parents have the right to participate in meetings related to the evaluation, identification, and educational placement of their child and are entitled to be members of the team that develops, reviews, and revises the IEP. Parents also have the right of due process.
Cost	EI services are provided at no cost, though states may use public and private insurance or a sliding scale for some services.	Eligible students are provided a free appropriate public education (FAPE) through the IEP.

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Transition Plan	Not fewer than 90 days before the toddler's third birthday, the IFSP includes transition steps for the toddler and his or her family to exit from the Part C program; and be afforded any transition services that the IFSP Team identifies as needed by that toddler and his or her family.	Beginning no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team, the IEP must include measurable postsecondary goals and the transition services needed to assist the child in reaching those goals.
Legal Protections	Procedural safeguards are in place, including due process, hearings, mediation, and complaints	Procedural safeguards and dispute resolution processes (due process hearings, mediation, complaints)
Periodic Reviews	Review of the IFSP is conducted every six months, or more frequently if conditions warrant, or if the family requests such a review.	The IEP is reviewed not less than annually, to determine whether the annual goals for the child are being achieved.
Outcome of Services	Meet the unique needs of the child and the family to achieve the results or outcomes in the IFSP and increase participation in daily routines and activities.	Enable children to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals; to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; and to be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and nondisabled children.