



School is a major part of a child's life. A child with mental health needs can experience challenges that make it difficult to be successful in school. You may need to collaborate with other school personnel to best support your students. Your school does provide a range of services that can help each child succeed.

## Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Children with more intensive mental health needs may qualify for special education services under the federal law called Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA requires that children with a disability receive additional services (IEP) to help them in school. A child with mental health needs must show certain characteristics to qualify for special education as a child with an "emotional disability."

"(i) Emotional Disability is a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's education performance:

1. an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors
2. an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers or teachers
3. inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances
4. a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
5. a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems

(ii) Emotional Disability includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance."

In addition, in order to be eligible for services under IDEA, the student, by reason of their disability, must require special education and related services."

*Note that the definition of Emotional Disability is not a diagnosis or medical term, but rather a term used in the federal education law to designate eligibility for special education. Under IDEA, if a child is found eligible, the student is entitled to an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) that is designed to meet their unique needs.*

It is important to know your rights. A Parents Guide to

Understanding Your IEP: Rights and Responsibilities can be found at <http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Special-Ed/IEP/IEPParentsGuide2016.pdf>

## 504 Plans

Children with mental health needs who do not qualify for special education may qualify for services under another federal law. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act's definition of disability is broader than the IDEA's definition. To be protected under Section 504, a student must be determined to: have physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or have a record of such an impairment; or be regarded as having such an impairment.

### Examples of what might be included:

- Adjustment to test taking (more time, questions given orally)
- Seating near the blackboard or near the teacher
- Excused from class to take medications
- Allowed to eat in class because of diabetes

### Who is responsible for a 504 Plan?

- The student (if appropriate)
- Parent or Legal Guardian
- Teacher
- Administrator
- School 504 Coordinator (may be a staff person on the Student Support and/or Child Study Teams)

### Others who may be included, as appropriate

- School Counselor, Social Worker, and/or Psychologist
- Physician, Psychiatrist, or other health professional
- Mental Health Clinician
- Speech/Language Pathologists
- Occupational Therapist/Physical Therapist

## Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)

In Maryland, CSEFEL is focused on promoting the social and emotional development and school readiness of young children between birth and five years of age. CSEFEL's Pyramid model is being integrated into the effective practices to enhance young children's social and emotional competence and to prevent challenging behaviors.

<https://theinstitute.umaryland.edu/our-work/maryland-center/piec/> or

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>

## Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

PBIS Maryland has been implemented in more than 900 schools across all 24 local school systems. The goals of PBIS are to promote a positive school climate, reduce

disruptive behaviors, and create safer, more effective schools for all students. The emphasis of PBIS is on rewarding positive behaviors rather than focusing on reactive, punitive practices. <http://pbismaryland.org/>

## Medication at School

Sometimes it is necessary for children to take medication during school hours. Schools have very strict regulations governing medications at school. A form completed by a child's doctor is required and can be downloaded from the Maryland State Department of Education website:

<http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DSFSS/SSSP/SHS/medforms/medicationform404.pdf>

All medication must be in containers labeled by the pharmacist or doctor and an adult must bring the medication to school. Non-prescription medication must be in the original container with the label intact.

## Resources on Special Education

### Maryland State Department of Education

<http://MarylandLearningLinks.org> <http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Special-Ed/IEP/BuildingIEPsMDFamilies.pdf>

### Maryland Association of Nonpublic Special Education Facilities (MANSEF)

<http://www.mansef.org>

### Disability Rights Maryland

<https://disabilityrightsmd.org/>

## Resources on 504 Plans

### Office of Civil Rights, Protecting Students with Disabilities: Frequently Asked Questions About Section 504 and the Education of Children with Disabilities

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>

## Resources on IEPs

### Resources related to IDEA and its implementing regulations, released on August 3, 2006.

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>

### Understanding the Evaluation, Eligibility, and Individualized Education Program (IEP) Process in Maryland. Maryland State Department of Education, 2008.

[https://www.hcpss.org/ff/special/understanding\\_iep.pdf](https://www.hcpss.org/ff/special/understanding_iep.pdf)

### The Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports.

<https://www.pbis.org/>

### National School Climate Center

Promotes positive and sustained school climate: a safe, supportive environment that nurtures social and emotional, ethical, and academic skills.

[www.schoolclimate.org](http://www.schoolclimate.org)

### Maryland Learning Links Family & Community Support Services

<https://marylandlearninglinks.org/>



an initiative of



The Children's Mental Health Matters Campaign, an initiative of the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD), receives funding from the Maryland Department of Health – Behavioral Health Administration, the Maryland Family Network, and community sponsors. Together with the Maryland Coalition of Families, National Center for School Mental Health, MANSEF, and hundreds of community champions, we work to raise public awareness and acceptance of the importance of children's mental health to overall child and family wellbeing. We are grateful to the National Center for School Mental Health for their collaboration in creating these resources for families.