

IDEA Part C Early Intervention Services vs. IDEA Part B Special Education Services—A Resource Document



The federal **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** has two important parts addressing the needs of children with disabilities: **Part C, Early Intervention** and **Part B, Special Education**. The chart below provides an overview of key provisions and the differences between the programs in Virginia.

| | PART C: Early Intervention | PART B: Special Education |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Purpose | Provides extra help for infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities to learn the skills that usually develop during the first 3 years of life | Provides individualized services and supports to students with disabilities to help them access the general education curriculum, learn with their classmates without disabilities, and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living |
| Focus | Developmental needs, family-focus, coaching model | Educational needs, child-specific |
| Who's Responsible | Infant & Toddler Connection (ITC) | Local Educational Agency (LEA) also known as School Division |
| Age | Birth to 3rd birthday | Age 2 to 21, inclusive |
| Who can refer? | Anyone can make a referral but, parental consent is required before evaluation, starting services, or changing services. | Anyone can make a referral but, parental consent is required before evaluation, starting services, or changing services. |
| Eligibility Criteria | Developmental delay (at least 25%) - if a child is developing differently or slower than other children the same age or has a health condition that will affect development | Found eligible in any one of 13 IDEA categories, or under Developmental Delay if the local school division uses that category (Age 2 to 6, inclusive) |

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| Cost | Some services are free. These include service coordination, determining eligibility, any testing that is needed and writing the IFSP. There are fees for some services listed on the IFSP. Families cannot be denied services because they cannot afford them. | School divisions are required to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to eligible students with disabilities. |
| Program Plan | Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) – Focuses on the needs of the family to support the child | Individualized Education Program (IEP) – Focuses on the education and related service needs of the child |
| Location of Services | Natural Environment – settings that are natural or typical for children without a disability e.g., home, childcare center, preschool, park, children’s museum, or other community setting | Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) – To the maximum extent appropriate, schools must educate students with disabilities in the regular classroom with appropriate aids and services along with their non-disabled classmates in the school they would attend if not disabled |

DID YOU KNOW?
By age 3, 80% of our brain is developed!

Resources:

Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia: www.itcva.online

Virginia Department of Education Parent’s Guide to Special Education: www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/parents/parents_guide.pdf

Special Education: An Introductory Guide for Parents | Understood - For learning and thinking differences:
www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/special-education-basics/understanding-special-education

PEATC’s mission focuses on building positive futures for Virginia’s children by working collaboratively with families, schools, and communities to improve opportunities for excellence in education and success in school and community life.



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