



# ILLINOIS STATE IEP GUIDE

Joint Agreements, School-Day Timelines & ISBE Regulations

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## About This Guide

### How to Use This Guide

- Terminology table: state-specific terms and what they mean in plain language
- Timeline differences: how this state's deadlines differ from federal IDEA
- State Education Agency: contact information for complaints and due process
- [iepguide.org](http://iepguide.org) guidance: specific steps for using [iepguide.org](http://iepguide.org) in this state
- Placement checklist: step-by-step placement timeline using [iepguide.org](http://iepguide.org)

### ■ [iepguide.org](http://iepguide.org) — School Placement Research Tool

Search by state, city, district, or school to compare SWD %, SDC program types, severity levels served, and specialist staff availability at [iepguide.org](http://iepguide.org)

# ILLINOIS — STATE IEP GUIDE


## How Illinois Differs from Federal IDEA

Illinois follows federal IDEA with relatively close alignment to federal terminology, but uses school days rather than calendar days for its evaluation timeline — which can significantly extend the process. Illinois also has a strong network of special education cooperatives (Joint Agreements) between small districts, which means your child's services may be provided by a cooperative rather than your home district. The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) system operates its own large-scale special education office with additional procedures.

### State-Specific Terminology

These terms appear in official school documents, meeting invitations, and procedural notices in this state:

Term in This State	What It Means
<b>ISBE</b>	Illinois State Board of Education — the state agency that oversees special education compliance
<b>Special Education Joint Agreement</b>	Illinois's name for a cooperative arrangement between smaller districts that pool resources to provide special education services — sometimes called a cooperative or co-op
<b>Compliance Complaint</b>	The formal process for filing a complaint with ISBE when a district violates special education rules
<b>Service Agreement</b>	Illinois terminology sometimes used for the description of related services (speech, OT, PT) provided under the IEP
<b>Educational Interpreter</b>	Illinois has specific certification requirements for educational interpreters serving deaf or hard-of-hearing students — more rigorous than many states
<b>Chicago Public Schools (CPS)</b>	CPS operates its own Department of Special Education with additional procedures, forms, and timelines layered on top of state and federal requirements
<b>Surrogate Parent</b>	Illinois uses this term for a court-appointed parent representative for students who lack parental involvement — same as federal definition

 **KEY TIMELINE DIFFERENCES IN ILLINOIS**

- Referral to consent: school must respond with evaluation consent form within a reasonable time — typically 14 calendar days
- Consent to evaluation completion: Illinois requires completion within 60 SCHOOL DAYS (not calendar days) — this can extend well beyond 3 months of actual school year time
- Evaluation to initial IEP: must be completed and IEP implemented within the 60 school-day window
- Annual review: within 12 months of last IEP date
- Reevaluation: at least every 3 years — ISBE requires parent consent for new assessments
- Chicago Public Schools: CPS has its own 60 school-day window and additional procedural steps — contact CPS Department of Special Education for CPS-specific timelines
- Joint Agreement transfers: if your child's services are provided through a Special Education Joint Agreement, timeline compliance is the responsibility of the Joint Agreement, not just your home district

## STATE EDUCATION AGENCY — ILLINOIS

- Illinois State Board of Education — Division of Specialized Support Services
- Website: [isbe.net/Pages/Special-Education.aspx](https://isbe.net/Pages/Special-Education.aspx)
- Phone: (217) 782-5589 or (312) 814-4510 (Chicago regional)
- Complaints: ISBE Dispute Resolution — (217) 782-5589
- Mediation: ISBE Mediation Program — (217) 782-5589
- Chicago Public Schools Special Education: [cps.edu/services-and-supports/special-education](https://cps.edu/services-and-supports/special-education)
- Parent Training & Information Center: Equip for Equality — [equipforequality.org](https://equipforequality.org) | (312) 341-0022

## HOW TO USE [iepguide.org](https://iepguide.org) IN ILLINOIS

- **Search [iepguide.org](https://iepguide.org) by Illinois school district or city** to compare SWD percentages, program types, and on-site specialist staffing across schools before your child's IEP meeting — especially important if your district's services are provided through a Joint Agreement cooperative.
- **Illinois's 60 school-day evaluation timeline can span an entire semester.** Start researching placement options on [iepguide.org](https://iepguide.org) immediately after signing consent — you may have 4–5 months before the IEP meeting and should use that time to compare schools.
- **For Chicago Public Schools families:** use [iepguide.org](https://iepguide.org) to compare SWD % and program availability across CPS schools — Chicago has significant variation in SDC program types between schools even in the same neighborhood cluster.
- **If your district contracts with a Joint Agreement for services:** use [iepguide.org](https://iepguide.org) to identify which specific schools in the cooperative actually have the specialist staff and program intensity your child needs, rather than accepting the cooperative's default placement.
- Compare on-site SLP, OT, and school psychologist staffing across Illinois schools using [iepguide.org](https://iepguide.org) — in small districts, these specialists often travel between multiple buildings and may only be at your child's school 1–2 days per week

## PLACEMENT TIMELINE — USING [iepguide.org](https://iepguide.org) IN ILLINOIS

- **STEP 1** — After referral, search your district and any neighboring districts on [iepguide.org](https://iepguide.org) to understand what program options are available in your area, including through Joint Agreement cooperatives
- **STEP 2** — At the IEP meeting, when a school or program is proposed, search it on [iepguide.org](https://iepguide.org) to verify its SWD %, program type, and whether specialist staff are on-site or traveling
- **STEP 3** — If a Joint Agreement placement is proposed, ask specifically: which building will my child attend, and which specialist staff are physically present there? Cross-reference with [iepguide.org](https://iepguide.org) data
- **STEP 4** — For Chicago families, use [iepguide.org](https://iepguide.org) to compare the proposed CPS school against other CPS schools in your network — SWD % varies widely across Chicago schools even within the same grade band
- **STEP 5** — If you are not satisfied with the proposed placement, you have the right to remain at the current school under Illinois stay-put protections — use [iepguide.org](https://iepguide.org) to identify better-equipped alternatives before the next IEP meeting