

Chapter 78

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: Translating and Implementing

Christine Anlauf Sabatino, Lynn Milgram Mayer, Elizabeth M. Timberlake

Getting Started

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990, the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act of 2004, and their various amendments and regulations have summarized how educational systems are to accomplish the mandate to provide a free public education for children with disabilities in the least restrictive school environment appropriate for each individual child (U.S. Department of Education, 2007; Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006). For school social workers, these codifications provide legal underpinnings for their services within the educational mission of the school, establish basic procedures, and set the stage for practice. However, it remains for school social workers to comprehend:

- the intent of these complex federal mandates and the implications for results-focused service delivery based in scientific research
- the meaning of the Response to intervention (RTI) service system pyramid for vulnerable children
- the individualized educational program (IEP) and individual family service plan (IFSP) practice models with their goals, process, and outcomes meaningful in a school setting

What We Know

IDEA Service Eligibility and Goals

For children ages 5–21, IDEA, Part B, mandates a free and appropriate public education for a child evaluated as having mental retardation, a hearing impairment including deafness, speech or language impairment, a visual impairment including

blindness, a serious emotional disturbance, an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who because of these impairments needs special education and related services (34 C.F.R. 300.8).

1. For infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families, IDEA, Part C, mandates early intervention services for children because they are experiencing developmental delays, as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures, in one or more of the following areas:
 - i. cognitive development
 - ii. physical development, including vision and hearing
 - iii. communication development
 - iv. social or emotional development
 - v. adaptive development; or
2. Have a diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay (C.F.R. 303.16).

Statute requirements explicitly link the unique needs of each child with the services to be provided and point to education-related outcomes. A child must meet the criteria and demonstrate a need for assistance with disability-related difficulties constituting barriers to educational performance. Since IDEA service delivery programs are associated with a child's educational progress, school personnel must show the linkage of planned interventions with educational outcomes and provide evidence of direct and indirect benefit.

Recent amendments emphasize a results-focused educational process that combines attention to the quality of the intervention as well as student achievement. IDEA's approach mandates:

- meaningful substantive requirements in educational programming

- evidence-based education-related practices and programs whose effectiveness is documented by scientific peer-reviewed research
- data-based monitoring systems for assessing student programs
- measurable annual education-related substantive and functional goals
- procedures for providing parents with data-based documentation of students' performance, provisions of general education services, and research-based strategies to increase student learning (Russo, Osborne, & Borreca, 2005; Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006)

For children ages 5–21 and their families, the IDEA service delivery program culminates in the IEP, a customized planning document prepared at a formal meeting between a qualified representative of the local educational authority, the child's teacher(s), other educational personnel (where appropriate), the child's parent(s) or guardian, and the child (where appropriate) (20 U.S.C. 1414 (d)(1)(B)).

These meeting participants bring together information from multiple sources to design school program modifications, services, and supports that will guide the educational experience of the child, protect the child's rights, and enable the child to:

- advance appropriately toward attaining annual goals
- be involved and progress in the general curriculum and participate in extracurricular activities and other nonacademic activities
- be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and nondisabled children in extracurricular activities (20 U.S.C. 1414 (d)(1)(A))

As a procedural requirement for protecting a child's rights, the IDEA regulations mandate that the IEP must include:

- a statement of the student's actual levels of academic achievement and functional performance
- measureable annuals goals in both academic and functional areas

- information about how progress toward meeting annual goals will be measured and when periodic reports will be provided to parents (the special education and supplementary services to be provided and the dates of initiation and anticipated duration)
- a statement of program modifications and school personnel supports designed to enable a student to advance toward goal attainment, progress in the general education curriculum, and be educated with peers with and without disabilities
- a statement of transition services at the point the student reaches 16
- a base in peer-reviewed research (34 C.F.R. 300.320 (a)(b))

Before students are referred for a multidisciplinary evaluation for possible special education services, educators must first determine that they are at risk for poor academic progress by documenting their actual levels of academic achievement and functional performance. During these initial stages, educators often consult with school social workers to:

- conceptualize the problem of concern and identifying the indicators of further failure
- implement research-based educational curricula and social work interventions (Harrison & Harrison, 2009)

When the time comes to create the actual IEP documents for the IDEA service delivery program, school social workers have already engaged in the practice processes of disability screening, eligibility assessment, problem formulation, goal-oriented educational problem solving, and service planning. Thus, the creation of the IEP is a biopsychosocial collaborative intervention process between the family and school on behalf of the child. In addition, a key element in IDEA service delivery is program monitoring and practice evaluation that focus on the protection of children's

rights, involvement and empowerment of parents, and enhancement of children's benefits, which are all core school social work tasks.

As a document, the IEP represents the best thinking and planning of those persons most closely invested in the child's educational advancement and yields documented evidence of the child's functioning at school, the child's level of service eligibility, and the parents' understanding of the strengths and needs of their child in school.

IEP Program Results: Children's Rights and Parent

Empowerment

78. IEP baseline and subsequent measurements document the school climate of ongoing IDEA-related service delivery and provide an opportunity for monitoring program quality and outcomes, including the degree to which the educational rights of children with disabilities are protected in day-to-day practice and the educational benefits evidenced by children. In monitoring program quality, the following questions assist school social workers in determining the focus of their collaboration with school personnel and parents in promoting children's rights.

- Do school personnel take into account children's needs and the right to achieve their potential, parents' expectations about their child's future, and how the school environment affects IEP decisions and educational progress?
- Does the IEP team consider the fit between the school environment and the needs of children with disabilities from a child rights and parent empowerment perspective?

To measure the degree to which the ideal learning climate is found in their schools and in their own practice, school social workers and their colleagues turn to six legally mandated educational rights of children with disabilities (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1998; Whitted, Rich, Constable, & Massat, 2009) as the template against

which to assess results. As shown in Table 78.1, the educational rights of children with disabilities are associated with corresponding professional action principles. In turn, these rights and principles translate into protective policies and practice procedures whose fulfillment generates data for program evaluation.

For example, the educational right to *attend school and be educated* translates into the educational and social work action principles of *full access* and *zero reject*. Among others, the related protective policies involve practices such as not excluding students for lack of capacity for learning or contagious diseases, and not suspending or expelling students simply for disability-related behavioral difficulties. These practices include collaborative problem solving among school social workers, parents or guardians (hereafter both referred to as parents), and educators to identify alternative solutions that are further grounded in the protective rights to *fair evaluation* and *fair treatment*.

Taken together, these four rights provide the parameters for school social work practice within the IEP's evaluative and due process procedures.

78. Table 78.2 illustrates how data indicators of the right to *attend school and be educated* may be counted and calculated in order to empirically substantiate that the targeted educational rights of children with disabilities have or have not been protected by school social workers and educational personnel. Specifically, the frequencies and percentages in the table provide information about the degree to which the children are being identified as needing and receiving IDEA-related educational services and, thereby, the degree of program implementation.

For example, if 47% of identified need is being met for this population, the collaborative effort of professionals and parents (as well as the school under study) is fulfilling the right to *attend school and be educated* for less than half of the children with disabilities. When such information is juxtaposed against the goal of 100%, the

degree of success or failure becomes apparent, as does the acceptability of the stated goal.

Aggregation of such data by school social workers yields a picture of the human rights/political context of the school and school system in which children with disabilities are educated. The portrait becomes clearer as more nuanced details are filled in by additional IEP data demographics, types and levels of disability, accommodations and resources needed and provided, and level of educational goal attainment. Over time, the static picture shifts to a longitudinal one as IEP data provide a look at the part that school social workers play and their level of success in the educational progression of cohorts of children with disabilities.

The facts and calculations shown in Tables 78.1 and 78.2 are straightforward. Competing equities, however, may cloud interpretation in day-to-day practice. Since the purpose of IDEA is protection of a vulnerable group, the law and its federal regulations provide the basis for addressing competing equities in practice among the mandated rights. For example, the right to *attend school and be educated* and the right to *be included in the general curriculum and other school-related activities* are considered universal rights for this target population.

But what happens in the real world of school social work practice when high demand for services confronts scarce funds and resources? According to 20 U.S.C. 1412 (3), children with disabilities who receive no supplemental or related educational services are to have priority over children with disabilities who receive some form of IDEA-related service. That is, the intent of this law is to provide children with disabilities the same basic educational opportunities as their nondisabled peers, but not necessarily opportunities that maximize their developmental potential.

In other words, this law's intent is not to fulfill the ideal that each child receives a level of service that enables the maximum benefit possible (*Board of Education v. Rowley*, 1982; Zirkel, 2008).

Parents, however, may not comprehend that when their child is making some progress on annual IEP goals established at IEP team meetings, the educational program is meeting the legal standard of IDEA. Although they have been included in IEP team planning meetings, research reveals that the IEP process is a passive experience for many parents (Turnbull, Turbiville, & Turnbull, 2000). Thus, the decisions and goals of the IEP may not reflect parental expectations about their child's future and parental priorities about the benefits experienced by their children. In these instances, the school social worker's practice role includes strengthening parent knowledge and involvement in a way that (1) clarifies their understanding of the type and level of benefits the educational system can provide for their child; (2) empowers their collaborative participation in IEP decision making in their children's best interests; and (3) enhances their capacity to realistically assess their child's educational benefits in relation to their rights and goals under IDEA and its amendments. Often a key area for clarification involves the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which generates state report cards to assess whether students are performing at grade level in standardized reading and math tests. This law is associated with measurement of teacher and school effectiveness. It is not associated with measurement of IEP annual goals for children with disabilities.

Table 78.1

Educational Rights, Professional Action Principles, Sample of Protective Policies, and Data Generated

1. Right to attend school and be educated	Principle of full access Principle of zero reject	Identifying children with disabilities who may be at risk of experiencing barriers to benefiting# from education # Not excluding children for reasons such as # lack of intellectual capacity for classroom # learning or having contagious diseases Not suspending or expelling students with disability-related behavioral difficulties without further evaluation of needs and strengths and due process hearings
2. Right to a fair evaluation of needs	Principle of nondiscriminatory evaluation Principle of individualized evaluation of needs, strengths	Evaluation not biased by race, culture, D language, socioeconomic status, or religious IE background # Evaluation not biased by gender discrimination or type of disability Evaluation based on facts about what students are doing in relation to education goal attainment and their capacity for achievement Evaluation based on identifying interaction of impairments, needs, and strengths on educational goal attainment Evaluation codified as mandated IEP
3. Right to benefit from school experiences	Principle of child individuation Principle of school adaptation	Individualize each child's education # Follow through with IE the IEP to build capacities in the student with a disability and the student's educational support system of school, family, and community

4. Right to be included in the general educational curriculum and other school-related activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principle of inclusivity Principle of least restrictive environment Principle of school adaptation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that school confers an individualized positive outcome for the target student Include student in general education curriculum with supplemental assistance and necessary services Adapt school facilities, programs, and services as necessary and feasible to meet the educational needs of the students Remove student from general educational curriculum only when student does not evidence benefit from supplemental assistance and necessary related services 	# # #
5. Right to be treated fairly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principle of procedural due process in decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide parents, child with information such as notices about meetings and proposed changes in services Provide access to records and access to fair hearing process Follow procedures for identifying, evaluating, developing IEP, implementing IEP, assessing progress, revising IEP as indicated for goal attainment 	# # P
6. Right to be included in the decision-making process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principle of child, parent inclusion Principle of parent empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include student and parents so that they have opportunity to affect student's education in a meaningful way 	P; P; C as L L de P; cl

Table 78.2

Developing Indicators of Program Results

In Relation to Children Served	
Data:	# of children in targeted school/region/system # of children screened as having disabilities # of children with disabilities identified as being at educational risk and eligible for IDEA services with breakdown by type of disability, risk, and service # of children with disabilities provided with IDEA services and breakdown by type of disability, risk, and service
Calculations:	% of children with disability in targeted system % of children with disability eligible for IDEA services % of eligible children provided IDEA services
<i>In Relation to Services Provided</i>	
Data:	Types of special instruction # children # service days
	Types of specific services # children # service days
	Mainstreaming
	• For instructional content # children # service days
	• For recreation periods # children # service days
	Types of transition services # children # service days

What We Can Do

IEP Practice Outcome: Child Goal Attainment

The key to determining the educational and social progress of an individual child with disabilities flows from one educational right in particular—the right to *benefit from school experiences*. In this context, the annual IEP practice outcome question is: Does the child’s participation in the school experiences and resources prescribed by the IEP facilitate his or her expected level of attainment of the specified IEP goals?

To answer this question, the IEP document contains annual goal statements that specify:

- independent treatment variable—prescribed school experiences and resources
- direction of the desired change process—decrease, maintain, or increase level of educational and psychosocial functioning
- outcome goal variable—level of the excess or deficit in functioning requiring attention and appraisal of the expected level of attainment in one year (Constable, Thomas & Leyba, 2009)

The IEP may also contain short-term objectives through which progress toward annual goals is measured. The school social worker answers this question by addressing problems in psychosocial functioning with objectives focused on a child's psychosocial and behavioral functioning with teachers in the classroom, peers in the school and community settings, and family members at home. In addition, the school social worker attends to family needs that are inhibiting the child's use of IEP resources and achievement of educational benefit, provides support and guidance as indicated to maintain parent involvement, and keeps the parents informed of their child's progress or lack thereof. In this way the IEP document indeed becomes "the living record of a complex evaluation and goal setting process, which has taken place among parents, school, and child" (Constable, Thomas, and Leyba, 2009, p. 498).

The professional literature contains many descriptive studies (qualitative and quantitative) of various aspects of the IEP document *per se*, but none addressing the IEP as an intervention program yielding empirical results such as preservation of children's rights or other intervention outcomes. By contrast, a search targeting school-based interventions and outcomes related to a targeted need or problem area identified in the annual IEP goal is likely to yield results. For example, a 2009 search (Sabatino, Timberlake, Mayer, & Rose, 2009) did not yield studies that addressed the

IEP as an intervention with outcomes but did yield 50 peer-reviewed outcome studies of school-based intervention models useful in creating a research-based intervention for use in an IEP document. The clear majority (36) of these school-based social work interventions targeted problem-reduction in areas such as violence and aggressive behavior, academic achievement and attendance, school behavior problems, drug use behavior, peer relations, sexual behavior, mental health, and family support and social support. The remainder (14) targeted increasing strengths such as prosocial behaviors and resilience. In addition, a meta-analysis of 21 school social work practice studies from 1980–2007 (Franklin, Kim, & Tripodi, 2009) identified two significant ($p < .05$) outcome categories: externalizing problem outcomes (weighted mean effect size estimate .23) and internalizing problem outcomes (weighted mean effect size estimate .40).

Other evidence-based practice models may be found in Roberts & Yeagers's (2004) text on evidence-based practice, which has 103 chapters on intervention models. This text also includes a comprehensive list of Internet resources including sites such as:

- Campbell Collaboration: www.campbellcollaboration.org
- Cochrane Collaboration: www.cochrane.org
- Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research: www.iaswresearch.org
- School Social Work Association of America: www.sswaa.org
- Society for Social Work and Research: www.sswr.org
- What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>

In searching the Internet, we found multiple sites replete with protocols purporting to represent best models of IEP documents prepared through structured data collection but containing sparse supporting evidence for these claims. Therefore, these references are excluded. For the reader, a search for interventions and outcomes

related to the targeted need or problem area identified in the annual IEP goal is likely to be more fruitful than a general IEP outcome search.

IEP Practice Outcome: Parent Involvement and Empowerment

Initially, IEP team members viewed parent inclusion in meetings as a symbolic gesture, allowing parents to present information but not engage in actual planning (Yoshida, Fenton, Kaufman, & Maxwell, 1978). The IDEA reauthorization law, however, includes parents in all components of educational planning for the child and views parents as equal partners in the educational processes (Sopko, 2003). Thus today, parent involvement is viewed as a value-added benefit, and school social workers are concerned with preparing parents to take an informed, collaborative role in preparing the IEP document, engaging in decision making and planning at IEP meetings, and monitoring IEP benefits (Goldstein & Turnbull, 1982; Martin, Marshall, & Sale, 2004). This perspective is supported by research that reports positive outcomes for both parent and child as a result of mothers' involvement in the educational process (Shonkoff, Hauser-Cram, Krauss, & Upshur, 1992). Through participation in meetings and educational services, for example, parents increase their knowledge about their child's education, parents and teachers increase communication, and children are more likely to achieve the goals set (Smith, 2001; Zhang & Bennet, 2001). Thus, besides obtaining the requisite information from parents for IEP documentation and planning, school social workers' IEP practice goals include decreasing parent and teacher resistance to parent involvement, increasing teacher-parent communication, increasing the sense of parental ownership of IEP decisions, and increasing parental ability to:

- engage in collaborative problem solving
- mobilize the school environment for their child's educational benefit
- help their child absorb as much educational benefit as possible
- monitor the level of IEP educational and social outcomes attained

These school social work practice goals stem from the educational right of the child and parent to *be included in the decision-making process* and the corresponding action principles of *inclusion* and *empowerment*. By clarifying that the intent of parent work is the child's educational benefit, these practice goals provide direction and continuity that focus the problem formulation, problem solving, and resource allocation process on the results sought by both parents and school (Strickland & Turnbull, 1990). Furthermore, these goals suggest use of social work practice strategies that:

- build a professional relationship and support parents in their concern for their child
- engage parents in collaborative problem solving and decision-making processes
- develop, clarify, and compile the biopsychosocial case history information
- provide general information to parents about the eligibility process and requirements for IDEA services, child needs and resources, and service availability
- provide the biopsychosocial history and social work assessment to the IEP team for collaborative decision making
- interpret and clarify the aggregate evidence and team recommendations for the parents

Stemming from children's rights, these practice goals and strategies assist school social workers in monitoring progress toward goal attainment and assessing outcomes in relation to IEP formulations. In this light, one focal outcome may be stated as parent role involvement and empowerment that increases the fit between the child with disabilities and his or her school environment. This outcome has a dual legitimacy in that its sanctioning sources include both the social work profession's

traditional mission and the federally mandated educational rights of children with disabilities. For example, an involved and empowered parent is one who demonstrates a critical awareness and understanding of community functioning (cognitive), feelings about one's competence or ability to effect change in the community (emotional), and participatory activities focused on social change in community contexts (behavioral) (Speer & Peterson, 2000, p. 110).

Conceptually, empowering parents involves mobilizing their personal, interpersonal, and political resources and power so that their actions improve the child's overall school functioning (Gutierrez, 1995; Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998). Sometimes, parents are empowered to work for educational change within their child's school; other times, within the broader community. Operationally, involved and empowered parents evidence competence, political acumen, relationship skills, ability to shape educational debate, and ability to increase school responsiveness to the needs of their child.

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Table 78.3 addresses contextually dependent aspects of parent role empowerment in relation to their child-in-school and takes the form of a goal attainment scale for use by school social workers. This scale provides one way in which the school social worker may rate parents’ functional level of involvement and empowerment at baseline and measure change in the empowerment-related cognitions, emotions, and behaviors identified with the IEP practice goals and brief intervention. For example, some parents need assistance in understanding the impact of the particular disability on the child and family. Others need to learn problem-solving strategies, collaborative decision-making skills, and leadership skills in obtaining appropriate educational accommodations. Since parent mastery of the IEP as a tool for their child’s education is likely to be associated with child benefit, this table offers a scale for selected aspects of parent work as an example of documenting parent goals related to their children’s education and assessing level of goal attainment.

Table 78.3

Goal Attainment Indicators of Parent Role Empowerment Outcomes

Rarely	Occasionally	Half the Time	Much of the Time	Consistently
1. Understand the impact on the family and the child of the child’s disability and, conversely, the impact of the family on the child.				
1	2	3	4	5
2. Understand the nature of the child’s disabilities in relation to functioning and learning in school.				
1	2	3	4	5
3. Understand strategies for ensuring some educational benefit.				
1	2	3	4	5
4. Understand school system dynamics and the external forces that shape the school				

environment.				
1	2	3	4	5
5. Know resources and methods to produce psychosocial change.				
1	2	3	4	5
6. Convey a sense of confidence, creative energy, and competence in making decisions and taking actions that affect the child.				
1	2	3	4	5
7. Demonstrate assertiveness and leadership skills in obtaining appropriate accommodations to improve the child's school situation and educational benefit.				
1	2	3	4	5
8. Demonstrate participatory skills in collaborative decision making and follow-through actions.				
1	2	3	4	5
9. Demonstrate appropriate strategies for problem solving.				
1	2	3	4	5

Response to Intervention Framework and IDEA

In order to be found eligible for special education services under IDEA, a student has been traditionally entitled to an educational assessment and intervention plan *after* the school documents a discrepancy between intellectual ability and educational achievement and *after* ruling out other possible bases for weak academic performance. In recent years, parents, educators, and allied professionals have expressed concerns that this model relies on a principle of failure. In other words, before the school system applies the regulatory process and procedures to determine eligibility for special education services under IDEA, a student must be substantially behind in academic performance.

The 2004 Amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) addressed these concerns by introducing the principles of Response to Intervention (RTI). RTI is an educational prevention approach to maximize academic achievement and minimize student behaviors that interfere with school success. It consists of assessment and intervention practices on multiple levels, including school-wide, class-wide, and individual services (Sabatino, 2009). A progress monitoring

system is used to track student responses so that the interventions can be intensified or altered if the student fails to respond to them (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2011).

In other words, RTI is an attempt to assist vulnerable students *before* they experience academic collapse. It is intended to identify students who are having learning difficulties as soon as they become apparent in the classroom and to provide evidence-based educational programs and practices to meet student educational needs. In addition, it substantially reworks the interrelationship between general education and special education. It brings forward the general education teacher in a structured, organized, formal manner to address academic performance in the regular classroom before the school engages in a full-scale special education evaluation.

It is imperative to note that RTI regulations are not intended to preclude a student from being referred for a special education evaluation under IDEA until all three levels of the RTI pyramid have been implemented. Some schools, however, are interpreting the RTI regulations to mean that students may not be referred for a special education evaluation unless documentation exists that school-wide, class-wide, or individual academic and behavioral supports have been instituted without success, thereby using RTI as a precondition for the referral under IDEA. Nothing in the RTI mandate prevents a special education evaluation if RTI has not been implemented for a student. Nothing in the RTI framework is meant to be construed as a barrier to a special education evaluation or as a substitute for special education services (Pasternack, 2011).

Tools and Practice Examples

Child

Brian is a 9-year-old boy who is currently enrolled in second grade at his local elementary school. He is described as a child who is of average height and weight. He comes to school well-groomed, wearing clothing suitable for the seasons. He enjoys

music class and shows particular interest and skills in art class, particularly creating toys out of “found” objects.

Brian’s teacher reports that she has had a difficult time getting him to stay in his chair, remain on task for assignments, focus on the current activity, and raise his hand. She has noted that he calls out without raising his hand and that he has a tendency to talk to his classmates when it is lesson time. Recently, she has become concerned that his behaviors have escalated. When she tries to redirect him, he yells and curses at her. He has begun to throw objects in the classroom at the wall. While he has not been aiming at other students, the objects that are thrown have ranged from books to chairs. When he called her a name using derogatory language and stormed out of the classroom, the teacher reached out for more help.

Brian’s educational history at this school has had its ups and downs. He was not enrolled in any formal preschool setting before beginning kindergarten. He did not have an easy transition to school. He found it difficult to follow the rules of the class and of the school. He did not make friends easily. He moved on to first grade based on the results of his educational testing at the end of the kindergarten year. His behavior, however, continued to interfere with his learning in first grade. With the increased structure of the first grade learning environment, his difficulties became more apparent. At the end of the year, the recommendation was that he repeat first grade, as he was not ready to move on to second grade as evidenced by educational testing.

The elementary school had a very well-crafted set of RTI procedures in place for all students in order to promote prosocial behaviors and academic success. When Brian was in kindergarten, his behavioral issues adjusting to the class were first addressed through the standard practices. Structure was provided for the whole class, with a particular emphasis on structuring free play time. Positive reinforcement was used within the class as a whole to encourage prosocial behaviors. In first grade, the

teacher built on what she knew had worked from the kindergarten teacher. The whole class participated in the school-wide “color system” in which each color indicated a level of prosocial behavior. Each child had a card with a color from purple to green throughout the day, and a form was sent home at the end of the week to indicate whether there were any difficult days for the child. The teacher separated out Brian and some of his classmates for more intensive review of the class rules, using a small group format to provide additional support in this area. During Brian’s second time in first grade, the color system was again used for the class, but Brian’s antisocial behaviors increased. The teacher began to call for the guidance counselor or vice principal to come to remove Brian from the room and to engage in intervention. In second grade, with the escalation of his behavior, he was suspended from school for throwing chairs.

At this point, Brian was referred for evaluation by the school district’s multidisciplinary team because RTI services were unsuccessful and his externalizing behaviors were interfering with his educational progress. He was deemed eligible for services based on meeting the definition of emotional disturbance and specific learning disability. He was found to be eligible for self-contained classroom education and was placed at a new school. In addition to special education services, his IEP called for related services of social work services in schools, parent counseling, and parent training. One goal on his IEP was for him to manage anger and frustration with class rules; another was for him to manage anger and frustration with peers. To evaluate progress on his goals, the plan was for Brian to complete a self-anchored rating scale, for his parents to use a behavior rating scale, and for the teacher to submit a report.

Parents

Brian’s Family Exists on the Edge of the Community

Brian's mother is an immigrant who came to the United States as a child. Her educational background includes receiving English as a Second Language and special education services. She did not complete high school. She had her first child, Brian's older brother, when she was 14 years old. She was 18 when she had Brian. She now has a new baby girl in the house. Her children do not all have the same father. Currently, she is living with Brian, the older son, the baby, and the baby's father. She does not have contact with Brian's father, as he was abusive to her in front of the children. Before becoming involved with her current partner, she and her older son and Brian moved from friend's house to friend's house, meeting the criteria in the schools for homelessness. She and her current partner are trying to be good parents and to stabilize their income. Both are employed, but at irregular hours—she works at a local motel as a housekeeper, and he works as a server at a restaurant. As such, they rely on a babysitter to take care of the children. Often, the children are at the babysitter's for holidays and late at night, depending on work schedules; occasionally, they stay overnight with the babysitter as well.

Parent counseling and parent training were deemed to be a necessary related service for Brian. Goals were set to enable them to be empowered in their role as parents in his education and to include the social work person-in-environment perspective. The goals included (1) learning about different ways children learn; (2) learning about behavior modification techniques, including schedules of reinforcement and token economies related to limit setting and discipline; and (3) learning about community resources available to support the children and the family. Services to the parents included participation in a parenting group and individual meetings with the social worker. Goal attainment scaling was initiated to evaluate progress.

Related services with Brian's family were considered to be an important element of the plan for Brian. In order to ensure Brian's educational progress, his

parents needed to augment their level of understanding of the school system and of the special education processes and procedures. The social worker determined that the parents needed to receive training related to the educational system, as well as training related specifically to helping Brian.

School Social Worker's Concurrent Parent Empowerment Goals

In addition to their child work and parent work to enable a child to achieve behavioral, academic, or related goals, the authors recommend that school social workers establish concurrent goals and objectives specific to parents in order to incorporate their perspective in the child's educational progress. This approach is consistent with IDEA's legal framework found in the IFSP for younger children, which documents the parents' concerns, priorities, and resources.

Key Points to Remember

This chapter expands the traditional view of IDEA as a static law by translating its legal principles into a process view of IDEA as both a program and a practice model for intervening with children, their parents, and the school environment.

- The program model incorporates active protection of the educational rights of children with disabilities and yields empirical results couched in the terminology of best school practices.
- The practice model implements the IEP as a process for involving parents and children in educational goal attainment and actively incorporates analysis of level of goal attainment of child benefit and parent empowerment.
- IDEA and RTI are not mutually exclusive but are different approaches for improving academic performance and educational achievement.

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