

# A Parent's Guide to Protecting Special Education

## IDEA: WHAT DO YOU DO NOW?

We know it's vital to keep our IDEA programs running smoothly to ensure students with disabilities continue to get a free and appropriate education. So, what do you do now?

### Actions You Can Take Today

#### Know your rights & current policies

The 14th Amendment guarantees equal protection under the law, and moving IDEA to a non-education agency could violate this principle by creating unequal access to education for children with disabilities.

Keep up with changes in special education laws, policies, and funding. Follow advocacy organizations and attend community meetings focused on special education rights.

#### Contact your legislators

Call, email, or meet with your representatives to advocate for fully funded and well-implemented IDEA programs. Ask them to support policies that strengthen special education services.

Call your local and state Department of Education to see how they are prepared to uphold IDEA and what policies and procedures they have for enforcing federal legislation. Let them know you are concerned about your child's ability to access their educational rights. They should be able to put pressure on your Governor's office.

Contact your Governor. They are the ones who accept any federal funds for IDEA and heavily influence allocation in your state. They also have direct lobbying power with Congress.

#### Use past precedent

Cases like *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), *Larry P. v. Riles* (1979), *PARC v. Pennsylvania* (1971), and *Andrew F. v. Douglas County School District* (2017) offer a basis for civil rights that are difficult to ignore. Emphasize that removing IDEA from the Department of Education could lead to a less equitable system for children with disabilities (and more lawsuits for the state/federal government).

#### Join with others

Joining advocacy groups helps to amplify your voice. Organizations like SPAN Parent Advocacy, Federation of Children with Special Needs, Learning Disabilities Associates of America, CHADD, The ARC, or local groups can take your voice much farther.

#### Share your child's story

Facts and data build a strong case, but real change happens when decision-makers connect on a personal level. Stories bring policies to life, allowing others to step into our shoes and truly understand the challenges and triumphs we face. Advocacy isn't just about numbers—it's about human experiences. When we share our children's stories, we tap into the power of emotion, inspiring action and driving meaningful change.