

# Caregiver Support Checklist

This checklist is intended to guide caregivers through the process of communicating with their children's teachers regarding reading difficulties. It also includes information on how to have a student evaluated for educational disabilities, as well as what the process of acquiring accommodations for a student might look like.

## Additional Resources

For more information on Individualized Education Programs, read the Iowa Reading Research Center blog post ["Family Preparation for an Individualized Education Program Meeting"](#) by Anna Gibbs, Ph.D.

For more information on how assistive technology can support students with reading and writing difficulties, read our blog post ["Using Assistive Technology to Address Students' Individualized Education Program Accommodations"](#) by Kate Will, M.A., or [request a free virtual or in-person assistive technology consultation](#) with the IRRC.

# Caregiver Support Checklist

## Talk to your child’s teacher about your concerns.

- Make sure you have written down your concerns before the meeting.
- Ask the teacher what they have observed about your child’s academic progress.
- Ask questions such as:
  - Do you think my child is having trouble with reading?
  - What specific trouble is my child having?
  - What can I do to help my child at home?
  - What can be done to help my child in class?
  - How is my child reading compared to other students?
  - Is my child receiving any additional help in reading?
  - Do you think my child would benefit from additional help in reading?
- Work with your child’s teacher to develop a plan for supporting your child’s reading needs. This may include things you’ll work on at home but should also include help in school.
- Decide on a time and date you will meet again to see how your child is progressing.

## Find out about the Universal Screener your child takes three times each year.

- Ask how your child’s scores compares to the benchmarks.
- Understand the skills that are being assessed. Below are some example Kindergarten skills:
  - Reading letter names and identifying letter sounds
  - Understanding concepts of print (e.g. We read from left to right on a page)
  - Identifying individual sounds they hear in a word (e.g. “at” has two sounds: /a/ and /t/)
  - Reading commonly used words by sight (e.g. “the”)
  - Blending sounds together to read simple words
- An example of a sample score report:

**Your child’s total score in the kindergarten screening process is listed below:**

Time period (circle one):	Student’s actual score:	Benchmark score (grade level expected score):
Fall		
Winter		
Spring		

## Be sure to keep a written record.

- As you go through the process of getting help for your child, be sure to keep a written record.
- Take notes and write down the date and name of each person you met with, what you talked about, and what you decided.

## Follow the chain of command.

- If you let your child's teacher know about a problem and nothing changes, try calling or writing again.
- Then contact the child's guidance counselor, assistant principal, or principal.
- If you still need assistance, contact the office of the district administrator or superintendent.

Your local Area Education Agency (AEA) also has support for parents through the Parent-Educator Connection. The Parent-Educator Connection, a statewide network of families and educators working together to serve children and young adults with special needs. Parent Coordinators and Parent Advisors are parents of individuals who have disabilities.

## Child Find

- In Iowa, the process of referring a child aged three through twenty-one for special education is called Child Find.
- Schools have the responsibility to identify students in need of special services.
- **Parents** can initiate that process by submitting a written request to the child's teacher or principal.
- Area Education Agency staff will be assigned to conduct the evaluation for your child. **You** will be included in this evaluation.

## Evaluation

- Your child will be evaluated to determine whether he or she has an educational disability and is eligible for special-education services.
- Download a copy of the [Procedural Safeguards](#) to understand your rights throughout the process. You will also be provided with a copy of these rights.

## Eligibility

- After the evaluation is completed, a team of teachers, administrators, AEA staff, and you will meet. Eligibility is a team decision, and **you** are part of the team.

- A parent may bring additional information obtained from outside sources (medical, outside evaluations, student data from tutoring) but will not be reimbursed by the district for those evaluations.
- Parents may bring other people to any school meeting. Be sure to notify the school who you are bringing in advance of the meeting.
- If your child is found eligible, the team will plan an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for your child, after you provide consent for special education services.
- Learn more about IEPs and other special-education terms and offerings from the [Iowa Department of Education website](#).

## Parent Support Groups

- During the evaluation and IEP process, and throughout your child's educational career, take advantage of the assistance offered by parent organizations.
- Check with your IEP team or district director of special education to find out if there's a parent group in your area.