# Top Four Considerations Before Applying for the IEA Program

Determining whether the IEA Program provides the educational options that best meet the individual needs of your child requires consideration of all of a child's educational needs. Before applying, parents should consider:

- what is gained and relinquished when participating in the IEA Program;
- the services that their child is currently receiving and the cost of those services;
- the educational options available; and
- the responsibilities assumed with having an IEA.

1) **Are you willing to waive your child's IDEA rights and services?**
   By placing your child in the IEA Program, parents are agreeing to:
   - take full legal responsibility for the education of your child including obtaining services necessary to educate your child; and
   - waive your child's rights to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Children in the IEA Program **will not receive the same services through the public school system**. Children in the IEA Program will **no longer have an IEP but may be eligible for a services plan** through the public school system. School districts will still maintain the student's eligibility as a student with a disability under IDEA; the triennial reevaluation process will remain the same.

*Additional Questions to Consider:*
   A. What services is your child currently receiving through the public school system?
   B. Can you, as the parent, provide those services, or are there private options available that you could pay for (e.g., private (non-public) schools, educational therapists, etc.)?

2) **Would the IEA award be enough to provide my student with an education? If not, would I be able to supplement the IEA award with my own funds?**
   This annual award and your personal funds must cover the cost of **all** of your child's educational needs and expenses.

*Additional Questions to Consider:*
   A. What is the cost of the services your child received through the public school system?
   B. What is the total cost of the services your child will need?

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Nov. 2018,
rev. July 2022; Oct. 2023; Jan. 2024;
July 2024; March 2025

3) **What type of school would my child attend: independent or umbrella home school, or private (non-public) school?**
   A. If your child will attend a non-public school, can you afford to supplement the cost of the non-public school tuition and fees, if necessary, with your personal funds?
   B. If you plan to home school your child, do you understand all the requirements and responsibilities to home school your child in Tennessee?  For a list of home school requirements, please visit the Home School Division website here.
   C. If a student withdraws from the IEA Program and returns to a public school, the credits earned at a non-public school may not be accepted as credit by the public school. Participation in the IEA Program does not guarantee that credits earned at participating schools and/or home schools will transfer to a public school.

4) **Are you willing and able to complete all the responsibilities of the IEA Program, including submitting expenses and receipts and taking responsibility for the education of your child?**
   A. IEA account holders must submit expenses to the department and attach receipts that document how IEA funds were spent so that the department can verify that the IEA funds were spent on approved IEA expenses.
   B. Some expenses require pre-approval before IEA funds can be used to purchase the service/item.
   C. If funds are misspent, account holders will have to repay the funds to the state and are subject to removal from the IEA Program.
   D. Forms must be submitted electronically. Access to a computer or smartphone is needed.
   E. The department will communicate with parents via email.
   F. If parents do not have a computer or smartphone, they can:
      - ask their non-public school to allow them to use the school's computers,
      - use the computers at their local public library, and/or
      - use IEA funds to purchase a computer, **with pre-approval**.

For questions, please click here to access the IEA Team Contact List or email IEA.Questions@tn.gov.

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