

What Refusal of Federal IDEA Funds Could Mean for Tennessee Children and Youth with Disabilities

► What's Being Discussed and Why Should Families Engage in the Process?

A Working Group has been formed by the Tennessee General Assembly to review the possibility of rejecting 1.8 billion dollars in federal funding for education. Speaker Cameron Sexton and Lt. Governor Randy McNally are asking this workgroup to explore the benefits of turning down federal funding for education services. Supporters of rejecting the federal funding claim that by rejecting it, Tennessee will be more free to manage its education system how it sees fit. It is not currently clear how the state would consistently fund education in such a scenario.

Why is this is an important process for families of children and youth with disabilities to engage in? If your child has an IEP (Individualized Education Program), those services are funded, in part, by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and there are safeguards to ensure services are determined by the IEP team, including parents, and provided as written.

► Current IDEA Protections Your Child May Be Benefiting From

- An IEP with measurable and specific goals and objectives for your child
- Speech/language, occupational or physical therapy services
- Behavior Plan
- Special transportation
- Accommodations and modifications
- Supports to participate in field trips and extracurricular activities
- Special education services in small group settings for individualized assistance
- Transition planning to prepare for life after high school
- Support in the General Education classroom
(an assistant, visual schedule, sensory supports)



► What Could Happen If Tennessee Refuses Federal IDEA Funds

Tennessee would be in full control, with no federal oversight, to provide or not to provide special education services that they currently must discuss, agree on, and provide as part of the IEP process. Tennessee would decide:

► **Which students** with disabilities will be provided special education services and supports

► **What** services and supports they want to offer

► **Special Education Decisions Families Currently MUST Be Part Of**


In addition to the IDEA benefits listed prior, there are many decisions families are, fortunately, required to participate in. These include decisions on:

- Least Restrictive Environment – where the student will be educated. Currently, IDEA requires that segregated classrooms, separate schooling, or other removal from the general education environment occurs only after consideration of the general education classroom with the use of supplementary aids and services
- Measurable goals and objectives through an IEP and needed accommodations and modifications
- Additional assistance for students who need attendants to benefit from their education
- Behavioral supports, communication needs of the student, and related services (therapies)
- Special Transportation

Without federal mandates, Tennessee will decide how much involvement families will have in developing their child's special education plan and in educational decisions for their child. TN currently has LRE, FAPE, IEP, and evaluation in state code, however, refusing federal funding means the General Assembly could change that at any time.

Federal IDEA rules and regulations are NOT connected to decisions TN is able to make about:

 **What curriculum is taught in your child's school**

 **What books are available or not available in your school's library**

► **How To Get Involved**

One way you can have a voice in this important topic is to access Tennessee Disability Coalition's Voter Voice page, where you can send a pre-written or custom email to your legislators, asking them to consider the voices of Tennesseans with disabilities and their families during this deliberative process. [CLICK HERE](#)

Stay Engaged

Sign up for email updates [CLICK HERE](#)

Text TEAMWORK to 72690 for policy updates sent periodically to your phone

Watch Tennessee Disability Coalition's webinar and Q&A [CLICK HERE](#)

Resources

"The Power of My Voice" video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5SHkm4EJhg>

LifeCourse Nexus: <https://www.lifecoursetools.com>

To connect with a Tennessee Disability Coalition team member on this topic, please email advocacy@tdc.org.

For more information about parent and student rights under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or if you have questions about your child's IEP or eligibility for services, please connect with TNSTEP at gethelp@tnstep.info or by calling 800-280-7837.