



Nebraska Department of Education
Office of Special Education

Nebraska IEP Guidance for High-Quality,
Compliant IEP Development

2026

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Purpose

This guidance is intended to support **IEP teams** in developing **high-quality, legally compliant, and student-centered Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)** that result in meaningful educational benefit and improved student outcomes.

The guidance is designed to be used alongside the **Nebraska Model IEP** form and **Nebraska Annotated IEP** and reflects both **federal IDEA requirements** and **Nebraska Rule 51** requirements.

Legal Authority and Foundational Requirements for IEPs

Federal Authority – IDEA

The **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** requires that each eligible child with a disability receives a **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)** through an IEP that is:

- Developed by an appropriately constituted IEP Team
- Based on the child’s individual needs
- *Reasonably calculated to enable the child to make progress appropriate in light of the child’s circumstances*

Key federal requirements are found in **34 C.F.R. §§ 300.320–300.324**.

- [IDEA Statute](#)
- [IDEA Regulations](#)

State Authority – Nebraska Rule 51

Nebraska implements IDEA through **92 Nebraska Administrative Code, Chapter 51 (Rule 51)**. Rule 51 establishes state-specific requirements related to:

- IEP content and timelines
- IEP team membership and participation
- Transition planning beginning at age 14
- Documentation and monitoring expectations

In Nebraska, the IEP is the **primary accountability document** demonstrating how FAPE will be provided and how educational decisions are individualized and justified. **For more information, please see [Monitoring and Enforcement – Nebraska Department of Education](#)**

High-quality IEPs are **more than compliant documents** — they are actionable plans grounded in data, collaboration, and high expectations. When IEP teams use this guidance alongside the Nebraska Model IEP, the result is stronger implementation, improved student outcomes, and reduced compliance risk.

Guidance and Recommendations for Developing High-Quality IEPs

Student and Parent or Guardian Information

Model IEP Page 1

Guiding Question: Would a reviewer clearly understand the IEP timeline?

Rule 51 Citation: **92 Neb. Admin. Code § 51-007.09C**

This section documents basic student demographics and contact information for the parent or guardian. Documenting the IEP meeting date is important to ensure the IEP meeting is held within thirty (30) calendar days of the determination that a student needs special education and related services. The information in this section also documents reviews, changes, and amendments to the IEP.

Common Errors or Challenges: Inaccurate IEP dates; misaligned timelines; improper amendments.

Best Practices: Verify accuracy of dates; align evaluations; preserve annual cycles.

IEP Team

Model IEP Page 2

Guiding Question: Did all required members meaningfully engage in decision-making?

IDEA Citation: 34 C.F.R. § 300.321

Rule 51 Citation: **92 Neb. Admin. Code § 51-007.03**

Nebraska Rule 51 mirrors IDEA requirements for IEP team composition and emphasizes **meaningful parent participation**.

Required IEP Team Members

- Parent or guardian
- At least one general education teacher (if the student participates in general education)
- At least one special education teacher or provider
- A school district or approved cooperative representative with:
 - Authority to commit resources
 - Knowledge of the general curriculum
- An individual qualified to interpret evaluation data
- The student, when appropriate (required for transition planning)

Operationalizing in Nebraska

- Meetings must be scheduled at mutually agreed-upon times.
- Parents must receive proper **written notice** and procedural safeguards.
- Participation may occur virtually if agreed upon by the parent.

Common Errors or Challenges: Missing members (including parents who have not been properly notified and students as required/appropriate); undocumented excusals.

Best Practices: Confirm required members; document excusals; ensure parent/student engagement.

Summary of Student's Current Performance

Model IEP Page 3

Guiding Question: Does this explain why special education is needed?

Rule 51 Citation: **92 Neb. Admin. Code § 51-007.07B**

This summary provides the foundation for identifying priorities for instruction and supports subsequent decisions regarding the PLAAFP, annual goals, special education and related services, accommodations, and, when applicable, postsecondary transition planning.

The summary should be based on current evaluations, assessments and progress monitoring data, and parent input. Clearly describe the student's strengths and needs including any special factors, medical, behavioral, communication, cultural or linguistic, or transition information that should be used to inform educational planning.

Common Errors or Challenges: Purely descriptive summaries; outdated data.

Best Practices: Synthesize multi-source data; focus on instructional implications.

Special Factors

Model IEP Page 3

Guiding Question: Is the rationale for each area defensible? Are decisions individualized?

IDEA Citation: 34 C.F.R. § 300.324(a)(2)

Rule 51 Citation: **92 Neb. Admin. Code § 51-007.07B**

The IEP team should consider and document their discussion about whether the child has needs in any of the following areas that influence the child's ability to access FAPE:

Behavior That Impedes Learning 007.07B3: Does the child have disciplinary referrals or documentation of classroom data that suggest the need for behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports?

Limited English Proficiency 007.07B4: Does the child's English Language proficiency impede access to the curriculum?

Blindness or Visual Impairment 007.07B5: Based on the evaluation of the child's reading and writing skills, needs and appropriate reading and writing, the IEP team must determine what supports are needed by a child with blindness or visual impairment. Additional information is available at [Nebraska State Plan for Vision Services - Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired](#)

Communication Needs 007.07B6: What, if any, communication supports does the child need? Consider receptive and expressive language needs in addition to any deafness or hearing impairment.

Assistive Technology 007.07B7: Considering information about the student's needs, what items, pieces of equipment, or product system(s) does the child need to improve functional capabilities?

If assistive technology is needed, what services will be needed to help the child use the device?
For more information, see [Services at School \(Birth-3, 3-21\) | Assistive Technology Partnership](#)

Common Errors or Challenges: Not collecting data or information about these areas, IEP team does not discuss each area, omitting rationale for IEP team decisions.

Best Practices: Document clear data-based decisions.

Adapted Physical Education

Model IEP Page 4

Guiding Question: Are PE decisions individualized?

IDEA Citation: 34 C.F.R. § 300.108(c)

Rule 51 Citation: **92 Neb. Admin. Code § 51-007.07C2**

Physical education services, specially designed, if necessary, must be made available to every child with a verified disability receiving a free, appropriate public education, unless the school district or approved cooperative enrolls children without disabilities and does not provide physical education to children without disabilities in the same grades.

Each child with a verified disability must be afforded the opportunity to participate in the regular physical education program available to nondisabled children unless:

- (1) The child is enrolled full time in a separate facility; or
- (2) The child needs specially designed physical education as prescribed in the child's individualized education program.

If specially designed physical education is prescribed in a child's individualized education program, the school district or approved cooperative responsible for the education of that child shall provide the services directly or make arrangements for it to be provided through other public or nonpublic programs.

The school district or approved cooperative responsible for the education of a child with a verified disability who is enrolled in a separate facility shall ensure that the child receives appropriate physical education services

Best Practices: Address PE for every student and base decisions on information specific to the individual student.

Guiding Question: Are PE decisions individualized?

Post-Secondary Transition Plan & Assessment

Model IEP Page 4

Guiding Questions: Does this plan prepare the student for life after high school? Are postsecondary goals based on student interests and strengths? Do transition services clearly support those goals?

IDEA Citation: 34 C.F.R. § 300.320(b)

Rule 51 Citation: **92 Neb. Admin. Code § 51-007.07A9a**

Nebraska statute and regulations require transition planning to be documented in Individual Education Programs (IEPs) as required by both federal and state law and must occur in the first IEP meeting held after the student reaches the age of 14.

TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS

1. Conduct Age-Appropriate Transition Assessments
2. Write Measurable Postsecondary Goals
3. Identify Transition Services
4. Write the Course of Study
5. Write the Annual IEP Goals
6. Coordinate services with Adult Agencies
7. Graduation

Transition assessments are a specific set of tools used to evaluate a student's strengths, preferences, interests, and needs related to their goals for living, working, and learning after graduation from high school ([Transition Planning Guidance Document](#))

1. Conduct student and parent structured transition interviews.
2. Conduct age appropriate transition assessments. These transition assessments may be comprehensive/formal (ESTR or TPI) or informal transition assessments (informal inventories, interviews, observations, rating scales, etc.).
3. Summarize the results of the transition assessments. The transition assessments should identify a student's specific strengths, preferences, interests and needs. Informal transition assessments can be used to document the data obtained from the completion of the student's transition activities in the current IEP.
4. Write the IEP

For more information see: [Transition-Planning-Guidance-Document-2022.pdf](#)

Common Errors or Challenges: Non-measurable goals; missing assessments.
Best Practices: Outcome-based goals; aligned services; student involvement.

PLAAFP

Model IEP Page 6

Guiding Questions: Can ambitious goals be written from this information? What does current data tell us about how the student is performing today? How does the child's disability affect progress in Nebraska's curriculum and learning expectations?

IDEA Citation: 34 C.F.R. § 300.320(a)(1)

Rule 51 Citation: **92 Neb. Admin. Code § 51-007.07A1**

PLAAFP statements clearly describe the student's **current performance and educational impact of the disability**, forming the basis for all IEP decisions.

Required Elements: PLAAFPs must include

- Academic achievement
- Functional performance (behavior, communication, independence, social skills)
- Impact of the disability on involvement and progress in the general curriculum
- Strengths, interests, and student/parent concerns

Operationalizing PLAAFPs

- Use **multiple data sources** (classroom observations, progress monitoring, diagnostic assessments, state and district assessments (NSCAS), and parent and student input). While IEP teams may wish to review data older than one year to understand the student's progress over time, for the PLAAFP, the IEP team should rely on the most recent data available.
- **Current Performance:** Describe performance in **objective, measurable terms**
 - Data are specific and can be collected frequently
 - Data can be used to monitor progress
 - Data should be collected for each identified need.
- Identify **priority needs** that require special education; data used for decision-making relate to both identified areas of concern and state content standards
 - List the priority needs that require specially designed instruction. Each need should have a corresponding annual goal, service, accommodation, or supplementary aid.
 - Not every need in the PLAAFP must become a goal — prioritize needs that, if addressed, will make the most positive difference for the student.
- **Strengths:** Identify academic, functional, social, and interest-based strengths the team can leverage to address areas of concern.
- **Reflect input from parent and student** (where appropriate), particularly about strengths, interests, and concerns

There should be a clear connection between the present levels of performance and the other elements of the IEP. If a reading concern and related skill deficit are identified, they should be reflected in both the student's goals and the special education and related services offered.

Common Errors or Challenges: Missing or vague baseline data; restating evaluation results verbatim; lack of connection between data, student needs, goals and services, and educational standards.

Best Practices: Use measurable data; link to goals, services, and Nebraska academic standards (where appropriate)

Annual IEP Goals

Model IEP Page 9

Guiding Questions: How will needs be addressed to improve student access and progress? How will we know – using data - that the student is making progress?

IDEA Citation: 34 C.F.R. § 300.320(a)(2)

Rule 51 Citation: **92 Neb. Admin. Code § 51-007.07A2**

The IEP must include **measurable annual goals** that:

- Address academic and/or functional needs
- Are measurable
- Are directly connected to PLAAFP-identified needs
- Include baseline data and criteria for mastery
- Enable progress toward state standards or functional independence in the general education curriculum

Writing Annual Goals: To begin the process of writing measurable annual goals, the IEP team should:

- Start with the academic and functional needs identified in the PLAAFP statements
- Identify any relevant state academic standards for the student's grade
- Discuss what the student should be able to achieve during the next 12 months

For more information, see: [IRIS Center IEP Resource: Challenging, Ambitious, Measurable Annual Goals](#)

Monitoring Progress: To monitor student progress, IEP teams must make decisions about the nature of the data that will be collected and analyzed relevant to each annual goal. The most appropriate progress monitoring systems are those in which objective numerical data are collected regularly and used to plan subsequent instruction.

OBJECTIVE CRITERIA that enable progress to be monitored and allows for determination of the point at which the objective has been accomplished, such as:

- 95% accurate
- fewer than 5 times per day
- 50 correct responses in one minute
- 4 out of 5 trials correct on three consecutive days

EVALUATION PROCEDURES to be used, such as:

- teacher observation
- written performance
- oral performance
- criterion referenced tests
- parent report
- observation
- time sample teacher-made tests

SCHEDULES to determine how often the objective will be measured, such as:

- one-two weeks
- twice a week
- once a month
- six weeks
- nine weeks
- each semester
- annually

For more information see:

- [Writing Measurable Goals](#)
- [Developing a Progress Monitoring Plan](#)

Progress Reports: The IEP team must stipulate when periodic reports on the student's progress will be provided to her parents. These reports keep the parents informed regarding whether their child is on track to achieve her annual goals.

For more information see: [Reporting Progress](#)

Postsecondary transition goals: Nebraska statute and regulations require transition planning to be documented in Individual Education Programs (IEPs) as required by both federal and state law and must occur in the first IEP meeting held after the student reaches the age of 14. **Model IEP, version 2** includes fillable sections to document postsecondary transition plans.

Measurable post-secondary goals (MPSG) capture a student's vision of adult life and the desired outcomes one year after graduation or exiting services. These are developed by using data from transition assessments that identify a student's strengths, preferences, interests, and needs. These areas are used to guide the student in selecting and communicating post-secondary goals in the areas of employment, education/training, and independent living (when appropriate).

When creating Post-Secondary Goals, they should be:

- Measurable
- Identify an outcome, not a process
- Future based, after the student earns and receives their diploma or ages out

One post-secondary goal should be written for each adult outcome area.

- **POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING:** Where and how the student is going to continue to work and/or develop skills or study after graduation?
- **EMPLOYMENT:** Where is the student going to work or engage in productive activities after graduation?
- **INDEPENDENT LIVING (IF APPROPRIATE):** Where the student is going to live and how he/she is going to access adult services, participate in the community, participate in extracurricular activities, and build and continue social relationships after graduation.

For more information see [Transition-Planning-Guidance-Document-2022.pdf](#)

Common Errors or Challenges: Non-measurable goals.

Best Practices: Include condition, behavior, criteria, timeframe.

Special Education and Related Services

Model IEP Page 13

Guiding Questions: How will needs be addressed to improve student access and progress? How will we know – using data - that the student is making progress?

IDEA Citation: 34 C.F.R. § 300.320(a)(4)

Rule 51 Citation: **92 Neb. Admin. Code §§ 51-007.07A5, 007.07A8**

Guiding Questions: Are services matched to the intensity of the student's needs? Could another educator implement this plan as written?

The IEP team should clearly document (1) describe their rationale, supported by data for each service (2) how the services support progress on goals, and (3) document the **special education services, related services, and supplementary aids and services**, including service intensity

and location ^{1 2}. The IEP should clearly differentiate specially designed instruction, accommodations, and related services. For each service, the IEP must include:

- Type of service
- Frequency
- Duration
- Location
- Provider

Nebraska also recognizes **Levels of Service (I, II, III)** for budgeting and reimbursement purposes, which must align with documented student need (92 NAC 51-003.34, 92 NAC 51-003.35, 92 NAC 51-003.36, 92 NAC 51-003.37). For more information, see [Calculation of School Age Student Full Time Equivalency \(FTE\) for Purposes of Special Education Reimbursement](#)

Special education services describe the **specially designed instruction** the student will receive. IDEA says “Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction— (i) To address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability; and (ii) To ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children,”(34 C.F.R. § 300.39(b)(3)).

Related Services (Sec. 300.34 Related services - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) support instruction by helping students access, participate in, and make progress in grade-level learning. These services are designed to remove or reduce barriers that may interfere with a student’s ability to learn or show what they know.

To do this, IEP teams should:

- Look closely at grade-level expectations and consider where a student may need additional support to learn or demonstrate mastery of those expectations. This includes thinking about how communication, motor, sensory, behavioral, or physical needs might affect learning.
- Review the related services and goals in the student’s IEP and how they connect to classroom learning. For example, speech-language services may support reading and oral expression, occupational therapy may help with writing or using classroom materials, and physical therapy may support access to learning environments.
- Use grade-level classes as meaningful practice opportunities for students to apply newly learned skills and strategies. Whenever possible, related services should connect directly to what students are learning in class, rather than being isolated from instruction.
- Collaborate with related service providers to identify ways skills taught in therapy can be reinforced during daily instruction. This teamwork helps ensure students are supported consistently across settings and can use their skills in real classroom situations.

Overall, related services strengthen instruction by supporting students in accessing grade-level content and progressing toward grade-level mastery alongside their peers.

¹[Weblink to Nebraska Rule 51](#)

²[PTI Nebraska - Nebraska Special Education and Early Intervention Regulations](#)

Transportation as a related service is required when a student's disability prevents access to school or school-related activities without it. Document specialized equipment, routes, or support personnel. Transportation supports might address special pick-up and drop-off requirements, seating requirements, equipment needs, any assistance that may be required, and any necessary training for bus drivers and monitor ([eCFR :: 45 CFR 1303.75 -- Children with disabilities.](#)).

Supplementary Aids and Services are supports, services, or accommodations provided in general education or other settings to enable the child to be educated with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. The IEP team should identify areas within instructional routines that might need additional planning.

Accommodations change how instruction, materials, or assessment are delivered to help a student with a disability, access the general education curriculum and demonstrate their knowledge and skills, without altering the content, standards, or expectations. They do not lower the academic bar; instead, they remove barriers so the student can meet the same learning goals in a different way.

IEP teams should consider what, if any, accommodations throughout instruction and assessment are needed by the child to reach and demonstrate mastery of grade-level standards.

Accommodations support students with disabilities in achieving high expectations when:

- Accommodations are incorporated throughout instructional routines and practices. Remember that accommodations on the IEP are guaranteed to the student.
- Accommodations are leveraged to ensure students are spending the majority of instructional time engagement in grade-level materials and tasks.

For more information, see [Nebraska Accommodations Guidelines - How to Select, Administer, and Evaluation Accommodations for Instruction of Student with Disabilities](#)

Program modifications are adjustments to content, curriculum, performance expectations, or grading criteria that change what the student is expected to learn or demonstrate. Examples include teaching curriculum at a lower grade level or applying modified grading criteria. IEP teams should carefully consider how program modifications could impact a student's eligibility for standard diplomas and graduation standards.

Supports for school personnel include training, coaching, consultation, or planning assistance provided to staff to enable effective implementation of the student's IEP. IEP teams

For more information, see

- [The Basics of Accommodations and Modifications \(NCEO Brief #33\)](#)
- [Supports, Modifications, and Accommodations for Students - Center for Parent Information and Resources](#)
- [IEPs: Developing High-Quality Individualized Education Programs](#)
- [SPED Strategies - IEPs for Daily Instruction Resource](#)
- [SPED-Strategies---Equity-in-Daily-Instruction](#)
- [IDEA definition of Related services - 33 U.S.C. § 1401\(26\)](#)
- [Journey to Inclusion – Nebraska Department of Education](#)
- [SPED Strategies - IEPs for Daily Instruction Resource](#)

Common Errors or Challenges: Services not linked to needs.

Best Practices: Clearly align services to PLAAFPs and goals.

LRE and Placement

Model IEP page 13

IDEA Citation: 34 C.F.R. § 300.320(a)(5)

Rule 51 Citation: [92 Neb. Admin. Code §§ 51-007.07A5, 007.07A8](#)

Guiding Question: Do the services described in the IEP ensure that the student is educated with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate?

IEP teams must carefully consider how the services and supports documented in the IEP will influence the student's placement and future opportunities. Teams should first consider how the student can succeed in general education with appropriate supports before considering more restrictive settings. Placement is based on the student's individual needs and the supports and services required for success, not on disability label or availability of programs. Further, teams should think about any possible consequences of IEP decisions. For example, modifications to curriculum could impact a student's opportunity to complete graduation requirements for regular diploma.

NDE has provided **IEP Service Tables** in the Model IEP form so that IEP teams can accurately document all special education services and supports. This information is used for meet federal reporting requirements about the environments where students with disabilities receive special education.

In addition, the service tables include an opportunity for the IEP team to document how they have reflected on and discussed Placement Considerations, including any potential harmful effects ([Sec. 300.116 Placements - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#))

Common Errors or Challenges: Insufficient evidence or justification for removal, not considering the full continuum, not determining the likelihood that the placement will help the student achieve annual goals, not considering potential harmful effects.

Best Practices: Document evidence, options considered, and rationale for decisions about services, supports, and placement.

Assessment Participation

Model IEP page 14

IDEA Citation: 34 C.F.R. § 300.320(a)(6)

Rule 51 Citation: [92 Neb. Admin. Code § 51-007.07A7](#)

Guiding Question: Does assessment participation reflect daily instruction?

The IEP team must discuss and determine how the student will participate in assessments. The team will document whether the student will participate in Nebraska's general statewide assessments (NSCAS) with or without accommodations, or in the alternate assessment (NSCAS-Alternate). The IEP team should balance the student's ability to benefit from the assessment, the need for accommodations, and the potential impact on instruction and future opportunities. Decisions should be collaborative, evidence-based, and fully documented.

For more information, see [Nebraska Student Centered Assessment System Alternate Assessment Eligibility Worksheet](#) and [AAS Guiding Questions for Alternate Assessment Participation 2024.pdf](#)

Common Errors or Challenges: Inconsistent accommodations, lack of evidence to support decisions.

Best Practices: Align instruction and assessment, review the student's progress over multiple years and settings, document rationale, ensure the student's curriculum provides access to depth and breadth of general academic content.

Extended School Year Services

Model IEP page 15

IDEA Citation: [34 C.F.R. § 300.106](#)

Rule 51: [92 Neb. Admin. Code § 51-007.07C5b](#)

Guiding Question: During extended breaks from school, can the student maintain or regain critical skills?

Eligibility for extended school year services is decided by the IEP team on an individual basis for student based on factors such as regression or loss of skills during a break, recoupment time needed after a break, critical skills essential for independence or access to learning, and emerging skills at risk of being lost.

For more information, see [Service Delivery \(Component of the IEP\) - Center for Parent Information and Resources](#)

Common Errors or Challenges: Category-based decisions.

Best Practices: Use regression/recoupment data.

Procedural Safeguards

Model IEP page 16

33 U.S.C. 1415(a): [Section 1415 - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#)

Rule 51: [92 Neb. Admin. Code § 51-009.06A](#)

Guiding Question: Do parents clearly understand their rights?

The school district will give parents a copy of their **Procedural Safeguards** (their special education rights) **once each school year**.

Parents will also receive a copy at these specific times:

- When the student is first referred for a special education evaluation or when a parent asks for an evaluation
- Whenever a parent asks for another copy
- When the school receives the **first** state complaint or the **first** due process request involving the student
- When the safeguards are required as part of special education discipline procedures

NDE publishes the Parent Rights for Special Education notice in English, Spanish, Chinese, Gujarati, and Vietnamese, and maintains the Family Guide to Special Education in Nebraska as a parent-friendly companion document.

For more information see: [Part B Procedural safeguard Notice \(Parent's rights\)](#)

Common Errors or Challenges: Missing documentation of safeguards.

Best Practices: Provide and document safeguards.

Appendix 1: Considerations for online IEP systems

Below is a **LEA-focused, practitioner-oriented list** of things local districts should consider when discussing **updates to an online IEP system with their vendor**, explicitly reflecting **day-to-day pain points raised by case managers, service providers, administrators, and parents**—including amendment workflows and IEP end-date integrity.

LEA-Specific Considerations for Online IEP System Updates

IEP Amendments, Version Control, and Legal Integrity

- **Ease of amending an IEP without resetting the original end date**
 - Case managers frequently complain that systems treat amendments like full rewrites, unintentionally changing annual review dates and creating compliance risk. LEAs should confirm that amendments:
 - Preserve the original IEP start/end dates
 - Clearly indicate “amendment without meeting” vs. full IEP
 - Automatically document parent agreement and scope of changes [\[tea.texas.gov\]](http://tea.texas.gov), [\[slpnow.com\]](http://slpnow.com)
 - **Clear version history and audit trails**
 - Teams need to easily see what changed, when, and by whom, without comparing PDFs or exporting documents. LEAs should ask whether:
 - Prior versions remain viewable and locked
 - Amendments are visually differentiated from full IEPs
 - Audit logs are accessible during disputes or monitoring [\[tea.texas.gov\]](http://tea.texas.gov)
-

Daily Usability for Case Managers and Related Service Providers

- **Reduced clicks and intuitive navigation**
 - Teachers and service providers report that overly complex navigation slows meetings and increases errors. LEAs should prioritize:
 - Fewer screens per section
 - Easy toggling between goals, services, and accommodations during meetings
 - Fast load speeds during high-use periods (annual review season) [\[g2.com\]](http://g2.com), [\[fullmindlearning.com\]](http://fullmindlearning.com)
- **Role-specific workflows**
 - Systems often assume all users need full access, overwhelming general educators and specialists. LEAs should ask for:
 - Simplified interfaces for general education teachers
 - Targeted views for SLPs, OTs, PTs, school psychologists, etc.

- Guardrails to prevent accidental edits outside a user’s role [tea.texas.gov], [us.fitgap.com]
-

Progress Monitoring and Instructional Reality

- **Flexible, instruction-friendly progress monitoring**
 - A common complaint is that progress tools are compliance-focused but disconnected from how staff actually collect data. LEAs should assess whether the system allows:
 - Multiple data collection methods (frequency, work samples, rubrics)
 - Easy data entry without duplicating work done elsewhere
 - Clear visual summaries usable in IEP meetings and parent discussions [slpnow.com], [us.fitgap.com]
 - **Linking goals to services and schedules**
 - Staff often struggle when goals, service minutes, and provider assignments live in separate parts of the system. LEAs should push for tighter connections to reduce inconsistencies [tea.texas.gov]
-

Collaboration and Meeting Management

- **Real-time collaboration and draft management**
 - IEP teams report difficulty sharing drafts without overwriting work or losing comments. Systems should support:
 - Draft status indicators
 - Clear ownership of sections
 - Safe pre-meeting collaboration without triggering compliance deadlines [tea.texas.gov]
 - **Meeting-ready views**
 - LEAs should ask for a “meeting mode” that allows teams to:
 - Quickly scroll through relevant sections
 - Make live edits without navigation delays
 - Flag follow-up items without finalizing prematurely [g2.com]
-

Parent Access and Communication

- **Parent-friendly portals and notices**
 - Parents often report difficulty accessing or understanding online IEPs. LEAs should evaluate:
 - Mobile accessibility
 - Plain-language summaries alongside legal text

- Clear indicators of when action or consent is required [idahoednews.org], [tea.texas.gov]
 - **Language access and document sharing**
 - Translation and interpreter workflows are frequently cited pain points. LEAs should confirm support for:
 - Translated notices and IEPs
 - Tracking when translated documents are provided
 - Sharing finalized IEPs without workarounds [tea.texas.gov]
-

Training, Support, and Turnover Reality

- **Onboarding for new and temporary staff**
 - Districts with high turnover report heavy reliance on informal “power users.” LEAs should ask vendors about:
 - Role-based training modules
 - Quick-start guides for case managers
 - Ongoing training when features change [research.com], [tea.texas.gov]
 - **Responsiveness to LEA feedback**
 - LEAs frequently report submitting suggestions that disappear into a queue. Discussions should include:
 - How user feedback is prioritized
 - Typical timelines for fixes or enhancements
 - LEA representation in user groups or advisory panels [mgaleg.maryland.gov], [tea.texas.gov]
-

Compliance, Data, and Risk Management

- **Built-in checks without over-restriction**
 - Staff often complain that hard stops interrupt drafting. LEAs should seek:
 - Compliance warnings during drafting
 - Final checks at signature rather than mid-workflow
 - Errors explained in plain language, not just citations [slpnow.com]
- **Data privacy and vendor accountability**
 - Given heightened concern about student data breaches, LEAs should revisit:
 - FERPA responsibilities of the vendor
 - Data storage, breach notification timelines, and subcontractors
 - District control over data access and retention [linkedin.com]