

Educational Surrogate Parents 101

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Objectives

Define "Educational Surrogate Parent" and Clarify Who Qualifies as One

Roles and Responsibilities of ESPs

Roles and Responsibilities of Facilities/Districts

Frequently Asked Questions/Q&A

What is an ESP?

- An Educational Surrogate Parent (ESP) is an individual trained by the state to participate in the special education process on behalf of a child.
- ESPs are required for certain students as specified in IDEA 300.519 and Illinois Administrative Code 226.550.

To qualify for an ESP, a student must be between the ages of 3-22, have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) (or be in the evaluation process), and be either:

A child who is a youth in care (but is not in a foster home).

A child who no parent can be identified or whose parent cannot be located.

A child who is an unaccompanied homeless youth.

Family Matters Parent Training and Information Center

- **Empowers families** of children with disabilities (birth to age 26) through training, information, and individualized support.
- **Provides consultations** via phone and email to assist with IEPs, evaluations, special education rights, and school collaboration.
- **Delivers statewide trainings** for parents, youth, and professionals on topics like transition, behavior, self-advocacy, and conflict resolution.
- **Manages key programs**, including the Educational Surrogate Parent Program and COMPASS advocacy training.
- **Promotes person-centered planning** using the Charting the LifeCourse framework to support informed decision-making and future planning.

ESP Qualifications

- Any individual who is interested in serving students may apply. (Special education background is not required.)
- All ESPs are onboarded through the **Family Matters Parent Training and Information Center.**
- All ESPs must pass a background check.
- ESPs are given a refresher training every three years.

Roles and Responsibilities of an ESP

An Educational Surrogate Parent:

- Represents the student in matters relating to:
 - Evaluation and eligibility
 - Placement
 - Provision of FAPE
- Attends a refresher training with Family Matters every three years.
- Informs themselves on the student's disability.

Representation of the student includes:

- Participation in all meetings where educational decisions are made.
- Granting or denying written consent for evaluation or services.
- Accessing and reviewing student educational records.
- Seeking dispute resolution (facilitation, mediation, due process) or legal assistance, as necessary.

ESP

vs. DCFS Caseworker

- Signs consent for special ed evaluation or services.
- Attends all special ed meetings.
- Consents to change of placement.
- Receives progress reports.

- Consents for field trips.
- Receives invites to open house.
- Signs consent for Medicaid reimbursement.
- Is notified of absences.
- Is notified that the child is ill at school.

How do I request an ESP?



[Log Into ELIS](#) [Log Into IWAS](#) [Public School District Lookup](#) [FRIS Inquiry](#) [IL Report Card](#) [About the Agency and Board](#) [Topics /](#)

[Home](#) > [Special Education](#) > [Special Education Information](#) > [Educational Surrogate Parent Program](#)

SPECIAL EDUCATION Special Education Information

Educational Surrogate Parent Program

RESOURCES

- [Educational Surrogate Parent Program FAQ-For ESPs](#) 📄
- [Educational Surrogate Parent Program FAQ-For Facilities](#) 📄

SPECIAL EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL SURROGATE PARENT PROGRAM

WHAT IS AN EDUCATIONAL SURROGATE PARENT?

An Educational Surrogate Parent is an individual who has been appointed to represent the educational interests of a child with disabilities when:

- No parent (as defined under 34 CFR 300.30) can be identified;
- The parent cannot be located;
- The child is a youth in care; or
- The child is an unaccompanied homeless youth.



[Educational Surrogate Parent Request](#) ▼

[How Does One Become an Educational Surrogate Parent?](#) ▼

[Is an Educational Surrogate Parent Reimbursed for Expenses?](#) ▼

CONTACT INFORMATION

General Special Education Inquiries: ISBESpecED@isbe.net

(217) 782-5589
(217) 782-0372 (Springfield - Fax)
(312) 814-2282 (Chicago - Fax)
Deaf/Hard of Hearing (888) 261-2708

Special Education Operational Support

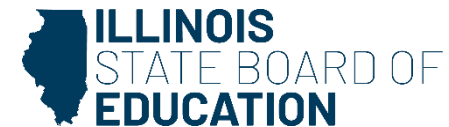
Twylla Bennett, Supervisor

Special Education Programmatic Support

Dr. Nakia Douglas, Director
Mary Lanoue, Supervisor

504 Inquiries - Office of Civil Rights (312) 730-1560

- Go to the ISBE homepage.
- Search “Educational Surrogate Parent.”
- Select “Educational Surrogate Parent Request.”



Information Required

- Student name, DOB, gender, ethnicity, special ed status, language spoken.
- Resident school district.
- Educational placement.
- Residential placement.
- Requestor information.

Educational Placement means the facility at which student is currently or will be attending school and/or receiving educational services.

Placement Type

Placement/Facility Name (if your facility has more than one program, please specify)

Telephone (include Area Code)

Email

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Suite/Apt.

City

State

Zip Code

Residential Placement

Residential Placement means any transitional or temporary living environment such as a group home, shelter, hospital, and/or transitional living.

Placement Type

Placement/Facility Name (if your facility has more than one program, please specify)

Telephone (include Area Code)

Email

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Suite/Apt.

Optional Information

- Student Information System ID number.
- Caseworker name and contact information.
- If the student goes by another name.
- Name of surrogate requested.

Types of Request:

- All requests can be made through the same link.

Appointment

- Student is new to your district or facility.
- Student is in process of initial evaluation for IEP.

Replacement

- Student has changed schools or facilities.
- ESP is unable to be contacted.
- ESP has demonstrated unprofessional behavior.

Withdrawal

- Student graduated.
- Student moved to foster care.
- Student reunified with family.
- Student has left your facility or district.

Responsibilities of Facility/District

- Request an ESP for a student who is eligible.
- Send ESP a 10 days' Notice of Conference.
- Send ESP three-day draft.
- Provide ESP copy of Procedural Safeguards.
- Provide ESP copy of finalized IEP, including signature page.
- Submit a request to withdraw surrogate if student has moved, reunited with family, moved into a foster placement, or no longer needs special education services.

Best Practices When Working with ESPs

Scenarios

An ESP has just sent me an introductory letter requesting educational records. What should I do?

Scenarios

The student has been struggling to make progress in the classroom. You would like to mention the need for assistive technology supports to the IEP team. Should you contact the ESP?

Scenarios

An ESP would like observe the student in the classroom. Is this allowed?

Frequently Asked Questions

Whose responsibility is it to request or withdraw an ESP?

- Any member of a student's IEP team may request or withdraw an ESP; however, an ESP must be at all meetings where educational decisions are made.
- Per Illinois Administrative Code 226.550:
- a) When a child who is a ward of the State is placed in a residential facility, a representative of that facility shall submit to the State Board of Education a request for the appointment of a surrogate parent. Upon enrollment of a student, the resident school district is responsible for ensuring the assignment of a surrogate parent if the residential facility has not already done so.
- d) When a child living in a residential facility no longer requires a surrogate parent, a representative of the facility shall notify the State Board of Education in writing to that effect. This notification shall include the reason for withdrawal of the request.

What happens at age 18?

- It is specified in 105ILCS5/14-6.10 that at the age of 18, the age of majority, all rights under Article 14 of the School Code transfer from the parent/guardian to the student.
- If the student has been adjudged incapable of making educational decisions independently or wishes to independently delegate their educational rights to another individual, an ESP may still be assigned to support the student.

What about a student who turns 22 during the school year?

An ESP needs to be withdrawn when a student has graduated from high school or turned 22 years old.

If a student's 22nd birthday occurs during the school year and the student is finishing the year, the ESP will not need to be withdrawn until the end of that school year.

Do students who are placed residentially out of state need ESPs?

A student who is placed at an out-of-state residential facility maintains an Illinois district of residence. An ESP will continue to be assigned to the student and attend all special education-related meetings.

A student previously had an IEP, but we are moving to a 504 Plan. Can we keep the ESP?

No.

The termination of IEP services must be discussed with an ESP. However, once the student no longer needs special education services on an IEP, the school district or facility must submit a request to withdraw that ESP from the student.

What if I request an ESP and they can't attend the meeting?

The entity should engage with the ESP as it would with any parent or guardian of a student receiving special education services as stated in the Procedural Safeguards.

Can I find out if a student has an ESP already?

- Yes! Email the ESP team at surrogate@isbe.net or call 217-782-5589.



Questions?