

# Involving Families in IEP/IFSP Goals

University of Denver

Denver, CO



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Students in the in the Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and Child, Family, and School Psychology (CFSP) programs at the University of Denver are required to complete the Preschool Interventions and Infant and Family Interventions courses. Both courses include an assignment called Writing functional Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) outcomes.

This assignment is aligned with the ECSE Specialist and School Psychology licensure standards and the DEC Recommended Practices from the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children. The goal of this assignment is to emphasize the critical involvement of families and the legal responsibility school staff have in the IEP/IFSP process. At the end of this assignment, students will understand the importance of collaboration with families and interdisciplinary teams in writing IEP/IFSP goals.

This is an important assignment and skill for students in these fields because understanding how IEP/IFSP goals are developed with the family leads to better outcomes for young children with disabilities. The “functional” part of the assignment is salient because, in practice, many IEP/IFSP goals are not written with a functional or applicable intent, rather, they are written based on the missed items of the assessment that was administered to the child and without input or collaboration with the family. Functional IEP/IFSP goals should be developed with the family and the whole IEP team based on the child’s current levels of functioning, the family’s priorities, and the child’s next developmental steps.

The content of this assignment is introduced during the class through lecture and discussion. The course professor uses a resource from the Early Childhood Technical Assistance ([ECTA](#)) Center. During the class, the criteria for writing functional IEP/IFSP goals is introduced and practiced.

Students also view videos of parents discussing their role in the IEP process, and read texts and articles about collaborating with families to develop IEP/IFSP goals. During the practice of the skill, students work in pairs to identify if previously written goals/outcomes reflect all the criteria. Then, students discuss in a larger group if the criteria were met or not and the rationale.

Students also practice writing IEP/IFSP goals for the children they are working with at their practicum sites or field examples that the professor created. The class dissects the practice goals/outcomes together so that they can discuss the criteria and how the goal/outcome can be re-written. Emphasis is made on collaborating with families on the development of the IEP/IFSP goals and the belief that parents know their child best and teachers and specialist know overall child development and the IEP/IFSP process.

Upon evaluation, students write functional IEP/IFSP goals with less jargon and more thoughtfulness of working with families to create the functional goals. Past and present students have reported that this activity and assignment was valuable to their learning and greatly helped their practice in writing IEP/IFSP goals with families and interdisciplinary teams.

Standard 4—Speaking Up for Every Child