



What's the Big IDEA? #1

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. This series is designed to offer information about IDEA as amended in 2004. Each fact sheet will focus on a different aspect of IDEA.

What is a PTI?

PTI = Parent Training and Information Center

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PTI stands for Parent Training and Information Center. PTIs are funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (USDE-OSEP) under IDEA. Their purpose is to assist families in navigating the special education system by providing training and assistance to the families of the nation's seven million children with disabilities (physical, cognitive, behavioral, and emotional). Each state has at least one PTI and those with large populations may have more. *Parents Reaching Out is the PTI for New Mexico.*

What Do PTIs Do?

PTIs are funded to provide information, support, education, and training to families of children who have disabilities. The New Mexico PTI serves families of children (birth to 26) across the state by providing the necessary tools for families to gain knowledge and skills so they can advocate for their children to receive a free and appropriate public education.

How Do PTIs Support Families?

The New Mexico PTI supports families by:

- Offering emotional support.
- Listening and asking questions in order to help families make informed decisions.
- Helping families identify and prioritize issues.
- Providing information on best practices for meeting the needs of children with disabilities.
- Helping parents prepare for an IEP meeting.
- Assisting with problem solving.
- Explaining procedures, safeguards, laws, and regulations that relate to students with disabilities.
- Interpreting school and special education jargon.
- Guiding parents as they navigate the school system to get their children's needs met in a timely manner.
- Encouraging families to advocate for their children.
- Creating a network of families who have similar needs and experiences.
- Reminding families that they know their child better than anyone else on the planet!

What Does the PTI Provide?

Information and Workshops

The NM PTI has created practical, family-friendly publications that are available in English and Spanish on topics related to IDEA, most notably, *The Handbook - Parental Rights and Special Education Procedures*. In addition, the NM PTI presents a variety of workshops for families and professionals. Our most popular workshop provides parents and professionals with a full-day training on the IEP process. We also offer workshops on inclusion and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports. We address the needs of adolescents with disabilities through workshops on educational transition as well as puberty/sexuality, employment, and health care. Call us to find out what trainings are coming up or check out the calendar on our website. All of our services are offered free of charge and we can custom-design a workshop for your group's needs. If you are out of the Albuquerque metro area, we can arrange to come to your location. Give us a call at 1-800-524-5176.

Leadership Building

The New Mexico PTI has a network of Community-Based Advocates (CBAs). These volunteers receive in-depth information on their rights, responsibilities, and protections under IDEA. They gain an understanding of the law and develop the leadership skills necessary to become active participants in early intervention and school reform activities. Our Community-Based Advocates operate under the "Pay it Forward" concept. As we learn and help others, we develop our own skills to help our children. Those who receive help from us learn new skills and pass them on to others. Before you know it, there is community support for all children. Our Community-Based Advocates reflect the diverse ethnic groups in New Mexico. They help the parents in their own communities navigate the special education and early intervention systems. They give the families in their communities the tools they need to advocate not just for their own children, but for all the children in the community. Call us to learn how you can become a Community-Based Advocate today.



Together We Are a Thunderstorm

*Individually, we are single drops of rain,
falling silently into the dust,
offering scant promise
of moisture to the thirsty land.
But together we can nourish the Earth
and revive its hopes and dreams.
Together, We Are a Thunderstorm*

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What if I'm not sure if the PTI can help me?

Give us a call. Chances are we have a program or resource to fit your needs and will be able to get you pointed in the right direction. You can also find out more information on our website, www.parentsreachingout.org.

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