

Prior Written Notice

Prior Written Notice, also referred to as PWN, is a key right for parents with children who have disabilities and special healthcare needs. This right is part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a law that ensures schools communicate important decisions to parents in writing.

When do schools need to give prior written notice to parents?

A school must provide written notice each time it:		
Plans to start or change the way a child is identified, evaluated, educated, or placed, or provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to a child	Refuses to start or change any of the (left) actions for a child	When the decision requires parental consent, the school may give written notice at the same time
For example, if a school wants to change a child's special education program, they must tell the parents in writing before making the change.		

What should be included in the written notice?

The written notice must:			
Describe the action the school wants to take or refuses to take	Explain the reasons for the school's decision	List the tests, records, or reports used to make the decision	State that parents have protections under IDEA
Inform parents how to learn about their rights if the decision isn't about an initial evaluation	Provide resources to help parents understand IDEA	Mention other options the child's special team considered and why they were not chosen	Offer other reasons behind the school's decision
For example, the written notice may say that the school decided to place a child in a smaller class based on test results and teacher observations, and it could list other options considered.			

What else do parents need to know?

The notice should also:		
Be written in easy-to-understand language	Be provided in the parents' native language or communicated in a way they understand, unless it is not possible	
If a parent doesn't have a written language, the school must:		
Verbally translate the information or communicate it in the way the parent prefers	Ensure the parent understands the notice	Document that they completed these steps
For example, if a parent uses sign language, the school may need to provide an interpreter to explain the notice.		

Sources: [Maryland Procedural Safeguards Notice](#) and [Right to Receive Prior Written Notice](#)