



## Placement or Location?

	Placement	Location
<b>1. What is it?</b>	<p>Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal special education law where IEPs come from, “placement” refers to the type of setting in which your child’s IEP will be carried out. IDEA requires all school districts to make available a continuum of alternative placements, which must at minimum include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a general education class</li> <li>• a special education class</li> <li>• a special education school</li> <li>• homebased instruction</li> <li>• instruction in a hospital or other institution</li> </ul>	<p>“Location” refers to the physical brick-and-mortar location where your child is attending school.</p>
<b>2. When does it change?</b>	<p>“Placement” changes when there is a drastic change to your child’s overall educational experience and level of interaction with non-disabled peers.</p> <p>Sometimes a change in “location” is also a change in “placement”; sometimes a change in “location” is not a change in “placement.” It depends on the specific circumstances.</p> <p>Even if your child stays at the same “location,” your child’s “placement” can still change if your child’s educational program or level of interaction with non-disabled peers changes.</p>	<p>“Location” is exactly what it sounds like — it’s the location of your child’s school. Your child’s “location” changes when your child changes classrooms or schools.</p>
<b>3. Why is it important?</b>	<p>IDEA requires that the IEP team decide a student’s educational “placement.” This means that as members of the IEP team, parents have a say in</p>	<p>Parents don’t have as much influence over the physical “location” of where your child</p>

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	determining a child’s “placement.” Before changing your child’s “placement,” the school must have an IEP meeting and issue Prior Written Notice.	<p>attends school. You have a say in your child’s “placement,” but a change in classroom or school site is not necessarily changing your child’s “placement.”</p> <p>Schools can move your student to a different classroom or even a different school without an IEP meeting or Prior Written Notice, as long as that change in “location” is not also a change in “placement.”</p>

### Examples from Real Court Cases About Placement vs. Location:

- ❖ Julio is a student at a public school. He is moved to another school where he has a similar class schedule and the same accommodations. However, his favorite class is theatre arts, and his new school doesn’t provide a theatre arts class. Julio’s location has changed because his physical location changed when he switched schools. **Julio’s placement remains the same because although one class has changed, his overall educational program and time alongside nondisabled peers remains the same.**
- ❖ Wendy is a student at a local school that provides two separate educational programs: one program that serves all students, and another program that only serves students with learning disabilities. Wendy is in the program that serves all students, but her teachers think that the program that only services students with disabilities would better accommodate Wendy’s needs because that program is specifically tailored to helping disabled students. Wendy is moved out of the mainstream program and into the special program. **Wendy’s location has not changed because she is still at the same school site. Wendy’s placement has changed because she switched from a mainstream education program to a more segregated special education program where she is only with other children with disabilities.** Wendy’s placement also has changed because she is receiving more disability-related services in the new program.
- ❖ Hassan is a deaf student who needs an ASL interpreter to understand what is going on around him. He also has Type I diabetes and needs an on-call staff member to administer insulin at any point during the school day. The school board decided that it was too burdensome to accommodate Hassan’s needs and disenrolled him. **Hassan’s location has changed because he is no longer attending this school, and Hassan’s placement has changed because this was a drastic change to his overall educational experience, and he was no longer receiving the same educational services.**