# Prior Written Notice (PWN) (1)

Prior Written Notice (PWN) is a critical procedural safeguard under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). School districts are legally required to provide PWN whenever they propose, refuse, or make changes to the identification, evaluation, placement, or provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for a student with a disability. The notice must be provided in writing and in a timely manner, giving parents the opportunity to understand and respond to the district’s decision.

## Important Legal Note

PWN is not optional—it is a mandatory safeguard under IDEA. The notice must include specific information: **(1)** a description of the action proposed or refused; **(2)** an explanation of why; **(3)** a description of the data and evaluations relied upon; **(4)** other options considered and why they were rejected; and **(5)** procedural safeguards available to parents. Failure to provide adequate PWN can amount to a denial of parental participation rights and a violation of IDEA.

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| Authority/Case | Key Holding |
| 34 C.F.R. § 300.503 | Districts must provide written notice when proposing or refusing to initiate or change identification, evaluation, placement, or FAPE. |
| Amanda J. v. Clark County Sch. Dist., 267 F.3d 877 (9th Cir. 2001) | Failure to provide parents with full information about evaluations and decisions violated IDEA’s procedural safeguards. |
| Knable v. Bexley City Sch. Dist., 238 F.3d 755 (6th Cir. 2001) | Court emphasized that lack of adequate notice deprived parents of meaningful participation and contributed to denial of FAPE. |

**Takeaway for Parents:  
Anytime the district refuses, delays, or proposes a change to your child’s evaluation, services, or placement, they must provide Prior Written Notice. PWN must explain the reasons, data, and alternatives considered. If the district fails to provide this notice, it is a violation of IDEA and undermines your right to participate in your child’s education decisions.**