# Parent Guide: Understanding Prior Written Notice (PWN) (2)

Prior Written Notice (PWN) is a critical procedural safeguard under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It ensures that parents are fully informed when a school proposes or refuses to make changes to a child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP). This handout explains what PWN is, when it must be provided, and how parents can use it to advocate for their child.

## When is PWN Required?

Schools must provide PWN in the following situations:

1. 1. Proposing a change in the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of a child.
2. 2. Refusing a change in the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of a child.
3. 3. Proposing a change in *how* a child receives a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).
4. 4. Refusing a change in *how* a child receives FAPE.

## What Must Be Included in a PWN?

By law [34 C.F.R. §300.503(b)], every PWN must include:

* A description of the action proposed or refused by the school.
* An explanation of why the school proposes or refuses the action.
* A description of each evaluation, assessment, or report used in the decision.
* A statement about parents’ procedural safeguards and how to obtain them.
* Sources for parents to get help understanding procedural safeguards.
* A description of other options considered and reasons they were rejected.
* A description of other factors relevant to the decision. [§300.503(b)]

## Implementation Date

The PWN must state when the proposed or refused actions will begin. Best practice is to provide parents 5–10 business days for review. Parents may request more time if the implementation date does not allow reasonable consideration.

## What if Parents Disagree?

Parents may use dispute resolution options, such as mediation or due process, if they disagree with the PWN. The “stay put” rule protects the child’s current placement until the dispute is resolved.

## \*\*\* If Parents Do Not See Their Request or Questions Answered in the PWN

## They should request an amendment to the PWN immediately or *as soon as possible.*

## \*\*\*Important Reminder for Families:

## Along with parent rights come parent responsibilities. If parents do not agree with what is being proposed, the PWN can serve as a starting point for taking action.

## If parents do not file a challenge or appeal to the decisions explained in the PWN, the proposed changes will be implemented on the date stated in the notice.

## REMEMBER

Before the end of an IEP meeting, parents should ask the team to review all proposals and refusals. Parents can also ask who will be writing the PWN and when it will be received.

Essential Questions to Ask:

* Have I received a PWN explaining the changes being proposed or refused?
* Do I need to ask any follow-up questions to fully understand the PWN?
* When and how will I receive the PWN?
* LOOK AT THE PROPOSED START DATE