

6 Child Disability Rights Laws You Should Know

By: Family Voices of California

To commemorate tomorrow's 15-year anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), we are looking back at six key laws that have specifically helped improve the lives of children with special health care needs.

- 1. August 14, 1935 – Social Security Act:** This Act established federal old-age benefits and grants to states to be used to assist individuals who are blind and children with disabilities. The Act also extended existing vocational rehabilitation programs established by earlier legislation.
- 2. April 11, 1965 - Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA):** The first federal grant program to fund the education of children with disabilities in state-operated or state-supported schools and institutions. Part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, the Act provided federal funds to help low-income students and led to education programs such as Title I, Head Start, and bilingual education.
- 3. July 1, 1969 - Lanterman Act:** This California law established the right of people with developmental disabilities in California to services and supports to allow them to live a more independent life. Regional Centers are developed to provide needed services.
- 4. November 30, 1975 - Education for All Handicapped Children Act:** A free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment is guaranteed. Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are mandated with special education and related services designed to meet the needs of each child (aged 3-21) with disabilities, and "wherever possible" to be educated with children who do not have disabilities.
- 5. July 26, 1990 - Americans with Disabilities Act:** If the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was the first civil rights act for people with disabilities, the Americans with Disabilities Act was the second. Closely modeled after the Civil Rights Act and Section 504, the law was the most sweeping disability rights legislation in history. It extended all civil rights protections to people with disabilities, including protection from discrimination in employment, transportation, public accommodations, telecommunications, and activities of state and local governments.
- 6. October 30, 1990 - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** Replaced the Education for All Handicapped Children Act and expanded discretionary programs. IDEA also included transition and assistive technology services as special education services and expanded the list of those eligible to include children with autism and traumatic brain injuries.