Encouraging Student Independence (ESI) Process Guide
Encouraging Student Independence Plan (ESI)

*Requirement to Develop Student Functional Independence*

By law, special education and related services to students with disabilities must be provided in the “least restrictive environment.” When an IEP Team is considering adult support for a student, all aspects of the student’s program must be considered with the intent of maximizing student independence. The IEP Team is responsible for the design of the student’s program and allocating school-based staff to implement the program.

A student’s educational program must be carefully evaluated to determine where support is indicated. Natural support and existing staff support should be used whenever possible to provide access in the least restrictive environment. If not carefully monitored and evaluated, additional adult support for a student may unintentionally foster dependence.

It is not always feasible to determine a student’s potential for learning and self-sufficiency with any precision, particularly where the student’s disability significantly impacts his or her capacity for communication. In that situation, even without a complete understanding of the student’s abilities, there can still be an assessment of the likelihood that the IEP will confer a meaningful educational benefit by measurably advancing the student toward the goal of increased learning and independence.

Students may require the support of an instructional assistant for needs in the area(s) of communication, health, safety, and mobility or as a reciprocal decision from another state or local school system.

*The ESI (SE: 35): Encouraging Student Independence Plan*

For all students assigned SEIA support where the IEP reflects Supplementary Aids and Services supports provided by an instructional assistant as a provider, an SE: 35 ESI should be developed. Electronic and manual versions of the SE: 35 are available on the Special Education website under the “FORMS” tab.
The **Encouraging Student Independence Plan (SE: 35)** is a data documentation tool developed to provide IEP teams with a means for evaluating a student's progress toward functional independence. An **ESI (SE: 35)** is developed upon initial provision of adult support and it is reviewed/revised at least annually by the school-based IEP team.

It is important for the SEIA(s) to become familiar with the expected outcomes as indicated on the student’s ESI and to have a variety of strategies at hand to assist students in achieving their goals. Collaboration among support staff will be critical when more than one adult is supporting the student. Once the data collection tool has been established by the case manager and shared with the SEIA(s), it is the responsibility of the SEIA(s) to collect data regarding student performance and to keep the case manager informed about the student’s progress so that the case manager can continually update the **SE: 35 ESI data documentation tool**.

**Initial ESI Plan Development and Progress Monitoring:**

Upon initial provision of adult support for a student, the **SCHOOL TEAM** is required to:

- convene an IEP team meeting to develop an ESI, a draft ESI (SE: 35) does NOT need to be sent home 5 days prior to an IEP team meeting
- document team discussions in the IEP team meeting notes (SE: 7)
- PRIORITIZE one or two IEP goals to develop functional independence and include the goal(s) in the newly developed ESI plan
- Ensure the prioritized IEP goal(s) is SMART (specific, measureable, attainable, reasonable, timely)
- Attach the ESI to the IEP team meeting notes (SE: 7)

The **CASE MANAGER** is required to:

- ensure that a copy of the initial **ESI (SE:35)** is placed in the student’s confidential record in the right hand pocket in a folder labeled “**ESI Plans**” to be used for future quarterly data collection
- create a student portfolio
- develop a data collection tool to track progress toward the prioritized goal(s) such as frequency table, ABC chart, anecdotal notes, etc.
• meet with the assigned SEIA(s) to review the required components listed on the cover page of the ESI
• train the SEIA(s) in the use of the data collection tool and give specific detail as to implementing the determined prompt(s)
• ensure ongoing collaboration with the SEIA(s) to review data collection and student progress
• ensure that progress is documented and reported quarterly, similarly at the time of quarterly progress reports for special education, on the ESI SE:35 data documentation tool and should reflect the student’s comprehensive performance throughout the entire school day

The SEIA is required to:
• maintain the student portfolio and ensure confidentiality of all information
• collect ongoing data as developed in collaboration with the case manager
• report data and outcomes back to the case manager during scheduled collaborative meetings

ESI Plan IEP Team Annual Review:

The ESI Plan is reviewed annually by the school-based IEP Team and documented in the IEP Team Meeting Notes (SE: 7). ESI documents that will be discussed and reviewed at the IEP team meeting must be provided to the parents 5 days prior to the IEP team meeting. During this process, the IEP TEAM will:

• determine student progress toward developing functional independence
• consider parental input
• develop and/or revise IEP goals/objectives for encouraging student independence

The CASE MANAGER will:
• document the review date on the cover page of the ESI and make adjustments as determined by the IEP team
• continue ongoing collaboration and data collection with the SEIA(s) as previously established

IEP Team meeting notes (SE: 7) Documentation Requirements:

Ensure that the IEP team documents its discussion of the ESI (SE: 35) in the "Documentation of discussion:" of the IEP team meeting notes (SE: 7).

Include in the IEP team meeting notes:

• If it is the initial development of the Encouraging Student Independence Plan (SE: 35 ESI)
• If it is the review of the Encouraging Student Independence Plan (SE: 35 ESI)
• Parental input regarding the Encouraging Student Independence Plan (SE: 35 ESI)
• The IEP team plan for promoting functional independence
• Attach the respective ESI (SE: 35) to the IEP team meeting notes (SE: 7)
Additionally, ensure that the IEP team documents any revisions to the IEP in Prior Written Notice (PWN) section of the IEP team meeting notes (SE: 7).

**PRIOR WRITTEN NOTICE**  
(Must be completed for all IEP team meetings)

> A public agency must give parents written notice each time it proposes or refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, educational program, or educational placement of a student or the provision of FAPE to a student before it may implement any such changes.

1. **FCPS proposes** to initiate or change area(s) checked below:
   - Identification/Eligibility
   - Evaluation/Re-evaluation (assessments)
   - Review/revision of the Individual Education Program (IEP)
   - Educational placement

   1a. Description of the action(s) proposed by FCPS: 

   1b. Explanation of action(s) proposed by FCPS: 

2. **FCPS refuses** to initiate or change area(s) checked below.