

How to Get GPS Trackers Documented in your Child's IEP

The skyrocketing occurrence of wandering incidents among children with autism has raised the discussion of utilizing Global Positioning Systems (GPS) to address safety skills in a student's IEP (Individualized Education Program).

Wandering is common, dangerous and puts tremendous stress on families and schools. Researchers have found that nearly half of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) attempt to wander or bolt from a safe, supervised place. More than half of these wandering children go missing – often into dangerous situations.

Safety, or the ability to protect one's self, is a vital health & safety adaptive skill for students; and for life after graduation from school. This important adaptive, non-academic skill, can and should be captured in a student's Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance in the IEP. IEP goal(s) can and should be developed to address the adverse impact this lack of skill (or safety risk) has on the student. Additionally, GPS can be considered an assistive technology device and service in accordance with the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

Please see the back of this pamphlet explaining why GPS is considered assistive technology.

Bringing these facts together, your school team can say "yes" to GPS in the IEP. It's always wise to be prepared should the team say "no." **Here are some suggestions for documenting GPS in the IEP** due to the safety risk that can adversely impact the student's education.



Documenting GPS in the IEP

The first step is to request GPS as a component of the IEP. Be prepared with proposed draft goal(s) and the supporting reasons why GPS is essential assistive technology to keep your at-risk child or young adult safe.

Document the school district's answer to your request under Prior Written Notice. If the school district refuses, make sure the reason why they have refused is documented. You may want to pursue your right to appeal their decision through mediation or a due process. Or, gather more information through further evaluation to support the GPS device and monitoring service. If they agree to the GPS, then you are on your way.

Background on Sample Student

Joey is a 4th grade student with an IEP under the classification of autism. Joey often bolts away from supervised activities during school and at home. He is assigned a one-to-one adult to monitor his safety during school. The team is concerned about his safety and lack of skill around safety awareness.

The team would like to improve Joey's functional capabilities around safety, starting with teaching him how to stop when instructed to stop running, walk safely in the school and in the community, tolerate a GPS monitoring device fastened to his clothing and participate in the process of putting it on. Additionally, the school team would like to provide training for the parents, helping them work with Joey on these goals.

Proposed Goal:

Joey will tolerate wearing a GPS tracking device and participate in the process of putting it on and taking it off.

Documentation under Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional (non-academic) Performance:

The Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance are the cornerstone of the IEP. It is the source that drives IEP goals and other IEP components. It is the statement that links all components of the IEP together.

Joey's Present Levels should note that "Joey is a safety risk; he bolts from supervised activities at school, home and the community", as an example.

Documentation for Parent Counseling and Training (a related service) under "Recommendations"

Parent Counseling and Training is a related service under the IDEA designed to

assist parents in acquiring skills to support the implementation of their child's IEP. This may involve helping the parent gain the skills needed to support IEP goals at home as well as support the efforts of the school.

Documentation Under "Accommodations"

Given the fact that Accommodations can include assistive technology, document the GPS device under "Accommodations" in the appropriate category of your state's IEP paperwork. If there is no specific category, we suggest placing it under "other," listing it as a "GPS device and service (assistive technology) to reduce safety risk due to bolting at school, home and in the community."

Documentation for Evaluations

You may require an evaluation to determine what specific device(s) and monitoring services best suit your student's lack of safety skills. If so, the request for evaluation(s) can be documented under "Prior Written Notice" and "Recommendations". Consider any evaluation that looks at the child's ability to keep themselves safe, and specifically ask for recommendations to be made addressing safety.

Documentation of Use

Does the GPS go between home and school? On a case-by-case basis, the use of school-purchased assistive technology devices in a child's home or in other settings is required if the child's IEP team determines that the child needs access to those devices to receive FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education). If the GPS is purchased by the school district, document under "Recommendations" that the GPS goes between home and school.

If parents have purchased the device and service, document this detail in the IEP to reflect that the GPS belongs to the parents and permission is given to use at school. These terms and conditions may require further documentation beyond the IEP and differ from state to state.



Documentation of Request for Financial Support from District

If it is decided that parents are going to request that the assistive technology device and monitoring service should be financially supported by the district, then you must document the request as a part of the IEP meeting.

After assuring that the GPS device is linked to an IEP goal, request the purchase of the device and annual monitoring fee. Insist that the district's answer to this question is reflected in Prior Written Notice in the IEP. If the answer is yes, you are on your way. If the answer is no, insist that Prior Written Notice reflects the reason for the district's denial of the request. This is where you may request an evaluation(s) to look at safety.

If denied, request your district's procedural safeguards to understand your rights to appeal the district's decision through mediation or due process.

GPS is Assistive Technology

In accordance with the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), assistive technology must be considered at least annually as a part of the student's IEP. Global Positioning Systems (GPS devices) and monitoring services, can be considered assistive technology by its definition under the IDEA 2004.

An assistive technology device is:

"Any item, piece of equipment or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of children with disabilities. The term does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted, or the replacement of such device."

(Authority 20 U.S.C. 1401(1))

An assistive technology service is:

"Any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, and use of an assistive technology device. The term includes -

- a.** The evaluation of the needs of a child with a disability, including a functional evaluation of the child in the child's customary environment;
- b.** Purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of assistive technology devices by children with disabilities;
- c.** Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, retaining, repairing, or replacing assistive technology devices;
- d.** Coordinating and use other therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices, such as those associated with existing education and rehabilitation plans and programs;
- e.** Training or technical assistance for a child with a disability or, if appropriate, that child's family; and
- f.** Training or technical assistance for professionals (including individuals or rehabilitation services), employers, or other individuals who provide services to employ, or are otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions of children with disabilities."

(Authority 20 U.S.C. 1401(2))



Julie Swanson

A parent and a special education advocate. Julie is the co-founder of YourSpecialEducationRights.com, an award-winning, video-based website designed to help parents understand their rights under the IDEA and other disability laws. She is also the co-author of *Your Special Education Rights: What Your School District Won't Tell You*.

“ I use an AngleSense GPS Tracker for my son in his program. He has learned to tolerate wearing the device and participates in putting it on and taking it off. Anglesense provides me and his team peace of mind regarding his safety. ”

ABOUT AngelSense

AngelSense GPS Tracking Solution provides all day, uninterrupted monitoring with life-saving alerts if a child wanders away from school grounds. AngelSense consists of a GPS device for the child and an accompanying app that can be used by multiple caregivers.

Our Solution has been successfully integrated into the school system with a customized interface. This allows staff members to access the app during school hours and help ensure the safety of their students with special needs.



To hear **success stories** about documenting GPS in the IEP and to receive a **special discount for IEP applicants** contact: info@angelsense.com

Learn more about AngelSense www.angelsense.com

* The AngelSense GPS Tracker is available at a one-time annual fee