SPECIAL EDUCATION & AUTISM
Navigating the IEP for children with autism:
A guide for pediatric providers

Criteria for an educational diagnosis for autism in schools is different than your medical diagnosis. Not all children with Autism will qualify for an IEP under the Autism diagnosis, and it is alright to let families know this.

Requesting an IEP
Children without academic challenges may not qualify for an IEP, but it is still important to ask. A 504 plan with behavioral accommodations can help ensure these children have the supports they need.

A) Write a letter on family’s behalf to take to the school, saying, ‘I, parent of Johnny, request a special education evaluation for Johnny for Autism Spectrum Disorder.’ Ask them to sign, date, and turn in to their school.

B) This initiates the process for special education evaluation and parents then have five days to sign a consent for evaluation.

C) The school will conduct possible cognitive testing, standardized testing, ADOS, social work observation, interviews, and medical record review within 30 days school days, and develop a plan with families at an IEP meeting.

D) That plan is implemented within 45 school days.

Goals
+ These are benchmarks the team might work on such as communication, peer relationships, engagement

Behavior Approaches
+ Accommodations might include: visual schedules, sensory breaks, gross motor breaks, fidgets allowed in the classroom, paraprofessional, and specific behavioral plan

Therapy
+ Therapies might be weekly or on monthly consult: Speech Language Therapy for social communication, Occupational Therapy, ABA therapist (usually on consult)

What is included in an IEP?

You can partner with schools by writing a letter, using language such as this patient might benefit from XYZ accommodations or therapy that can help your patient thrive. It is possible the schools may not have the resources to support the request, but it is worth a try!

Class Setting
+ Depending on the needs of each child, the class setting might include a small class setting, or pull-out (resource room) support for different subjects