# Key Component 3: Identify Areas of Need
during the IEP

Identifying and Prioritizing Student Needs

Utilize the following data sources when identifying student need(s) as reported in the Individualized Education Program (IEP):

- **Assessment data**
- **Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance**
- **Input of IEP team members, including parent(s) and student**
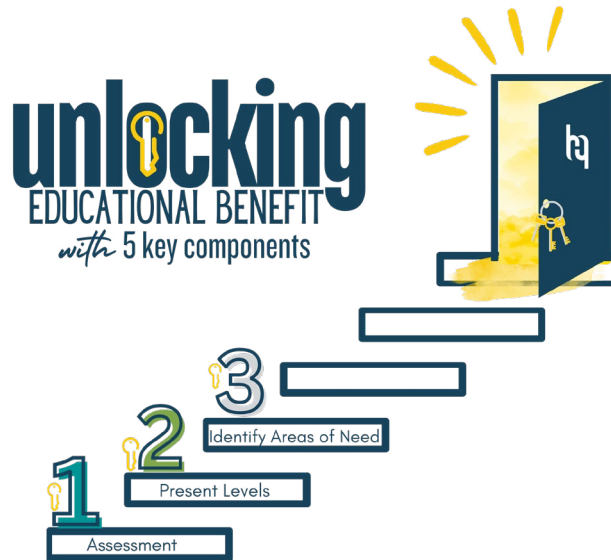
Document the area(s) of need in the IEP. Based on the data gathered, the IEP team should discuss and document whether and how the student's needs will be addressed through accommodations and modifications, goals, and/or services. For areas of need the IEP team has determined will be addressed through goals, list those areas in the Areas of Need section of the IEP.

AREAS OF NEED
For the student to receive educational benefits, goals will be written to address the following areas of need:

How do we identify the student's needs?

Utilize assessment data, present levels, and IEP team input to identify the student's need(s). The identified need(s) should be a result of the student's documented disability.

Does every identified need require a subsequent goal?

Each identified need related to the student's disability needs to be addressed within the IEP in one of the following ways:

- **Accommodations or modifications**
- **Goal(s): In instances where an area of need cannot be addressed through an accommodation or modification, a goal must be developed (including short-term objectives and/or benchmarks, when appropriate).**

How do I handle disagreements about needs?

As with any part of the IEP meeting, if a school-based team member, the parent(s), the student, or anyone else attending the meeting expresses disagreement, it is important to document their dissent. If there is uncertainty as to the reason for disagreement, it is difficult to move the team toward agreement, so ask questions to clarify. Since the identified needs for the student are foundational in determining goals and accommodations, establish if the team can move forward without additional data being collected. Be sure to summarize the discussion and any decisions made within the IEP document.

How do I document parent involvement when determining student needs?

As with all parts of the IEP meeting, it is important to ask parent(s) for their input during the discussion of identified needs. Ask questions such as,

- **"Do you think this list or this discussion has covered all of your student's needs as they relate to their disability?"** or

- **"Did you have any additional information you wanted the team to consider at this point in the meeting?"**

Document that the parent was asked for input and what their response was in the IEP notes.

EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT CONSIDERATIONS

- Are all identified areas of need clearly documented?
- Has parent/guardian input been documented during the discussion of identified needs?

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