

Ensuring Alignment: From Present Levels to Goals, Services, and Accommodations

Purpose & Overview

A strong IEP is like a puzzle: every piece must fit together. Too often, teams write a PLAAFP, draft goals, add services, and list accommodations, but the sections don't align. Misalignment creates compliance risks, confuses staff, and reduces student progress.

This worksheet provides step-by-step tools, templates, and examples for creating seamless alignment across all IEP sections so that every need identified in Present Levels is addressed with a measurable goal, a matching service, and the right accommodations.

Why Alignment Matters

- **Legal Compliance:** IDEA requires that goals and services be directly linked to Present Levels.
 - **Clarity for Staff:** Educators need a roadmap that shows exactly how each identified need is addressed.
 - **Family Trust:** Parents are reassured when they see consistency and logic across the plan.
 - **Student Progress:** Aligned IEPs ensure instruction, supports, and data all target the right skills.
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The Alignment Chain

1. **PLAAFP Statement:** Identifies current performance, strengths, needs, and baselines.

2. **Goal(s):** Directly address the needs identified in the PLAAFP.
3. **Services/Minutes:** Provide the instruction or support needed to meet the goal.
4. **Accommodations/Modifications:** Remove barriers so the student can access instruction while working toward the goal.
5. **Progress Monitoring Plan:** Data collection method and schedule tied directly to the goal.

*If a need is in the PLAAFP but not addressed with a goal, service, or support
→ the IEP is incomplete.*

Alignment Crosswalk Template

Use this simple crosswalk to check for consistency.

PLAAFP Need	Annual Goal	Services	Accommodations	Progress Monitoring
“Reading fluency at 72 CWPM with 93% accuracy; difficulty with multisyllabic words.”	“Student will increase fluency to 110 CWPM at ≥95% accuracy across 3 probes.”	SpEd reading intervention 3x/week	Repeated readings, phrase-cued texts	Weekly 1-min CBMs
“Writing 1–2 sentences; needs graphic organizer to expand ideas.”	“Student will write 5-sentence paragraphs with topic, 3 details, and conclusion.”	SpEd writing 2x/week; SLP vocabulary 1x/week	Sentence frames, graphic organizer, exemplars	Monthly rubric scoring

“Difficulty using coping strategies; escalates 2–3x/week.”	“Student will independently use a coping strategy to return to task ≤ 5 min in 4/5.”	Counseling skills 1x/week; SpEd coaching 2x/week	Calm corner, visual break menu	ABC notes, latency timing
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Sample Aligned Sets by Domain

Academic Example (Math)

- **PLAAFP:** Student solves 2/10 single-step word problems independently; 6/10 with checklist.
- **Goal:** Solve 8/10 multi-step word problems using a problem-solving checklist.
- **Service:** Targeted math intervention 4x/week.
- **Accommodations:** Highlighter for key words; visual problem-solving steps.
- **Progress Monitoring:** Weekly word problem probes.

Communication Example (AAC)

- **PLAAFP:** Using AAC, Student independently requests 2–3x/day; peer initiations 1x/day with prompt.
- **Goal:** Independently use AAC to initiate and maintain peer interactions 3x/day.
- **Service:** SLP direct service 2x/week; classroom consultation 1x/month.
- **Accommodations:** Partner-augmented input, visual conversation scripts.
- **Progress Monitoring:** Daily initiation log with prompt levels.

Behavior Example (Self-Regulation)

- **PLAAFP:** Student identifies emotions with visuals but needs 2 prompts to use coping strategy.
- **Goal:** Independently use coping strategy to return to baseline in ≤ 5 min, 4/5 opportunities.
- **Service:** Counseling 1x/week; para support during transitions.
- **Accommodations:** Visual break menu, safe space, scheduled sensory breaks.
- **Progress Monitoring:** Latency recordings + weekly summary chart.

Alignment Pitfalls to Watch For

Misstep	Correction
Goals that don't connect to PLAAFP data	Always anchor goal baselines in the PLAAFP.
Services listed without clear purpose	Link each service to a specific goal.
Accommodations "laundry list"	Only include supports tied to the student's actual needs.
No progress monitoring method	Identify tool (CBM, rubric, ABC notes) and frequency for each goal.

Alignment Checklist (Use at Every IEP Meeting)

- Each PLAAFP statement includes **baseline data**.
- Every identified need has a **matching goal**.
- Every goal has a **matching service**.

- Every goal has at least **1–2 accommodations** supporting access.
 - Every goal has a **progress monitoring method + schedule**.
 - Nothing in the PLAAFP is left unaddressed.
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Action Starter: Try Tomorrow

- Pull one current IEP and choose a single area (e.g., reading or behavior).
- Create a **crosswalk table** linking the PLAAFP → Goal → Service → Accommodation → Progress Monitoring.
- Highlight any gaps (e.g., need in PLAAFP without a goal; goal without a service).
- Adjust with your team to ensure the chain is unbroken.