



SPIN NEWS

The Newsletter for Parents of Children with Disabilities

SPECIAL
PARENT
INFORMATION
NETWORK

October 2025
Volume XLI, No. 1

SPIN is co-sponsored by the Disability & Communication Access Board and the Department of Education. Services include a phone line for information referral and support, a quarterly newsletter, an annual conference and community workshops. SPIN is guided by an Advisory Committee made up of parents, educators, agencies serving children with disabilities and their families and people with disabilities. SPIN also provides staff support to the Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC).

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Standing Together for IDEA

2025 marks 50 years since the passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children’s Act, renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990. It is because of IDEA that our children with disabilities are guaranteed a free and appropriate public education, including learning alongside their non-disabled peers with access to evidence-based interventions to meet their individualized needs.

After decades of protection, many parents and educators are now worried because of recent actions in Washington, D. C. to gut the U.S. Department of Education by removing all but a handful of staff responsible for overseeing special education and enforcing the civil rights of students with disabilities and their families.

Amid all the uncertainty, the special education community in Hawaii has a lot of good things working in our favor, which may help to reassure our readers:

- + Leadership in the Hawaii Department of Education has assured the Special Education Advisory Council and parent organizations that they are both obligated and committed to providing FAPE and procedural safeguards;
- + Hawaii has already received its IDEA funding for this school year;
- + Money budgeted in the federal budget for special education services for SY 26-27 is currently at the same level as this year;

+ Funding for Hawaii’s Parent Training and Information Center, Leadership in Disabilities and Achievement of Hawaii, remains stable making it possible for them to provide individual advocacy, training and technical assistance to parents without interruption; and

+ Our delegates in Congress—Senators Hirono and Schatz and Representatives Case and Tokuda—are doing their best

to protect the rights of students with disabilities and strongly oppose attempts to eliminate or gut the U.S. Department of Education.

So while our keiki with disabilities are guaranteed funding and services for now, SPIN believes that we all must stand together in opposing cuts to the U.S. Department of Education, and especially cuts to the Office of Special Education Programs and its parent organization, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. Call your U.S Senator and Representative to thank them for their advocacy and stay tuned for more updates from SPIN.



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OCTOBER IS BULLYING PREVENTION MONTH

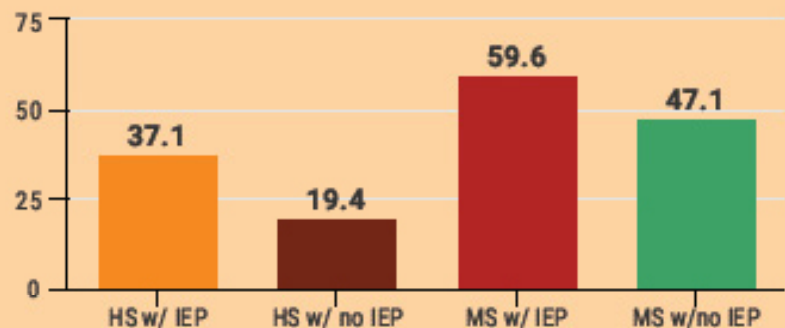
Learn how Hawai'i middle school and high school students with disabilities are at high risk for bullying.

The **Hawai'i Youth Risk Behavior Survey (HYRBS)** is the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's survey given to students 12-18 years old every two years. It collects valuable data about a student's exposure to bullying and cyberbullying that can be compared across gender, race, ethnicity and, beginning in 2021, disability status. This infographic reflects the most recent survey data (2023) comparing special education students to general education students.

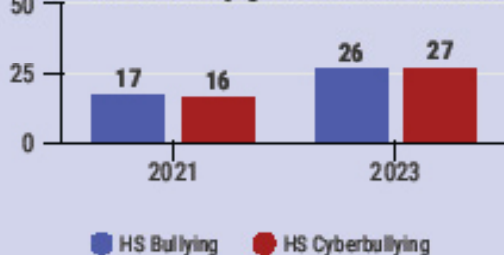


70%
of Middle Schoolers (MS) with IEPs said bullying was a problem at school.

% Bullied/cyberbullied within last 12 months



Rates for HS Students with IEPs Rose Sharply from 2021 to 2023



Cyber--bullying 2x more likely

26.6% for high school students with IEPs vs. 12.2% for high school students without IEPs

17% of high schoolers with IEPs did not attend school on one or more days in the last 30 days because it felt unsafe at school or on the way to and from school.



20.4% of middle schoolers with IEPs did not attend school on one or more days in the last 30 days because it felt unsafe at school or on the way to and from school.



Report Source: "Bullying Among Students who Did and Did Not Receive Special Education Services in Hawai'i for the years 2021 and 2023" Hawai'i Health Data Warehouse
Data Source: Departments of Health and Education, 2023 Hawai'i Youth Risk Behavior Survey



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If Your Child Has Been Bullied, Your IEP Team Can Help

In Hawaii, "Bullying" is described as any written, verbal, graphic, or physical act that hurts, harms, humiliates or intimidates a student, that is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment. If you feel your child has been a victim of bullying at school, talk with your child's IEP team to help your keiki recover from the bullying and to learn advocacy skills to help prepare for and prevent future incidents.



If your child has been bullied at school

- Document the incident. Talk with your child and get as many details as possible.
- Contact the school to let them know your child has been bullied.
- If there has been an impact on their learning, request an IEP meeting to address your child's needs.



Common impacts to a child's learning after bullying

- Reluctance or refusal to go to school
- Changes in mood, increased anxiety, depression and negative behaviors
- Avoidance of certain areas at school
- Changes in academics & school work
- Skipping services provided by the IEP
- Changes in eating, sleeping or routines
- Recurring tummy aches, headaches or other health issues that cause absence.

IEP Goals, Services & Supports



Request an assessment
to understand any changes to your child's mental health and emotional well-being.



Build social skills
to understand social cues and learn what bullying is and is not.



Develop self-advocacy skills
to learn appropriate responses to bullying like how to say "stop", how to walk away and how to tell an adult. This can also include safe spaces the child can go to for help and support.



Develop positive friendships
and encourage the buddy system when walking around campus and on the playground.



Supervision or shadowing
of the student in places where bullying may occur.



Counseling for the student
or informal check-ins by trusted adults at the school. Parents can also request counseling so they can better understand the needs of their child.

Sources: [understood.org/en/articles/bullying-laws](https://www.understood.org/en/articles/bullying-laws)
[disabilityrightsca.org/publications/bullying-and-harassment-of-students-with-disabilities](https://www.disabilityrightsca.org/publications/bullying-and-harassment-of-students-with-disabilities)
[pnrtexas.org/addressing-bullying-with-a-childs-iep/](https://www.pnrtexas.org/addressing-bullying-with-a-childs-iep/)
<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/idea/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/bullyingdcl-8-20-13.pdf>

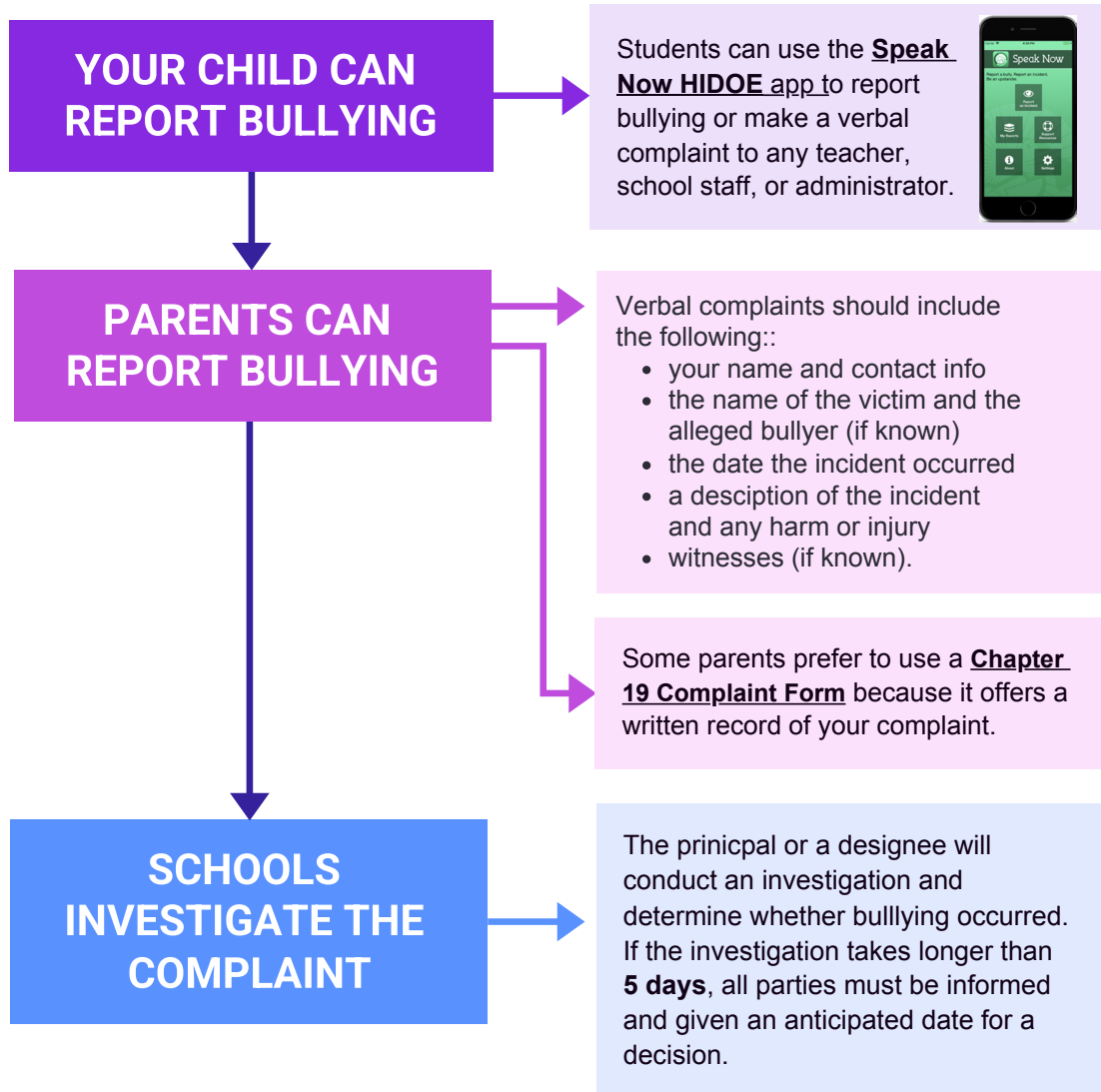
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REPORTING BULLYING UNDER CHAPTER 19*

What to do when your child is bullied by another student at school, on school transportation or at a school-sponsored event.

***Chapter 19** is the set of rules all public schools follow regarding student misconduct, discipline, and the process of investigating a complaint of bullying, discrimination or harassment of a student by another student. Once a complaint of bullying is received, schools have a responsibility to take immediate steps to stop the bullying and prevent it from reoccurring.



for more information visit



March 2024



Spotlight on Supports



Microsoft has introduced a new AI reading tool called Reading Coach. It is a free program that can be downloaded and used on your computer, Chromebooks, iPads and tablets. All you need to access it is a free Microsoft account and a device with a microphone and speakers or a headphone jack.

To use the Reading Coach,

- kids choose a main character
- choose a setting for the story
- choose their reading level.

The AI Reading Coach generates a custom story and the child reads the story out loud. The reading coach listens and scores their reading. Depending on the child’s reading proficiency, the AI identifies words that they have trouble with and builds those words into a new story for more practice. It’s best for learners who know how to decode words and can be used in multiple languages.

Reading Coach is free to download and can be accessed on the Microsoft Store or by visiting coach.microsoft.com.

Microsoft has built-in reading accessibility tools available in all of their products, including Word and PowerPoint, called Immersive Reader. It’s easy to use for emerging or dyslexic readers and can be found in the “View” tab.

Immersive Reader allows you to

- change the background color of the page
- choose between 1, 3 and 5 lines to be in focus while the rest of the document is grayed out
- highlight the syllables in a word to help with decoding
- use the read aloud button, choosing from three different voices and control how fast it reads.

These tools will not teach your child to read. They can help them practice and build on their emerging reading skills in a fun and interactive way.

The Kakou Club, on the windward side of Oahu, provides programs for teens and adults with disabilities through person-centered programs that are rooted in local culture and community.

Founded by Sarah Shepherd in loving memory of her auntie Marie, Sarah believes everyone deserves to know someone with disabilities. Her mission is to uplift the lives of adults living with disabilities by supporting them in achieving independence, community inclusion, and personal fulfillment.

Sarah offers inclusive yoga twice a month at Kailua Beach Park, one class is for caregivers and the other is for individuals with disabilities. They also provide community events like stargazing, farm tours, and group volunteer opportunities for teens and adults, along with their parents and caregivers.

To learn more about the Kakou Club, visit their website at www.kakouclub.org or call them at 808-752-5668.



As Thanksgiving Day approaches, our blessings we review, the things we are most thankful for, are parents just like you.

You are a Special Parent, in all you say and do, You’ve made a difference in our lives, and in your keiki’s too.

We cherish all the memories, of triumphs great and small, 40 years of SPIN and parents, we’re grateful for you all.

~Amanda Kaahanui





Eligibility Categories for Special Education Under IDEA and Chapter 60

Speech or Language Disability (SoL)

A **Speech or Language Disability (SoL)** means a child has a significant problem in producing or understanding oral language that is not consistent with their level of development or thinking abilities.



Most students with a Speech or Language Disability eligibility are age 10 or younger, representing about **10%** of all students with IEPs from preschool to 4th grade.



Source: SY 23-24 618 Child Count Data

The team that evaluates a student for a speech or language disabilities must take into account cultural and ethnic differences, for example the use of silence, in order to separate out cultural norms from the existence of an underlying disability.



In order to qualify under this eligibility category, a **speech-language pathologist** must be part of the team making the decision.



Speech or Language Disability Eligibility Standards

To be found eligible for special education and related services under the category of SoL, a child must have a significant problem in one (1) or more of the following areas:

Area

Examples

Articulation:
Difficulty making certain sounds



Sounds may be left off, added, changed or distorted making it hard to understand the child.

Fluency disorder:
Difficulty with the flow of speech



Stuttering, hesitating, stretching out, repeating, or cluttering sounds.

Phonological disorder:
Difficulty orally sequencing sounds in words/sentences



A pattern of leaving out a sound, substituting one sound for another or simplifying.

Voice disorders:
No or abnormal-sounding voice



An absence of voice, or abnormal pitch, loudness, resonance or quality of the voice

Language:
Difficulty understanding and/or using words



Improper use of words and their meanings, an inability to express ideas, a reduced vocabulary, or improper grammar.

Expressive or Receptive?

Children who have a language disability may have trouble communicating their thoughts (expressive language) and/or may have trouble understanding the meaning of what is being said (receptive language).



Sources: Chapter 60 Guidelines Appendix B - Referral, Evaluation & Eligibility, Speech or Language Disability



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Supported Decision-Making

An Alternative to Guardianship

Supported Decision-Making (SDM) is a process that allows individuals with disabilities to make their own choices with help from trusted supporters.

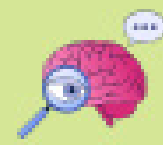
Its purpose is to empower adults with disabilities to have control over their lives while getting the support they need.



Promotes independence and self-determination by keeping control over their own decisions instead of having a guardian make decisions for them.



Encourages inclusion in community life and can be used in along with guardianship, Power of Attorney & other documents.



Supports the individual's rights to make decisions about their health, finances and day-to-day decisions.

How it works in 4 easy steps:



Pick Supporters - individuals choose trusted people who can help them when and where they need it.



Decide How They Help - define what kind of help is needed, like explaining options or help with communication.



Make the Decision - the individual stays in control while their supporters help them.



Make Changes as Needed - the plan can change as the needs of the individual changes over their lifetime.



Hawaii passed a bill in 2025 to allow banks and healthcare providers to recognize SDM agreements.

Scan the QR code for a sample of a Supported Decision-Making agreement from Colorado.

Other Alternatives to Guardianship

A Supported Decision-Making agreement can be one option of an individual's formal and informal choices to make decisions for themselves. Other options can include:

- medical and financial power of attorney
- joint bank accounts
- living wills/special needs trusts
- health care surrogacy
- representative payees
- limited guardianship (for health & personal decisions)
- conservatorship (for money & property decisions)



Sources: 2025 SPIN Conference Workshop "Wizards of Independence" <https://spinconference.org/2025-spin-conference-attendee-passes/>
<https://www.advocacyserver.org/resources/for-adults/supported-decision-making/>

Revised July 2025





Fall Calendar



11/1 Fall-o-ween Dance - FREE - In person
 5:00 – 7:00 pm Le Jardin Academy
 917 Kalaniana'ole Hwy, Kailua
 Join the Hawaii Autism Foundation for
 A fun evening of dancing, photo booth
 And a live DJ. To register, visit
<https://spinhawaii.org/events/>

11/1 LDAH Traveling Mini Conference - FREE
Lanai – 10:00 am – 2:00 pm - In person
 Dole Park on Lanai Ave.

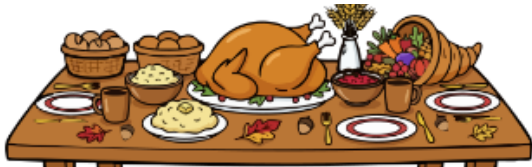
11/8 Maui – 10:00 am – 2:00 pm - In person
 UH Maui Campus, Pilina Center
 310 W. Kaahanumanu Ave. Kahului

11/22 Oahu – 10:00 am – 2:00 pm - In person
 Neal Blaisdell Center
 777 Ward Ave. Honolulu
 To register, call 808-536-9684.

Epilepsy & Seizure Training – FREE
11/12 5:00 – 6:30 pm - In person and Zoom
11/13 10:30 am – 12:00 pm - In person and Zoom
11/13 2:30 – 4:00 pm - In person and Zoom
 Hosted by the DDD, this seizure management
 training is for parents, waiver providers and
 stakeholders. To register, visit:
<https://spinhawaii.org/events/>

11/14 SEAC Meeting - FREE - Virtually over Zoom
 The Special Education Advisory Council, meets
 monthly to discuss the unmet needs of children
 with disabilities in public schools. Public input is
 available during each meeting. For the Zoom
 link, visit the agenda page on the SEAC
 website: <https://seac-hawaii.org/>

11/21 Silent Disco for all ages - FREE - In person
 5:00 – 8:00 pm Key Project Kaneohe
 47-200 Waihee Rd., Kaneohe
 Silent disco with a live DJ, drinks and snacks
 and quiet spaces if you need a break. To
 register, visit: <https://spinhawaii.org/events/>



11/22 Epilepsy Foundation Conference - FREE - In person
 1:00 – 4:00 pm Aloha Tower Marketplace
 1 Aloha Tower Dr., Honolulu
 Open to families and all stakeholders, the event
 will include presentations, Seizure First Aid training
 and networking. To register, visit:
<https://spinhawaii.org/events/>

11/28 Sweetland Farm Tour & Tasting - FREE - In person
 9:00 - 11:00 am for ages 13+ Sweetland Farm
 65-1031 Kaukonahua Rd, Waialua
 Join the Kakou Club to learn about life on a working
 dairy farm, meet friendly goats and see how local
 cheese is made.
 To register, visit www.kakouclub.org



12/5 Sensory Friendly Holiday Party - FREE - In person
 6:00 – 9:00 pm Harbor Church West Oahu
 590 Farrington Hwy, Kapolei
 Join KELLII for games, gifts, snacks, a photo with
 Santa and more. To register, visit:
<https://spinhawaii.org/events/>



12/6 Young Athletes Makahiki - FREE - In person
 9:00 – 11:00 am Special Olympics Hawaii Complex,
 91-610 Maunakapu St. Ewa
 Children ages 2-7 are invited to spend the morning
 in activities that will focus on motor skills and
 socialization through play.
 To register, visit <https://sohawaii.org>

12/20 Hoomana Sensory Santa - FREE - In person
 9:00 am – 12:00 pm Windward Church of the
 Nazarene, 45-232 Pua'ae Rd, Kaneohe
 This fun event will include arts and crafts,
 a sensory movie, photos with Santa and more.
 To register, visit <https://spinhawaii.org/events/>



Save the Date! March 28, 2026
for the 40th Annual SPIN Conference!
at the UH Manoa Campus Center
 Visit www.spinconference.org for details

For more events and happenings around the state, be sure to visit our website events
 calendar at <https://spinhawaii.org/events/> and like us on Facebook!