

IEP Alignment & Progress Monitoring Review Guide

Ensuring Services, Goals, and Data Form One Coherent Plan

Purpose: A legally and educationally sound IEP is internally consistent — services match needs, goals match services, and progress data actually gets collected and used. This guide supports IEP quality reviewers in checking horizontal alignment across an IEP document and verifying that progress monitoring systems are evidence-based and functioning as intended.

1. Alignment Chain Review

For each identified need in the PLAAFP, trace it across the document using the chain below. A break anywhere in the chain is a quality flag.

Link	Question
Need → Goal	Is there a goal (or accommodation) addressing this specific need?
Goal → Service	Is there a special education or related service with enough frequency/duration to reasonably support this goal?
Service → Setting	Is the service delivered in the setting/LRE that matches how it's written (push-in vs. pull-out)?
Goal → Progress Method	Is the progress-monitoring tool named in the goal actually capable of measuring that skill?
Accommodation → Assessment	Do classroom and state/district assessment accommodations match what's used for daily instruction?

2. Evidence-Based Progress Monitoring Standards

- Progress data is collected at a frequency sufficient to detect trend before the next review (e.g., weekly/biweekly curriculum-based measurement for academic goals; not once-a-semester only).
- Progress monitoring tool has documented reliability/validity for its purpose (e.g., established CBM probes, standardized behavior rating scales) rather than an informal, non-replicable method.
- Data is graphed or otherwise visually trackable so trend (not just a single point) can be judged against the goal line.
- A decision rule exists: if 3–4 consecutive data points fall below the goal line/aim line, the team convenes to problem-solve rather than waiting for the annual review.
- Progress reports to parents state actual data/percentage of progress, not only a checkbox (e.g., "progressing satisfactorily") with no numbers.

3. Service Delivery Consistency Checks

- Minutes/frequency stated in the IEP match the master schedule and service logs actually being used.
- Provider qualifications match the service type (e.g., speech-language services delivered by a certified SLP).
- Related services (OT, PT, counseling, transportation) are integrated with academic goals rather than siloed with no cross-reference.

- Any missed sessions are logged, and a compensatory-services determination process exists for significant service gaps.

4. Red-Flag Indicators for Reviewers

Red Flag	Why It Matters
Same goals copied year over year with no data change	Suggests goals are not being driven by current progress data
Goals with no matching service minutes	Raises FAPE sufficiency concerns under Endrew F.
Progress monitoring method is a state test given once a year	Cannot detect trend in time to adjust instruction
PLAAFP describes disability broadly with no functional/academic specifics	Weakens the basis for goals and services

Evidence Base & Sources

- Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District RE-1, 580 U.S. 386 (2017) — FAPE requires an IEP "reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances."
- National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII) — data-based individualization and progress monitoring standards.
- IRIS Center — modules on progress monitoring (CBM) and data-based decision making.
- What Works Clearinghouse — evidence standards for instructional/progress-monitoring tools.
- 34 CFR §300.320(a)(3) (progress reporting requirements).

This resource synthesizes federal statute, regulation, and peer-reviewed / technical-assistance-center guidance current as of publication. It is an instructional tool, not legal advice; consult your district's legal counsel and current state regulations for compliance decisions.