

OVERVIEW OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCESS

What is Special Education?

Special Education is a support service provided to a student with a qualifying disability that incorporates specially designed instruction and/or services for the purpose of accessing the general education curriculum. These services are provided at no cost to the parent.

Steps in the Special Education Process

Step 1: Initial Referral for Special Education Services

Students suspected of having a disability are referred through the Office of Special Programs to a multidisciplinary team along with documentation of failed classroom interventions.

Step 2: Individual Evaluation Process

The multidisciplinary team agrees upon the evaluations, information and input required to determine the student's current abilities and levels of performance. A comprehensive evaluation plan is completed and distributed to the assessment team. Parental consent is obtained prior to conducting the evaluation.

Step 3: Determining Eligibility for Special Education Services

Based on evaluation results and other appropriate information the multidisciplinary team decides if the student qualifies for special education based on the classification criteria of the IDEA and if the student requires specialized instruction in order to successfully access the general education curriculum.

Step 4: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

If the child is eligible to receive special education services, the Committee develops and implements an appropriate IEP, based on the information gathered and the identified needs of the student. Parental consent must be obtained prior to the provision of special education services.

Step 5: Annual Review/Reevaluation

The IEP is modified or revised by the Committee on a yearly basis at an Annual Review. At least every 3 years, a re-evaluation is scheduled to determine if the student continues to qualify for special education and whether the classification and services remain appropriate. If at the time of the re-evaluation the parent and the school district determine that a re-evaluation is not necessary, an evaluation forego may occur with parental consent.

The referral/evaluation process occurs sequentially with each step building on the previous one. In this way, comprehensive information about the student is obtained and considered. Timelines are in place and adhered to so that delays are avoided. Parents are an integral part of this process, and involvement is encouraged. Throughout the process, consideration must be given to how special education services and/or programs can be provided in the least restrictive environment. Committees must first consider placement in a general education program with supplementary aids and services provided to the student and/or the student's teacher in that setting. The Committee must provide written justification whenever the recommendation is to place a student in a classroom other than a general education classroom.

Reviews and Re-evaluation

At any point after a student begins receiving special education services, an administrator, the student's teacher, related service provider or parent may initiate a meeting to review the student's IEP.

At least once a year, the CSE invites parents and student (if over 15 years of age), a minimum of 5 days in advance, to participate in the review of the student's IEP. The purpose of this review is to determine progress made toward current goals, and to develop a new IEP for the coming school year. This review may result in a recommendation for a change of placement or levels of service based on the student's progress or lack thereof.

At least once every three years the CSE shall arrange for an appropriate reevaluation of each student with a disability by a multidisciplinary team or group of persons, including at least one teacher or other specialist with knowledge in the area of the student's disability. The re-evaluation shall be sufficient to determine the student's individual needs, educational progress and achievement, the student's ability to participate in instructional programs in regular education and the student's continuing eligibility for special education. Prior to the due date of the re-evaluation, the parents in conjunction with the school psychologist may determine that no change in classification or services will result from the scheduled evaluation; in this case, a fore-go of the evaluation may be considered. This option requires the completion of a written report by the school psychologist, which includes summary information related to the student's current services, progress, previous test scores and an attachment of the parental consent. Any recommended changes made as a result of a review meeting or re-evaluation are forwarded to the Board of Education for final approval.

Declassification

If a student who has been receiving special education services, is no longer in need of special education services and can be placed in a general education program on a full-time basis, the service providers will first conduct a re-evaluation and then recommend declassification of the student if appropriate. At the CSE meeting, the committee may identify support services necessary for the student to be successful in the general education program. These services can continue for one year after the student enters the general education program full time. Test accommodations remain in place until a student graduates or ages out of a program.