

Special Education Evaluation for students with disabilities ages 3 - 21

School districts are required to identify students with disabilities, evaluate students in all areas of suspected disability and serve students who are identified as eligible for special education services by providing them with a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

What does this mean? Where do I begin?

A parent who thinks their child has a disability and needs special education services should contact the school and request a special education evaluation. This initial request for an evaluation should be sent in writing to the student's general education teacher with a copy sent to the principal. The letter should include the student's name, a brief statement of your concerns and how the school can contact you.

I sent a letter requesting the school evaluate my child, now what?

Within a reasonable amount of time, the school should contact you to schedule an evaluation team meeting. The initial evaluation will consist of a variety of procedures to determine if the student is "a student with a disability" and, therefore, needs special education and related services.

To conduct the evaluation, the school should:

- Assess each area of concern which may include (but not limited to): general intelligence, academic performance, health/motor ability, vision, hearing, social/emotional/behavioral status, communication status and transition skills (during grade 9)
- Include a variety of evaluation tools including information from the parent
- Not use any single procedure as the sole criterion
- Use technically sound instruments

In addition, the school must ensure:

- Assessments and other evaluation materials are administered in the student's language or other communication mode and in the form most likely to give accurate information on what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally and functionally. (There are specific tests that can be used if your child is non-verbal.)
- Tests and evaluation materials are not discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis
- Standardized tests have been validated for the specific purpose they are used, administered by trained personnel and in accordance with instructions (If an evaluation is not conducted under standard conditions, a description of why not must be included in the report)
- Evaluation tools and strategies assist in determining the educational needs of the student
- Tests are selected and administered to accurately reflect the student's aptitude or achievement rather than reflect the student's impaired sensory, manual or speaking skills unless those skills are the factors the test measures

At the end of the meeting or shortly thereafter, the parent will be given prior written notice. The prior written notice will state the area(s) being assessed, the name of the test(s) being done and who will be administering the test(s). The notice typically gives the parent three options: the parent can give permission for the school to proceed, the parent can request further information or the parent deny permission. In each event, the parent has 14 calendar days to sign and return the form.

For initial evaluations, if the parent does not sign and return the form checking permission for the assessment, the district cannot proceed with the assessment.

For re-evaluations, the district can proceed with the evaluation if the parent does not return the form.

We had the evaluation meeting, I gave permission for the assessment, now what?

The team shall conduct an evaluation for special education purposes. The evaluation team has 30 school days from the date the district receives parental permission to complete the evaluation. After the completion of the evaluation, the school will contact the parent for a meeting to discuss the evaluation results. The school is required to give the parent an evaluation report. The evaluation report must include:

- A summary of all evaluation results
- Documentation of whether or not the student has a particular category of disability
- The student's present levels of educational performance and educational needs
- Whether the student needs special education and related services
- Whether any additions or modifications are needed to meet annual goals and to participate in the general education curriculum

For further information or advocacy services, contact Arc Greater Twin Cities at 952-920-0855 or visit www.arcgreatertwincities.org. Tell us what you think about this Arc Guide. Please complete a short survey online at <http://arcgreatertwincities.org/resources.aspx>. Thank you!

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