SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICE

Referral Process for Special Education

STEP 1

If, after interventions in the general education classroom, the student continues to experience difficulty, school personnel may refer the child for a special education evaluation. Referrals for determination of eligibility for special education services may be initiated by:

- School personnel (including general education teachers, special education teachers, counselors, administrators, etc.);
- Child's parent(s) or legal guardian(s);
- Any other person involved in the education or care of the child.

The official referral begins the formal process of determining eligibility for special education services. Once a referral is provided, the school must obtain consent from the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to begin the evaluation phase of the referral process.

STEP 2

The state requires that students referred for special education services receive a nondiscriminatory multi-factored evaluation. TEECS will complete the evaluation within 60 days of the referral date. The evaluation is to be conducted by a multidisciplinary team that will consist of individuals who can bring different perspectives and expertise to the evaluation. Some examples of team members include:

- School Psychologist
- Special Educators
- General Educators
- Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s)
- Related Service Providers (Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Audiologist, Orientation and Mobility Specialist, etc.)
- Medical Doctors (including psychiatrists, ophthalmologists, and optometrists)

STEP 3

Within 30 days of the completion of the evaluation, the individuals that took part in the process thus far will meet to determine eligibility. In simple terms, a student is considered eligible for special education services if (1) the child has a disability which negatively impacts his/her educational performance, and (2) the child needs special education services in order to benefit from education.

Not all students are determined to be eligible for special education services. There are multiple reasons why a student may not qualify for special education services including not having a disability that negatively impacts his or her education. However, these students may need help to access the academic curricula. In these situations, the school will need to work out a plan to provide other services for the student.

If the team determines that the student is eligible for special education services, then a formal Individualized Education Program (IEP) team will be formed to develop a plan of special education services for the student.

STEP 4

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a *legal contract between the parents and the school district* that describes the special education services to be provided by the school district. While IEP documents vary, the basic parts of an IEP include:

- A student profile that provides background information about the student. The profile will include strengths and weaknesses of the student, information regarding performance in the classroom and on formal assessments, and the reason he or she is receiving special education services.
- IEP initiation and duration dates: the goals expressly stated in an IEP begin on the date, stated in the IEP meeting, and are in effect until the date stated in the IEP. These IEP goals are reviewed, monitored and updated based on student progress. For most students, IEP goals are in place for one academic year.
- A statement of "special instructional factors" (such as the need for assistive technology, braille, or transition services).
- A statement of special transportation needs
- A statement of opportunities to participate in nonacademic and extracurricular activities with their non-disabled peers
- A statement of the frequency and method of reports of goal attainment for parents or guardians.

    - Benchmark pages are included and focus on specific areas that need special education services (such as reading, math, PE, etc.). The benchmark pages include: Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) statements,
    - Measurable Annual Goals,
    - Evaluations used to measure annual goals,
    - Benchmarks to be achieved to meet the annual goals,
    - Special education and related services needed to achieve the annual goal
- A Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) if the student's behavior is a concern and a functional behavioral assessment has been done or needs to be conducted,
- For students 16 years and older; the plans and activities for the student's transition from high school will be addressed
- The signature page which provides a statement of least restrictive environment (LRE) and has the signatures of all members present at the meeting.

The IEP team is composed of the following:

- The **parent(s) or legal guardian(s)** of the student with a disability;
- At least **one general education teacher** of the student if the student is or may be participating in the regular education environment for any classes;
- At least **one special education teacher** of the student or a special education provider of the student;
- A **case manager**
- **Related services representative (if need it)**
- **The student**, when appropriate; and
- **Other individuals asked to attend at the discretion of the school or the parent** who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the student. Parents also have the right to invite an advocate if they so desire.

STEP 5

Once the IEP is developed and signed by members of the IEP team it is the responsibility of the entire IEP team to ensure that the IEP is implemented. The IEP team may meet as frequently as needed to discuss the implementation of the IEP. The IEP document is a "living" document and can be altered during the school term if needed.

STEP 6

Each year, the IEP team is required to meet for the dual purpose of evaluating the implementation of the current IEP and to develop the next annual IEP. During these annual meetings, the IEP team should discuss the positive and negative elements of the special education services provided and determine, based on any new assessment data, what services should be provided in the upcoming school year.

While the IEP is redeveloped each year, the IEP team does not have to conduct the battery of assessments each year. At a minimum, the IEP team is to determine if formal evaluation is required every three years.

There are times when, after the reevaluation takes place, it is determined that the student does not need special education services. One example of this might be young children who are provided speech and language services and have developed the ability to speak without problems. In this case, the IEP team will need to file appropriate documentation to support the fact that the student no longer is eligible for services and the IEP team will disband for this student.

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Parent resources

http://www.state.nj.us/education/code/current/title6a/chap14.pdf
http://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/dyslexia/NJDyslexiaHandbook.pdf
http://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/resources/PARCCAccomm.shtml
http://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/form/prise/prise.pdf
http://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/form/prise/prise_s.pdf

Project Child Find

Project CHILD FIND 1-800-322-8174

Project CHILD FIND is a free referral service and public awareness campaign to assist in the identification of unserved/underserved youth with a delay or disability from birth through twenty-one years of age. In addition, Project CHILD FIND develops and distributes information to the public about early intervention services and special education programs throughout New Jersey. Project CHILD FIND's comprehensive efforts include: 1. Assisting families of infants and toddlers, birth through two, concerned about their child's development by directing all requests regarding early intervention to the family's local Special Child Health Case Management Unit. If you need the number for your Special Child Health Case Management Unit, call: Project CHILD FIND 1-800-322-8174 2. Assisting families of preschoolers, three through five, concerned about their child's development by directing requests to their local school district. 3. Helping families access community services through referral. 4. Promoting community and public awareness of all children with disabilities by providing information. 5. Assisting local school district boards of education to identify unserved children from age three through twenty-one who are in need of special education and related services. Information through Project CHILD FIND may be obtained by calling the toll-free number, 1-800-322-8174, which is in service 7 days a week, 24-hours a day. All calls received are confidential. Project CHILD FIND was established by the New Jersey Department of Education through I.D.E.A., Part B funds from the U.S. Department of Education.

CHILD FIND Resources: Statewide Parent Advocacy Network Inc: http://www.spanadvocacy.org/
Association for Children of NJ : https://acnj.org/
Early Intervention: http://www.nj.gov/health/fhs/eis/for-families/