

School Age (5-21) Special Education Process

Referral

A referral is the first step in the special education process. Persistent learning and/or behavioral difficulties may be an indication that a child may need special education and/or related services. A referral can be submitted by any number of sources, but usually the child's teacher or parent is the referral source.

First, interventions and strategies for improving student performance will be implemented at the **classroom level**. At school, strategies can range from changing where the student sits to providing structured study guides to assist in independent reading assignments. At home, strategies can range from having the parent sign all completed homework to transcribing assignments. The classroom teacher and various school staff develop both classroom and at-home strategies to assist the student in becoming successful in school.

After a period of time, if the strategies in the classroom and at home are not successful, the classroom teacher will ask for assistance of the building RTI Committee. The RTI Committee is located in each school and meets as needed to discuss and plan for students in that school. The following staff may be members of the RTI Committee: Teacher, Psychologist, Resource Room Teacher, Speech/Language Teacher, Social Worker, Guidance Counselor, Nurse, and School Administrator. Together the classroom teacher and the RTI Committee may recommend other remedial services and building level support that can be utilized in the regular education setting.

If the child's difficulties persist after the strategies and/or services have been implemented, a referral to the Committee on Special Education (CSE) may be made. A referral is made in written form and should be dated. This makes it official and provides a start date since there are timelines involved. Written consent for evaluation is required by the parent/guardian and will be mailed to the parent/guardian.

Evaluation

Upon completion of the evaluations, a committee meeting is scheduled to review the results of their testing. At minimum a child who has been initially referred must have the following evaluations:

- Psychological
- Educational
- Social History
- Classroom observation
- Medical

Other areas where information can be gathered include:

- Speech and Language Evaluation
- Occupational/Physical Therapy Evaluation
- Psychiatric Evaluation
- Visual Evaluation
- Audiological

When the evaluations are completed, the professional staff will provide the parent/guardian with copies of the evaluation results. The evaluations will help the CSE determine if the child is eligible for special education services. Any additional information parents wish to share will also be considered.

Initial CSE Meeting

Upon completion of the evaluations, a CSE meeting will be scheduled. Parent(s)/Guardian will be notified of the meeting in writing, with a list of attendees. The meeting will include the CSE chairperson, a school psychologist, a special education teacher, a parent member, the child's teacher, and the parent(s). The parent(s) may bring any individual(s) to the meeting. The general outline of a meeting is as follows: introductions, an overview, and a summary of the evaluations, description of the student's classroom performance, and a summary of other relevant comments, CSE recommendations, and further processes.

Recommendations

In developing recommendations, the CSE will discuss the evaluations and any other pertinent information on the child. The first decision is whether the child possesses an educational disability that adversely affects his/her educational performance. There are 13 classifications from which the committee draws. If the child is determined to possess an educational disability, a determination must be made as to the least restrictive educational setting in which the child can receive educational benefit from special education services. In order to accomplish this task the CSE has a variety of programs from which to choose. These placements range in levels of restriction, including class-size, student-teacher ratio, and degree of mainstreaming. The progression of services is as follows:

- Related services only
- Consultant Teacher
- Integrated Co-teaching
- Resource Room
- Special Class—In District
- BOCES or Local Public School
- Special Day School Program
- Residential School Program
- Home/Hospital Instruction

In addition to recommending an educational program, the CSE will review related services, goals/objectives, testing access, alternative testing techniques, second language instruction, transportation, and transition planning as appropriate. A student who is found eligible for special education services will be referred back to the RTI Committee at the child's respective school.