

Frequently Asked Questions about Special Education

Q: I have a preschool student who may need special education services. What do I do?

A: If your child received early intervention services as an infant or toddler up to age three, and may still need special education, your service coordinator will assist you with transition planning and making a referral to the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE).

If your preschool-age child (3-5 years old) did not receive early intervention services, but has some delays or lags in development such as difficulty in talking, moving around, thinking, or learning or is facing physical or behavioral challenges — you, or professionals who know your child, may make a referral to the chairperson of your school district's Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) who will assist you in completing the referral process.

Q: Are related services such as Speech, Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy provided in the elementary school?

A: Yes. Related services are provided to a student of any grade if the child needs the service to make appropriate progress.

Q: What is RTI? Is it part of Special Education?

A: Response to Intervention (RTI) is NOT a part of special education. RTI is a general education initiative. RTI works to improve student performance by identifying struggling students early and providing necessary supports and intervention. In grades K-4, prior to referring a student with a suspected disability for special education evaluation, schools must document the steps taken to support the student in the general education setting within their RTI model and maintain data regarding to the student's responsiveness to interventions.

Q: My child is struggling in school, what should I do?

A: If your child is struggling in school you should first talk to your child's teacher. Classroom and building level supports can be put in place to try to address the issue. If further support is needed your teacher may refer your child to the RTI committee to consider additional individualized supports for your child. RTI is time limited and data is frequently collected and reviewed. If RTI strategies have been implemented and you have spoken with your child's teacher and school, and you still feel your child needs additional support, you may refer your child for a special education evaluation. This is a series of evaluations to determine if your child has a disability.

You can make a referral for a special education evaluation at any time; RTI will not be used to delay or deny special education services.

Q: What are the recognized disability classification areas?

A: New York State recognizes the following areas of educational disabilities:

Autism

Deafness

Deaf-Blindness

Emotional Disturbance

Hearing Impairment

Intellectual Disability

Learning Disability

Multiple Disabilities

Orthopedic Impairment

Other Health Impaired

Speech or Language Impairment

Traumatic Brain Injury

Visual Impairment

Q. When is a child eligible for special education?

A: A child is eligible for special education when, as a result of mental, physical or emotional impairment, he or she requires individualized special educational programming and or services in order to make appropriate educational progress.

Q: What is a Learning Disability?

A: A Learning Disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written which manifests itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia (a communication disorder that results from damage to the part of the brain that controls language).

Q : What is the difference between a Section 504 Plan and an IEP?

A: A Section 504 Accommodation Plan is guided by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, while an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is guided by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. A Section 504 Plan is a blueprint for how a child will have access educational programs and opportunities, while an IEP allows for specialized instruction and related services unique to the child.

See this link for more details: <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/504-plan/the-difference-between-ieps-and-504-plans>

Q: When my child is referred to the CSE and I receive and sign consent, what is part of the evaluation?

A: The individual evaluation (for Initial evaluations or Reevaluations) shall include a variety of assessment tools and strategies, including information provided by the parent, to gather relevant functional, developmental and academic information about the student that may assist in determining whether the student is a student with a disability and the content of the student's individualized educational program, including information related to enabling the student to participate in and progress in the general education curriculum. The initial evaluation must include at least:

- A physical examination
- An individual psychological evaluation
- A social history
- An observation of the student in the student's learning environment
- Other assessments or evaluations as **are needed** to determine additional physical, mental, behavioral and/or emotional factors that contribute to a child's disabilities/suspected disabilities.

Q: When should I receive my child's evaluation before a CSE meeting?

A: For an Initial Evaluation or a Triennial Evaluation, you should expect to receive your child's evaluation a week before your meeting. There are times when evaluations are closely scheduled and may arrive closer to your meeting date.

Q: What is the role of a parent member?

A: A parent member can provide important support and information to the parent/guardian of the student during the meeting. They have been trained to understand the role of CSE members and to support parents during a CSE meeting. Parent members are not a required member of the CSE and parent needs to request their attendance at least 3 days (72 hours) before the meeting. Parent members are not lawyers or advocates.

Q: How can I know that my child's IEP is being followed?

A: All of your child's teachers and service providers either receive a paper copy of your child's IEP or are required to access it electronically. Each teacher or service provider is responsible for measuring your child's progress on his/her IEP goals by collecting data according to a set schedule.

Q: If I hold my child back will services continue?

A: Your child's services will continue as long as your child remains eligible for an IEP. Retention is not decided by the CSE and should be discussed with your building principal.

Q: Are special classes listed on the high school transcript as part of the college application process?

A: No. In addition, whether or not you choose to disclose to a college your child is applying to that he or she had IEP is up to you. Your child's IEP ends when he or she meets the requirements for graduation. . While certain colleges and universities may have supports for students who were classified, colleges do not follow IEP's. If your child's college receives federal funds, your child may be eligible for Section 504 accommodations as a college student.

Q: How do I apply for extra time for my child's SATS and ACTS?

A: Your guidance counselor will do the paperwork to apply for testing accommodations that are listed on your child's IEP.

Q: What is the difference between Consultant Teacher services and Integrated Co Teaching?

A: Consultant teacher services (CTS) provide direct or indirect services to students with disabilities within a general education classroom. Consultant teacher services are considered "indirect" when the support is provided to the general education teacher. Each student with a disability requiring consultant teacher services shall receive direct and/or indirect services consistent with the student's IEP for a minimum of two hours each week, except that the committee on special education may recommend that a student with a disability who also needs resource room services in addition to consultant teacher services, may receive a combination of such services consistent with the student's IEP for not less than three hours each week.

While it is NOT required, a school district may include integrated co-teaching (ICT) services in its continuum of services. Integrated co-teaching services means the provision of specially designed instruction and academic instruction provided to a group of students with disabilities and non-disabled students. In an ICT classroom, the general education and special education teachers share responsibility for classroom instruction.

Q: What is Transition Planning? Is this the same as transitions between grades or school buildings?

A: As your child moves from grade to grade and building to building, there is sharing of information so new teachers are aware of your student's needs and IEP. When we talk about *Transition Planning*, we are talking about the planning that occurs during the CSE in the year in which your child turns 15, or earlier if appropriate for your child. That is the year you will start to see additional areas on your child's IEP that specifically relate to post-secondary planning. Your Secondary Supervisor of Special Education along with you Guidance Counselor will be talking with you about post-secondary plans (i.e. college, trade school, work) and the agencies that can support your student as he/she moves on to next steps after graduation.