



Special Education Process



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Step One: Assessments/ Evaluations

For many parents, learning that your child needs specialized services in school to be successful is a distressing and confusing time. Understanding the process of obtaining needed services for your child will assist you in alleviating some of your stress and concerns.

Some children may be formally diagnosed with a disability by a medical provider, especially if it is a physical disability. This diagnosis, however, does not entitle your child to services. Services are provided based on your child's needs.

What usually happens on the path to obtaining supports and services for a child is that first, educational staff notice that a child is struggling. They will then use Response To Intervention (RTI) to provide interventions for the struggling student. Doing RTI allows immediate assistance for the child. If the child continues to struggle with these interventions they will then be referred for further assessments.

Assessments are diagnostic tools; they do not contain answers or solutions. These tests are designed to provide an overview of your child's academic performance, basic cognitive functioning and/or his or her current strengths or weaknesses; they can also test hearing and vision. Assessment are not able to predict your child's future performance, nor his or her ability. That said, they are excellent tools because they break your child's academic performance down into subsets, such as reading comprehension, spelling and basic arithmetic. They can also rule out simple problems, such as hearing or vision impairments, which may be affecting learning. This information is invaluable because it guides the educational process. The data collected during these assessments helps guide the development of goals for your child.

It is important to remember that not every child who struggles academically will qualify for special education services. Assessments might show that your child does not have a learning disability or other impairment that qualifies him or her for these services; however, that does not mean that your child is lazy, stupid or not trying. If your child is struggling but does not qualify for special education, it is imperative that you keep looking for solutions. Work with you child's teacher and other school service providers to draft an action plan that will address your child's individual needs.



Special points of interest

- Special education services are provided based on the child's needs.
- Schools may use RTI before referring a child for further assessments.
- Assessments are tools used to provide an overview of your child's strengths and needs.
- If your child is struggling but does not qualify for services, work with your school to find a solution.

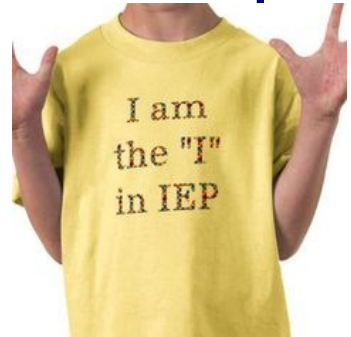
Step Two: Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Meeting

The Individualized Education Program:

The IEP is a document created for a child to receive individualized special education services. This document is created from the assessments that were completed on the child.

Who attends:

- district representative (very often the CSE Chairperson)
- general education teacher (if the child is or will be in general education)
- special education teacher, school psychologist
- others with knowledge of your child and the assessment results (PT, OT, or speech therapists)
- Parents
- child



What is included in the IEP:

- Present Levels of Performance (PLEPs)- a brief overview of how well the child is currently performing.
- Goals- Goals are written to provide measures of progress. Goals can be academic, behavioral, social or transition-based, should always be written for recognized areas of need and something that can be achievable.
- Accommodations and Modifications- are changes to the classroom environment that may be necessary to assist the child. Teachers and parents are often unclear about the difference between an accommodation and a modification. The general rule is this: if it helps the child to complete the same work at the same level as his peers, it is an accommodation; if it changes the work, or the work is completed at a different level, it is a modification.
- Transition plan- once the child reaches the age of 16, a transition plan needs to be added to the IEP.

Step Three: Recommendations/ Placement

Recommendations/ Placement

During the meeting recommendations and placement options will be discussed. Recommendations can include any accommodations and modifications needed in order for your child to be successful in learning. The least restrictive environment (LRE) is also considered when making a placement determination. LRE requires that the placement of a student with a disability should provide the special education needed in a location as close to home as possible with as many students who do not have disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate.

If you are unsure why certain recommendations and placements are being considered, ask the committee members for their reasons to clarify any misunderstandings.

The key to success in the classroom lies in having appropriate accommodations and modifications

Step Four: Annual Review

Meetings occur annually and as needed to review goals, your child's progress and to make the modifications needed to the program to ensure proper supports and services for your child.

Preparing for a Meeting

Most CSE meetings have time constraints. In order to use your time wisely it is best to prepare for the meeting.

- Request a draft IEP and therapists reports to review before the meeting
- Compare reports to previous years reports
- Gather and organize needed documents
- Provide school district with any outside evaluations that you would like them to consider
- Talk with teacher and providers before the meeting
- Write a brief prioritized list of questions and concerns to discuss during the meeting
- Keep the focus on the child's needs, not the districts resources or your expectations
- Be open to new ideas and willing to compromise
- Learn the language and ask for an explanation of anything that is unclear to you



Effective Communication

More information about the special education process can be found at New York State Education Department's (NYSED) website:
www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/techassist/CSE-IEP.htm


Effective Communication leads to a proactive, collaborative relationship between families and schools. When families and schools have an effective team, student outcomes improve. It is important for family members to understand the barriers and essential elements of effective communication and to learn how to use strategies to establish and maintain collaborative relationships with their school team.

The main way to achieve this collaborative relationship is to practice active listening during meetings and when conversing with school personnel. Active listening involves learning how to listen to someone as you would like to be listened to. You can do this by practicing a few simple techniques:

- Facing and maintaining eye contact with the person that is speaking
- Minimize internal and external distractions– shut your phone off and stay focused on what the person is saying
- Ask questions BUT wait until the speaker is done talking
- Keep an open mind
- Even if the speaker is launching a complaint against you, wait until they finish to defend yourself. This allows the speaker to feel as if they have been heard and you'll know the whole argument before you respond.
- Paraphrase what the speaker has said. This will let them know that you understand and clear up any misconceptions from either party

Parent Technical
Assistance Center (PTAC)

Located at the
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 Southern Tier PTAC

*Building collaborative
relationships between
schools and parents of
children with special needs*



**To register for any of
these free trainings or
to inquire about any
needed trainings
contact PTAC via the
web at:**

www.ptac-stic.com

or by email at:
ptac@stic-cil.org

or by phone at:
607-724-2111



Upcoming Trainings

March 15, 2016– **“Challenging Behavior”** from 12pm– 2pm at the Southern Tier Independence Center. When registering please note if you are attending this training as a Family Education Training (FET) for OPWDD purposes.

March 20, 2016– **“Special Education 101”** from 1:00pm– 3:00pm at Valley Bowl in Waverly, NY. Join us to learn about the special education process.

March 22, 2016– **“How to Help Young Children through Tough Times”** from 8:30am – 11:30am at SUNY Cobelskill Upper Chaplin Hall. To register for this event contact ECDC at: www.ecdc-stic.com (look for the registration tab at the top of the page)

March 30, 2016– **“Transition Options Pt.1: Support Services and Housing for Individuals with Disabilities”**, from 9:30am– 3:00pm, at the Broome County Library’s Decker Room. Various presenters focusing on support and services for individuals transitioning from school into the adult world. To register for this training contact Shelley Hubal at register@familyrn.org or by phone at: 607-437-0077. Please note if you are a parent of an OPWDD eligible individual when registering.

April 14, 2016– **“Transition Night”** from 4:00pm– 6:00pm, at the EOP Building in Elmira, NY. To register for this event contact Wendy Watkins at wwatkins@aimcil.com or by phone at 607-733-3718.

April 24, 2016– Join PTAC for lots of superhero fun as they celebrate Autism Awareness Day with the Binghamton Mets who are playing the Erie Sea Wolves. The game begins at 1:00pm.

May 3, 2016– **“Transition Options Pt.2: Career and College Options for Individuals with Disabilities”**, from 9:00am– 3:00pm at the Southern Tier Independence Center. To register for this training contact Shelley Hubal at register@familyrn.org or by phone at: 607-437-0077. Please note if you are a parent of an OPWDD eligible individual.

May 19, 2016– **Dr. James Ball as he presents, “RAISING THE BAR: New Thoughts on Behavioral Strategies for Young Children With Special Needs and Autism”** from 9:00am– 3:00pm at the Columbia– Greene Community College’s Arts Center. To register for this training contact ECDC at: www.ecdc-stic.com (look for the registration tab at the top of the page)

May 20, 2016– **Dr. James Ball as he presents, ”SETTING THE COURSE: Planning the Road Map for Transitioning Children With Special Needs and Autism”** from 9:00am– 3:00pm at the Columbia– Greene Community College’s Arts Center. To register for this training contact ECDC at: www.ecdc-stic.com (look for the registration tab at the top of the page).

May 25, 2016– **Lenny Grozier as she presents, “Get a GRIP: Teaching Young Children with Trauma in Mind”** from 9:00am– 3:00pm at the Doubletree Hilton Hotel in Binghamton, NY. To register for this training contact ECDC at: www.ecdc-stic.com (look for the registration tab at the top of the page).