

Just for Parents: Learning about Special Education Evaluation

If your child is having trouble learning in school, there are several things you can do. One is to talk with the teacher to see if he or she is also concerned. Another is to ask for a special education evaluation.

An evaluation is a way of gathering information about a child. It looks at your child's strengths. It also looks at what is difficult for your child. It includes different kinds of information, such as:

- Information from parents
- Tests
- Observations
- Interviews with people who know the child
- Medical information

You may ask the school district to evaluate your child. You should ask in writing, and send the request to the principal or special education director. It is good to keep a copy of this request.

The school district should reply in writing. School staff may:

- Ask for a meeting. They may want to talk more about your concerns. They may need more information. They may want to try teaching your child in a different way before doing an evaluation.
- Agree to do an evaluation. If they agree to an evaluation, staff will send an evaluation plan home and ask you to agree in writing to the plan. They will describe the kinds of tests and assessments they want to do. You must give your permission in writing if it is the first evaluation for your child.
- Say that they do not think the evaluation is needed. They must explain why they do not think evaluation is needed. They must tell you what to do if you still want an evaluation. If your child has not been evaluated before and you think it is needed, the school district must do the evaluation.

After the Evaluation

When the evaluation is finished, you and school staff will talk about the results. Evaluation will show if your child has a disability. It will help you and school staff to decide if your child needs special education. It will show what kind of services may help.



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An evaluation:

- Is completed by people who are trained and knowledgeable
- Covers all areas related to a possible disability
- Includes more than one procedure
- Is in a child's native language (unless clearly not possible)
- Must not discriminate

You will want to read the evaluation results carefully. Ask to have it explained if you do not understand what it says. This is important!

If You Disagree with the Results of an Evaluation

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If you do not agree with the evaluation results for your child, you may ask for a second evaluation. This is called an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE). If you disagree with the evaluation and ask for an IEE (it is best to ask in writing), the school must:

- Refer your child for an IEE at no cost to you, or
- Prove, at a hearing, that its evaluation is appropriate. If this happens, the school district will not have to pay for an IEE. As a parent, you may have an IEE at your own expense and ask that it be considered in planning.

Why is Evaluation so Important?

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If your child qualifies for special education, his or her school program will be based on the evaluation. The evaluation describes a child's strengths and needs. It describes the kinds of services and supports that are needed. It is the basis for developing a written plan to help a child learn. This written plan is called an Individualized Education Program (IEP). If the evaluation is not accurate, the IEP may not meet your child's needs.

As a parent, you are an expert on your child. What you know about your child is important in planning his or her school program. It is important that your voice is heard in the evaluation process!

Contact Your Local Parent Center
