

SECTION TWO

The Special Education Process From Early Intervention to Post-School Transition



WHAT ARE THE STEPS IN THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCESS?

This part of the handbook describes the steps in the special education process with each step building on the previous one. It is important to know how the process works so that all participants can be effective partners.

1. Prereferral

When you suspect that a student may be experiencing difficulties in academic achievement and/or developmental progress, you should contact the child's teacher or guidance counselor to arrange a conference to discuss ideas and strategies that may help your child in the learning process. Behaviors that may indicate that this prereferral process should begin include:

- ▲ Difficulty staying on task
- ▲ Persistent difficulty in following direction
- ▲ Frequent outbursts for no apparent reason
- ▲ Difficulty in understanding what is read
- ▲ Difficulty expressing ideas in spoken or written form
- ▲ Difficulty solving math problems
- ▲ Experiencing complex medical problems
- ▲ Inability to talk as well as children of the same age
- ▲ Demonstrating little interest in toys or stories for children of that age
- ▲ Demonstrating puzzling behaviors
- ▲ Inability to play with other children

2. Intervention

Interventions are changes in routines, both at home and school, that have been recommended as a result of the prereferral process. During the intervention period, observations of your child at home, knowledge about his or her development, your expectations at home, and understanding of how your child learns can be important contributions and should be

shared with school officials. Your child may also be recommended to receive support services such as remedial reading or math, counseling, psychological support, social work services, and/or community services.

3. Referral

At the end of the prereferral/intervention period, a conference is held with you to discuss your child's progress. If the interventions have not been successful, then a referral to the Case Study Committee (CSC) will be made. You, as a member of the CSC (and your child when appropriate), will work with school and/or medically related personnel to decide whether to provide additional support services or to plan a comprehensive individual evaluation for your child. The individual evaluation is recommended when the committee suspects that your child may have an educational disability. Working with the CSC you will contribute to the development of the evaluation plan. This plan is designed to gain insight, through a series of tests and observations, into the suspected area of disability(ies) which may be influencing your child's educational success.

4. Evaluation

Evaluations are special tests, observations and other activities designed to collect information which will help in determining whether your child needs special education. You will be asked to share your knowledge about your child's development, your expectations at home, and information about how your child learns. The purpose of the evaluation will be printed on the permission form that you will be asked to sign. At this point, ask enough questions so that you really understand what this evaluation means. These evaluations will be completed by a trained team of professionals, (multidisciplinary team), include more than one test, and be administered in your child's native language or mode of communication.

The evaluation period may require up to 45 school days from the date that you give written permission.

The results of this evaluation will provide information about your child's educational strengths and needs and help determine whether a special education program is necessary.

5. Eligibility

After the evaluations are completed, you and other members of the CSC will meet to review all of the information. At this point, ask enough questions so that you really understand the results. During this meeting, you will help to determine if your child is eligible for special education. This decision is made by comparing the evaluation results to the eligibility criteria for the suspected disability(ies) as discussed in Section One.

NOTE: What if my child is not eligible for special education?

If your child is determined not eligible for special education services by the CSC but continues to have difficulties, several alternative programs may be considered. Recommendations might include services such as Reading Improvement, English as a Second Language, Guidance Counseling, Psychological Counseling, Social Work Services, or other community services.

6. Individualized Education Program (IEP)

If your child is found eligible for special education, you will participate in developing a written plan for your child. This is called an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This program includes:

- ▲ your child's current educational levels
- ▲ long range goals for a 1-year period
- ▲ short-term objectives
- ▲ ways in which progress will be evaluated
- ▲ when progress will be reviewed
- ▲ who will provide the needed services
- ▲ the amount of time your child will be in special education
- ▲ any modifications to the general education program
- ▲ any related services needed such as transportation, speech, language, occupational therapy,

physical therapy, etc.

- ▲ secondary transition planning for adult life (must start no later than age 14)

Your ideas (and your child's when appropriate) about what you want your child to learn in the next year will be considered in developing this plan. The plan goes into effect only after you agree and sign it and may be reviewed at any time concerns arise regarding the services being provided.

7. Placement

Placement refers to the best learning environment for your child. This can include a variety of options on a continuum of services from support in the general education environment to a self-contained classroom. Placement will be determined by your child's individual needs, strengths, goals and services required. Any decision about placement is made only after the IEP has been developed with your input, and must consider the least restrictive environment (LRE) for the student.

8. Annual Review

Your child's progress in achieving the goals on the IEP must be reviewed and revised each year at the Annual IEP Review meeting. Your observations about any changes in your child's education, both positive and negative, should be shared at this time. You can prepare for this meeting by reviewing your child's current IEP and listing ideas that you would like to have included in the development of the next IEP. You may also ask to have this plan reviewed at any time during the school year. You (and your child when appropriate) will participate in this annual review process.

9. Three-Year Reevaluation

Your child must be reevaluated every 3 years to determine current educational needs and special education eligibility. You or the school staff may request that a reevaluation be conducted before the third year if it is believed to be necessary. You will be involved in designing an evaluation plan to determine if your child continues to be eligible for special education and/or related services.



HOW DOES MY CHILD TRANSITION FROM EARLY INTERVENTION TO SPECIAL EDUCATION?

Your child may be identified as having special needs between the ages of birth and 2 years. An Early Intervention Program, operated by the military branches, will be provided to meet the needs of the child and family. These services will be addressed in an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

Beginning at age 3 years, your child may be referred for placement in the Preschool Services for Children with Disabilities (PSCD) program. This is part of the special education program operated by DoDDS designed to provide for the special needs of students between the ages of 3 and 21 years of age. Services provided in this program will be addressed in an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

It is important for you to be involved in planning for the transition of your child from the Early Intervention program to the Special Education program. You can help by collecting and sharing educational and medical information with your child's early intervention team leader. You should begin to plan for the transition when your child is 2 years 6 months of age, but in no case, later than when your child is 2 years 9 months of age.

Prior to your child's entry into the special education program, a meeting will be arranged by the early intervention team leader with the local school Case Study Committee (CSC). You will be a member of this team which will decide what follow-up actions will be necessary for the transition to occur. Once the CSC determines your child to be eligible for special education services, an IEP will be developed and the program location and entry date will be determined.

WHAT IS SECONDARY TRANSITION?

Secondary transition is a coordinated set of activities for a student which promotes movement from school to post-school activities and is based on his or her needs, preferences and interests. The ultimate goal of the transition process is meaningful employment and/or participation within the community, and a quality life for all individuals with disabilities.

Secondary transition planning for your child will involve special education staff and related services providers along with you and your child. The planning process is designed to ensure that your child will be provided the necessary skills and services to make a smooth transition from school to adult life with as little interruption as possible. Beginning at age 14 years, and each year thereafter, your child and you will be involved in developing an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) which will be included as a part of the IEP. The ITP will address what skills and services will be provided for your child to be successful upon leaving school in the following areas:

- 1 Employment
- 2 Post-secondary training and education
- 3 Independent living
- 4 Community participation

Your involvement in discussions and the decision making process will help in building a solid transition bridge for your child upon leaving school based on both family and student expectations.