

SECTION THREE

Making the Partnership Work



WHO MAKES DECISIONS ABOUT MY CHILD'S NEEDS?

You will be working with the school Case Study Committee (CSC) in making decisions about your child's needs. The CSC accepts student referrals from classroom teachers, family members, other staff members, and representatives of community agencies. The CSC is composed of you and other individuals within the school system who have special knowledge or information. The CSC is also referred to as a multidisciplinary team, meaning that they come from different disciplines or skill areas, each providing input into the process. You also have special knowledge that needs to be considered. The CSC must include at least the following individuals:

- ▲ Parent(s)
- ▲ Classroom teacher(s)
- ▲ Administrator
- ▲ Special Education Teacher

and may sometimes include persons, such as:

- ▲ Communication Impairment Specialist (speech and language therapist)
- ▲ School Counselor
- ▲ School Psychologist
- ▲ School Nurse
- ▲ Physician
- ▲ Physical Therapist
- ▲ Occupational Therapist
- ▲ Clinical Psychologist

One of the CSC members will be designated as the Case Manager for your child. This person will oversee the CSC process and ensure that you are involved in all decisions affecting your child's educational services. You and the other CSC members are the vital links in the process. You will work together to determine the need for evaluations, determine eligibility for special education services, plan for these services, and develop programs for your child. You can provide a great deal of information about how your child learns, what he or she likes, what things you

see at home, and how these might be important in this process.

HOW DO WE RESOLVE CONCERNS OR PROBLEMS?

During the course of your child's school experience, concerns, or problems may arise that require resolution but do not require formal mediation or a due process hearing. The first step in solving problems is to ensure that everyone understands the problem or concern. Requesting a meeting or conference with the person most directly involved with your child would be an excellent starting point in resolving the matter. Talk with your child's teacher, case manager, and/or the school principal to discuss and resolve the concern.

Each member of the parent/school partnership must learn to recognize all potential communication barriers and to develop strategies for overcoming each one. With this kind of preparation, it is possible to resolve issues and to maintain an open communication among all partners in a student's life.

Frequent issues involve:

- ▲ *classroom matters*
- ▲ *evaluation or eligibility for special education programs and services*
- ▲ *implementation of your child's IEP*
- ▲ *appropriateness of your child's program or placement*

Fostering feelings of trust and respect is an important goal for parents and educators, and attention to successful communication methods is an important way to achieve that goal. *Keep the lines of communication open.*



What are my Rights and Responsibilities?

In planning for the education of your child, you have the right to be heard and respected. We all need to take care of ourselves, and feel that it is all right to be concerned about our family and children. We need to remember that we have the right to question. With each of these rights come responsibilities. We need to be willing to accept and respect others and their opinions, let others be able to say that they have needs and provide information.

These rights do not change when a student is determined to need special education. However, you do receive additional rights and responsibilities which help ensure that the needs of your child are addressed and that you are involved.

These rights include:

- ▲ The right to be considered a full participating member of the Case Study Committee (CSC) when planning for your child.
- ▲ The right to provide information about your child that can be used in developing interventions, evaluation planning and educational programs.
- ▲ The right to insure that your written permission is given before any formal evaluations are begun.
- ▲ The right to receive written notice prior to any changes in placement or programs for the student.
- ▲ The right to a complete evaluation, which includes more than one test or procedure and is completed by trained personnel from various educational and/or medical areas of expertise, to receive copies of those results, and to have those results explained in a language you can understand.
- ▲ The right to have all tests provided in the student's native language (unless it is clearly not feasible), and all test instruments are to be nondiscriminatory.
- ▲ The right to access your child's records, receive copies of those records, have someone available to explain the records, and to know who has seen those records.
- ▲ The right to confidentiality of all records about the student.
- ▲ The right to confidentiality regarding ALL activities within the special education services your child receives.
- ▲ The right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that addresses your child's individual needs.
- ▲ The right to request an independent assessment at DoDEA expense if you disagree with the assessment results.
- ▲ The right to be involved in the development of your child's Individual Education Program (IEP).
- ▲ The right to receive transportation and other related services necessary for the student to benefit from his or her special education services.
- ▲ The right to mediation and due process if differences regarding your child's program or services can not be resolved by other means.

Along with each of these rights come the following responsibilities:

- ▲ To be involved
- ▲ To participate in meetings regarding your child and be ready to discuss issues of concern that you have.
- ▲ To ask questions and be sure you understand what is happening.
- ▲ To provide all the relevant information that is needed in planning and program development.
- ▲ To let the school personnel know about any changes in your child's life, both positive and negative, including areas of growth, changes in health and medication, and difficulties your child is having.
- ▲ To educate yourself regarding the rules and regulations governing special education services.