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A GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AGES 3-5



Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities

WHAT IS PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION?

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE), Office for Exceptional Children (OEC) oversees statewide preschool special education programs with school districts, approved providers and parents. Special Education and related services are available for children from the age of three through age 21 who have been identified with a disability. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) provides the legal grounds for children with disabilities to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). These services are administered by the school district in which you live.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY PRESCHOOL AGE CHILD NEEDS SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES?

If your child received early intervention services through the Help Me Grow Program as an infant or toddler up to age three, and may still need special education, your Help Me Grow Service Coordinator will assist you. Your Service Coordinator is responsible for notifying the preschool special education department of your school district that your child will be reaching school age and may be eligible for special education and/or related services.

If your preschool-age child (3-5 years old) did not receive early intervention services, but has some delays such as difficulty in talking, moving around, thinking, learning or is having physical or behavioral challenges, you or any professionals who know or are working with the child, may make the referral to your school district.

The school district of residence shall conduct a multidisciplinary, individual and non-discriminatory initial

evaluation to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child, **including information provided by parents.** The test and other evaluation materials used to assess a child are selected and administered so as not to be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis and provided and administered in the **child’s native language or other mode of communication.** These evaluations should be provided **at no cost** to the parents.

In order to be eligible, your child must have a disability that affects his or her learning. If your child has a disability or special need that may be affecting his or her learning, representatives from your school district and other agencies will meet with you in the eligibility meeting to discuss the result of the evaluation. If your child is to be an eligible “preschool student with a disability,” he or she must qualify under one or more of the following disabilities (from Ohio Operating Standards):

1. Autism
2. Intellectual (Cognitive, Mental Retardation)
3. Deaf-Blindness, Deafness
4. Emotional Disturbance
5. Hearing Impairment
6. Multiple Disabilities
7. Orthopedic Impairment
8. Other Health Impairment
9. Specific Learning Disability
10. Speech or Language Impairment
11. Traumatic Brain Injury
12. Visual Impairment.

The team will also recommend the program or services to meet your child’s individual needs and where they will be provided.

A copy of the Evaluation Team Report (ETR), including a summary of the evaluation, will be provided to you.

In this meeting you will also get a copy of the procedural safeguard notice called ***Whose IDEA Is This? A Parent's Guide to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.*** If your native language is not English, you can ask the school district to provide you with a copy of the procedural safeguards notice in your native language or to explain it to you through a qualified interpreter.

If your child's evaluation is not timely or, if you disagree with the evaluation results or the recommendation of the team, you have the right to ask for an Independent Education Evaluation (IEE), mediation or an impartial hearing.

If the team finds your child is not eligible for special education programs and/or services, you will be given the reasons for the decision in writing through a Prior Written Notice.

HOW WILL MY CHILD RECEIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RELATED SERVICES?

If your child is an eligible preschool student with a disability, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) needs to be written for your child that will list the recommended services to be provided, how often, and for how long.

Most children with disabilities and/or special needs can receive special education services they need in settings with their nondisabled peers. To meet your child's individual needs, the IEP team, including yourself, determines the most appropriate Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). LRE means that the child should be educated along with children without disabilities, to the greatest extent possible.

Services may be provided at an approved or licensed pre-kindergarten or Head Start program, the parent's work-site

or a provider of childcare, the student's home, clinic or a hospital.

Services may be provided through full-day services, part-day, in settings serving children with and without disabilities, and only children with disabilities.

WHAT PROGRAMS OR SERVICES WILL MY CHILD RECEIVE?

Based on your child's unique needs, the IEP team, including yourself, will determine what services will be provided to the child. The following are special education related services, but are not limited to:

- Occupational Therapy (OT)
- Physical Therapy (PT)
- Speech Therapy (ST)
- Assistive Technology (AT)
- Parent Education
- Counseling
- Special Education Itinerant Teacher (a special education teacher works with a child in a setting recommended by the IEP Team).

Services cannot be denied because a child's behavior is problematic, the child is not potty trained, or there is a waiting list.

HOW WILL MY CHILD BE TRANSPORTED TO AND FROM SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES?

When the IEP team is planning programs and/or services for your child, they must also consider your child's transportation needs, including the need for specialized transportation. If recommended by the IEP team, transportation will be provided by the school district. The

school district is not required to provide transportation to all students with disabilities, in all cases.

HOW WILL I KNOW THAT MY CHILD IS MAKING PROGRESS?

As a parent of a young child who is in an early childhood special education program, you want to be sure these services are helping your child develop and learn. These services are designed to make the most of each child's potential, as well as strengthen the family's ability to help their child.

One way to learn more about your child's progress is through three "child outcomes" that are measured for every child in the United States who participates in early intervention or early childhood special education programs. These outcomes will help you know how well your child is developing and participating in activities at home, at school, or in the community. Outcomes are the results families and teachers want for children.

Three Child Outcomes to Measure Progress:

- 1. Gaining positive social emotional skills, including social relationships.** This outcome measures how children interact and play with their family, other adults, and other children.
- 2. Learning and using new knowledge and skills.** This outcome measures how children learn and use basic language and communication skills such as counting and problem-solving that will prepare them to be successful in kindergarten.
- 3. Using appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.** This outcome measures how children gradually become more independent by learning how to move from place to place, feed themselves, and take care of basic needs.

When you and the IEP team write the child's IEP, it will be decided how and when you will be informed of your child's progress. Progress can be reported by regular phone calls from the teacher or service provider, notes and comments in a shared notebook, or formal progress report which tells how your child is progressing toward IEP goals and whether your child is expected to meet the goals on the IEP by the date planned.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT?

When parents and professionals work together as a team, children do better. While professionals have expertise in working with children, **you are the expert on your own child**. You have information about your child that cannot be gathered through any other method other than to hear it directly from you.

By sharing your observations of your child, you will be helping your early childhood special education teachers and service providers to understand your child's strengths and needs. You will help your IEP team understand how your child is progressing on the three child outcomes and what skills need improvement.

Through your involvement, you will help your child to be an active and successful participant now and in the future at home, in the community, and at school.

WHERE DO I GET MORE INFORMATION?

- Your local school district (Principal or Director of Special Education).
- Many districts have a parent mentor who can assist families with the requirements of special education and relationship of outcomes to your child's IEP.
- ODE's Special Education Team at (614) 466-0224, Office of Early Learning and School Readiness

- Or, the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities at (800) 374-2806.

References

National Parent Technical Assistance Center, PACER Center (2013); www.Pacer.org



OHIO COALITION FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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