

2025-2026

**Canton Area School District
Special Education Handbook**



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CANTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT: Proud of Our Traditions

It is the policy of the CANTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT not to discriminate on the basis of sex, handicap, race, and national origin in its educational and vocational programs, activities, or employment as required by Title IX, Section 504, and Title VI.

Canton Area Elementary School does not discriminate in co-curricular activities as to students participating with mental or physical disabilities. All handicapped students with diverse abilities will be provided with an equal opportunity to participate in nonacademic services as are all other students. All students with diverse abilities will be provided with support services and accommodations will be made, as individual needs and circumstances dictate, to allow them to participate in the services and activities.

For information about your rights or grievance procedures contact the superintendent at 509 East Main Street, 570-673-3191. This handbook, published by the Canton Area School District, is designed to be used as a reference.

It is our practice to exert every effort to maintain communication between the home and the school. Never hesitate to contact us on any matter because knowing each other is critical to the welfare of the pupils.

This handbook and other school publications are updated on a regular basis. Policies, herein written, are subject to change. Prior and adequate notice of changes will be given before enforcement of changes.

Additional information may be obtained in the booklet "Pennsylvania Parent Guide to Special Education For School Age Children". This booklet is available at the Canton Area School District Special Education Office. You may request a copy by contacting the Support Services Office. Additional information is available through PA Training and Technical Assistance Network at <http://pattan.net/parent-information>

CANTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICTS RECORDS POLICY

Regulations of the State Board of Education as amended in July 1977, state: "Each Board of School Directors shall adopt an updated plan for the collection, maintenance, and dissemination of pupil records and submit the same to the Department of Education for approval on or before 1978." While recognizing the legitimate needs for the collection and use of the information, the Canton Area School District is aware of the need to insure as much as possible, the rights of privacy of the individual. Therefore, the school district plan shall contain policies and procedures for the collection, maintenance, release and destruction of educational records. In addition, the school district shall protect the confidentiality of education records containing personally identifiable information. The district Record Policy is located in the Guidance Office for public review (adopted as revised September, 2009).

CANTON, PA 17724
(570) 673-3191

SCHOOL DIRECTORY

Dr. Amy Martell, Superintendent of Schools.....	673-3191
Mr. Mark Jannone, School Business Manager.....	673-3191
Mr. Donnie Jacopetti, High School Principal.....	673-5134
Mr. Michael Wells, Elementary Principal.....	673-5196
Mrs. Amy Repard, Special Education Supervisor.....	673-3983
Mr. Dave Loomis, School Psychologist.....	673-5196
Mrs. Jessica Watson, School Counselor.....	673-3000
Mrs. Corrin West, School Counselor.....	673-5196
Mrs. Dani Greer, HS Principal's Secretary.....	673-5134
Mrs. Pam Engel, HS Office Secretary.....	673-5134
Mrs. Brianna Ward, ES Principal's Secretary.....	673-5196
Mrs. Siarra Shanley, ES Office Secretary.....	673-5196
Mrs. Terry Weber, Support Services Secretary	673-3983
Mrs. Asti Tillotson, Cafeteria Manager.....	673-5196
Mrs. Cindy Reed, School Nurse.....	673-5196
Ms. Jen Martin, Health Office Assistant.....	673-5134

Canton Area School District

Mission, Vision, Value Statement

MISSION

We focus on Learning - Every child, every day, "The Warrior Way!"

Canton Students are leaders, communicators, and citizens who value learning and community.

TRADITION
PRIDE
EXCELLENCE

VISION

Canton Area School District



Values

WARRIOR

- **P**erseverance
- **R**esilience
- **I**ntegrity
- **D**etermination
- **E**xcellence

SPECIAL EDUCATION STAFF

Ms. Carolann Ward-Spencer - Supplemental Learning Support, K-6

Miss Deborah Fitzwater - Itinerant Learning Support, K-2

Ms. Shaina Slocum - Itinerant Learning Support, 3

Mrs. Sara Ross - Itinerant Learning Support, 4-5

Mrs. Cindy Black - Itinerant Learning Support- 6/ Gifted Support -K-12

Mrs. Caitlin Barr - Supplemental Learning, 7-12

Ms. Michelle Harkness - Itinerant Learning Support, 7

Mrs. Sheila Jackson - Itinerant Learning Support, 8

Mrs. Callie Gensel - Itinerant Learning Support, 9

Mrs. Janelle VanNoy - Itinerant Learning Support, 10

Ms. Sheila Wesneski - Itinerant Learning Support, 11-12

PARAPROFESSIONALS

Mrs. Janelle Bruce, Elementary School

Mrs. Samantha Campbell, Elementary School

Mrs. Danielle Henson, Elementary School

Mrs. Leah Strong, Elementary School

Mrs. Mercedes Meuse, Title I Paraprofessional

Mrs. Heidi Morgan, Elementary School

Mrs. Joanne O'Hara, Elementary School

Mrs. Diane Palmer, Elementary School

Mrs. Janie Segur, Title I Elementary School

Mrs. Desiree Shepard, Kindergarten Paraprofessional

Mrs. Faye Spencer, Kindergarten Paraprofessional

Mrs. Bonnie DeFelice, High School

Mrs. Betty Lutz, High School

Ms. Rachel Stone, High School

Mrs. Melony Schrader, High School

Mrs. Mindy Tymeson, Paraprofessional

Mrs. Sherry Vargson, High School

Mrs. Stephanie Mignano, High School

Mrs. Elysse McPherson, High School

K-12 DISTRICT WIDE

Mrs. Jamie Taylor, Speech and Language Support jtaylor@canton.k12.pa.us

Mr. Dave Loomis, School Psychologist dloomis@canton.k12.pa.us

Mrs. Amy Repard, Special Education Supervisor arepard@canton.k12.pa.us

Mrs. Terry Weber, Support Services Secretary tweber@canton.k12.pa.us

**Annual Public Notice of Special Education Services and Programs,
Services for Gifted Students, and Services for Protected Handicapped Students**

**Published by BLaST IU 17
(Revised July 2013)**

Notice to Parents

According to state and federal special education regulations, annual public notice to parents of children who reside within a school district is required regarding child find responsibilities. School districts (SDS), intermediate units (IUs) and charter schools (CSs) are required to conduct child find activities for children who may be eligible for services via Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. For additional information related to Section 504/Chapter 15 services, the parent may refer to Section 504, Chapter 15, and the Basic Education Circular entitled Implementation of Chapter 15. Also, school districts are required to conduct child find activities for children who may be eligible for gifted services via 22 Pa Code Chapter 16. For additional information regarding gifted services, the parent may refer to 22 PA Code Chapter 16. If a student is both gifted and eligible for Special Education, the procedures in IDEA and Chapter 14 shall take precedence.

This notice shall inform parents throughout the school district, intermediate unit, and charter school of the child identification activities and of the procedures followed to ensure confidentiality of information pertaining to students with disabilities or eligible young children. In addition to this public notice, each school district, intermediate unit, and charter school shall publish written information in the handbook and on the web site. Children ages three through twenty one can be eligible for special education programs and services. If parents believe that the child may be eligible for special education, the parent should contact the appropriate staff member identified at the end of this public notice.

Children aged three through the age of admission to first grade are also eligible if they have developmental delays and, as a result, need Special Education and related services. Developmental delay is defined as a child who is less than the age of beginners and at least 3 years of age and is considered to have a developmental delay when one of the following exists: (i) The child's score, on a developmental assessment device, on an assessment instrument which yields a score in months, indicates that the child is delayed by 25% of the child's chronological age in one or more developmental areas. (ii) The child is delayed in one or more of the developmental areas, as documented by test performance of 1.5 standard deviations below the mean on standardized tests. Developmental areas include cognitive, communicative, physical, social/emotional and self-help. For additional information you may contact, Ms. Deborah Knapp, Supervisor of Early Intervention Services, BLaST IU #17.

Evaluation Process

Each school district, intermediate unit, and charter school has a procedure in place by which parents can request an evaluation. For information about procedures applicable to your child, contact the school, which your child attends. Telephone numbers and addresses can be found at the end of this notice. Parents of preschool age children, age three through five, may request an evaluation in writing by addressing a letter to Ms. Deborah Knapp, Supervisor of Early Intervention Services, BLaST IU #17.

Consent

School entities cannot proceed with an evaluation, or with the initial provision of special education and related services, without the written consent of the parents. For additional information related to consent, please refer to the Procedural Safeguards Notice which can be found at the PaTTAN website, www.Pattan.net. Once written parental consent is obtained, the district will proceed with the evaluation process. If the parent disagrees with the evaluation, the parent can request an independent education evaluation at public expense.

Program Development

Once the evaluation process is completed, a team of qualified professionals and parents determine whether the child is eligible. If the child is eligible, the individualized education program team meets, develops the program, and determines the educational placement. Once the IEP team develops the program and determines the educational placement, school district staff, intermediate unit staff, or charter school staff will issue a notice of recommended educational placement/prior written notice. Your written consent is required before initial services can be provided. The parent has the right to revoke consent after initial placement.

Confidentiality of Information:

The SDS, IUs and CSs maintain records concerning all children enrolled in the school, including students with disabilities. All records are maintained in the strictest confidentiality. Your consent, or consent of an eligible child who has reached the age of majority under State law, must be obtained before personally identifiable information is released, except as permitted under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The age of majority in Pennsylvania is 21. Each participating agency must protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable information at collection, storage, disclosure, and destruction stages. One official at each participating agency must assume responsibility for ensuring the confidentiality of any personally identifiable information. Each participating agency must maintain, for public inspection, a current listing of the names and positions of those employees within the agency who have access to personally identifiable information.

For additional information related to student records, the parent can refer to the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

This notice is only a summary of the Special Education services, evaluation and screening activities, and rights and protections pertaining to children with disabilities, children thought to be disabled, and their parents. For more information or to request evaluation or screening of a public or private school child contact the responsible school entity listed below. For preschool age children, information, screenings and evaluations requested, may be obtained by contacting the Intermediate Unit. The addresses of these schools are as follows:

INTERMEDIATE UNIT

BLaST Intermediate Unit #17
2400 Reach Road -PO Box 3609
Williamsport, PA 17701 570-323-8561

BLaST Intermediate Unit #17
33 Springbrook Drive
Canton, PA 17724
570-673-6001

Dr. Christina Steinbacher-Reed, Executive Director creed@iu17.org

Dr. Elizabeth Segraves, Assistant Executive Director - Division of Student Services dsegraves@iu17.org

The school entity or charter school will not discriminate in employment, educational programs, or activities based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, handicap, creed, marital status or because a person is a disabled veteran or a veteran of the Vietnam era. No preschool, elementary or secondary school pupil enrolled in a school district, Intermediate Unit, or charter school program shall be denied equal opportunity to participate in age and program appropriate instruction or activities due to race, color, handicap, creed, national origin, marital status or financial hardship.

UNDERSTANDING SPECIAL EDUCATION

1. What is IDEA and why is it important?

This federal law, the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA), defines the national requirements for special education services, and provides the foundation for Pennsylvania Chapter 14 of the Pennsylvania school code. The IDEA 2004 provides that:

- All children identified as eligible for special education and related services are entitled to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), in the least restrictive environment (LRE). ◦ Special Education services must be designed to meet the unique needs of the child and provided in accordance with an individualized education program (IEP).
- Special education services should prepare the child for employment or independent living. ◦ The rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected.

2. Does my child have a right to a free and appropriate education (FAPE)?

Every child identified as eligible for special education and related services must receive education services at no cost to the parent. These services can be made available to a child enrolled in preschool, elementary school, secondary school, or a charter school, which is considered a local education agency (LEA). A free and appropriate public education (FAPE) must be provided for an eligible child no later than age three.

3. Can you explain the terms laws, regulations, and guidelines?

Laws, regulations, and guidelines define and establish special education. All federal and state agencies providing special education programs must follow the established laws, regulations, and guidelines governing them.

- **Laws** are passed by the legislature on the federal and state levels and dictate the specific areas, requirements, and criteria covered by the legislation.
- **Regulations** are issued by the State Board of Education to help interpret the laws, and become directives for the schools and intermediate units.
- **Guidelines** are issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, which suggest procedures for carrying out the special education laws and regulations.

4. What children are eligible for special education?

Chapter 14 of the Pennsylvania Special Education regulations defines your child as eligible for special education, if your child has been evaluated by the evaluation team and has one or more of the following disabilities:

- Deaf-blindness and/or Deafness,
- Emotional disturbance,
- Hearing impairment,
- Intellectual Developmental Disorder,

- Multiple Disabilities,
- Orthopedic impairment,
- Other health impairment,
- Specific learning disability,
- Speech or language impairment,
- Traumatic brain injury, or
- Visual impairment including blindness,

And needs special education as determined by the evaluation team.

5. What is the special education continuum of services?

Pennsylvania school code, Chapter 14, lists three types of special education support and services provided by special education personnel. this continuum of services includes:

- **Full-time** - Special education supports and services provided by special education personnel for **80% or more** of the school day.
- **Itinerant** - Special education supports and services provided by special education personnel for **20% or less** of the school day.
- **Supplemental** - Special education supports and services provided by special education personnel for **more than 20% but less than 80%** of the school day.

6. Are there different support programs for the special education student?

A student's educational placement is determined by the IEP Team. *The IEP team must first consider the regular classroom with the provision of supplementary aids and services before considering the provision of services in other settings.* Special education support services are based on the student's primary need and are available in the following categories:

1. Autism Support
2. Blind-visually impaired support
3. Deaf and hard of hearing support
4. Emotional support
5. Learning support
6. Life Skills Support
7. Multiple disabilities support
8. Physical support
9. Speech/Language support

7. What children are eligible for special education?

Chapter 14 of the Pennsylvania Special Education regulations defines your child as eligible for special education, if your child has been evaluated by the evaluation team and has one or more of the following disabilities:

1. Autism,
2. Deaf-blindness and/or Deafness,

3. Emotional disturbance,
4. Hearing impairment,
5. Intellectual Developmental Disorder,
6. Multiple Disabilities,
7. Orthopedic impairment,
8. Other health impairment,
9. Specific learning disability,
10. Speech or language impairment,
11. Traumatic brain injury, or
12. Visual impairment including blindness,

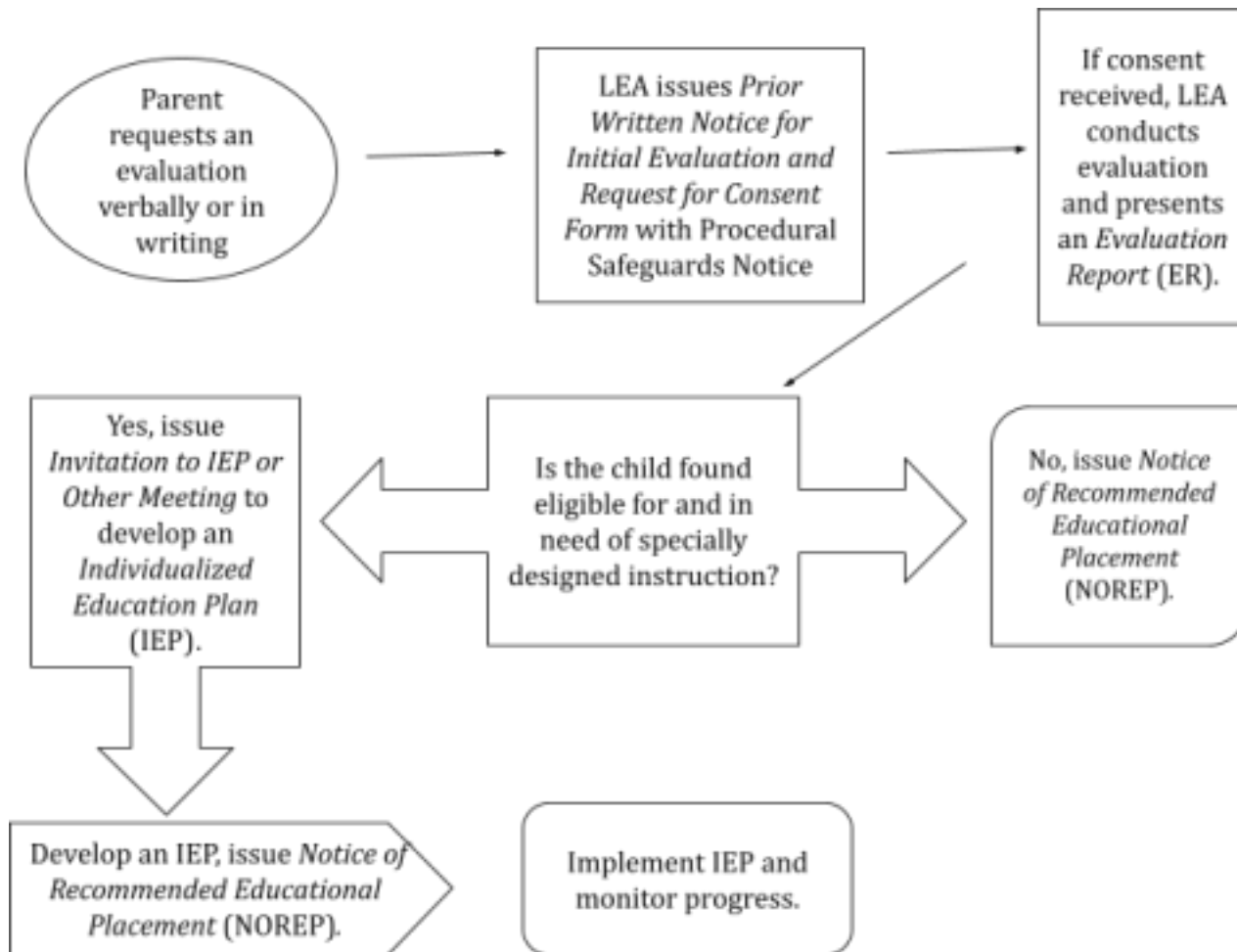
And needs special education as determined by the evaluation team.

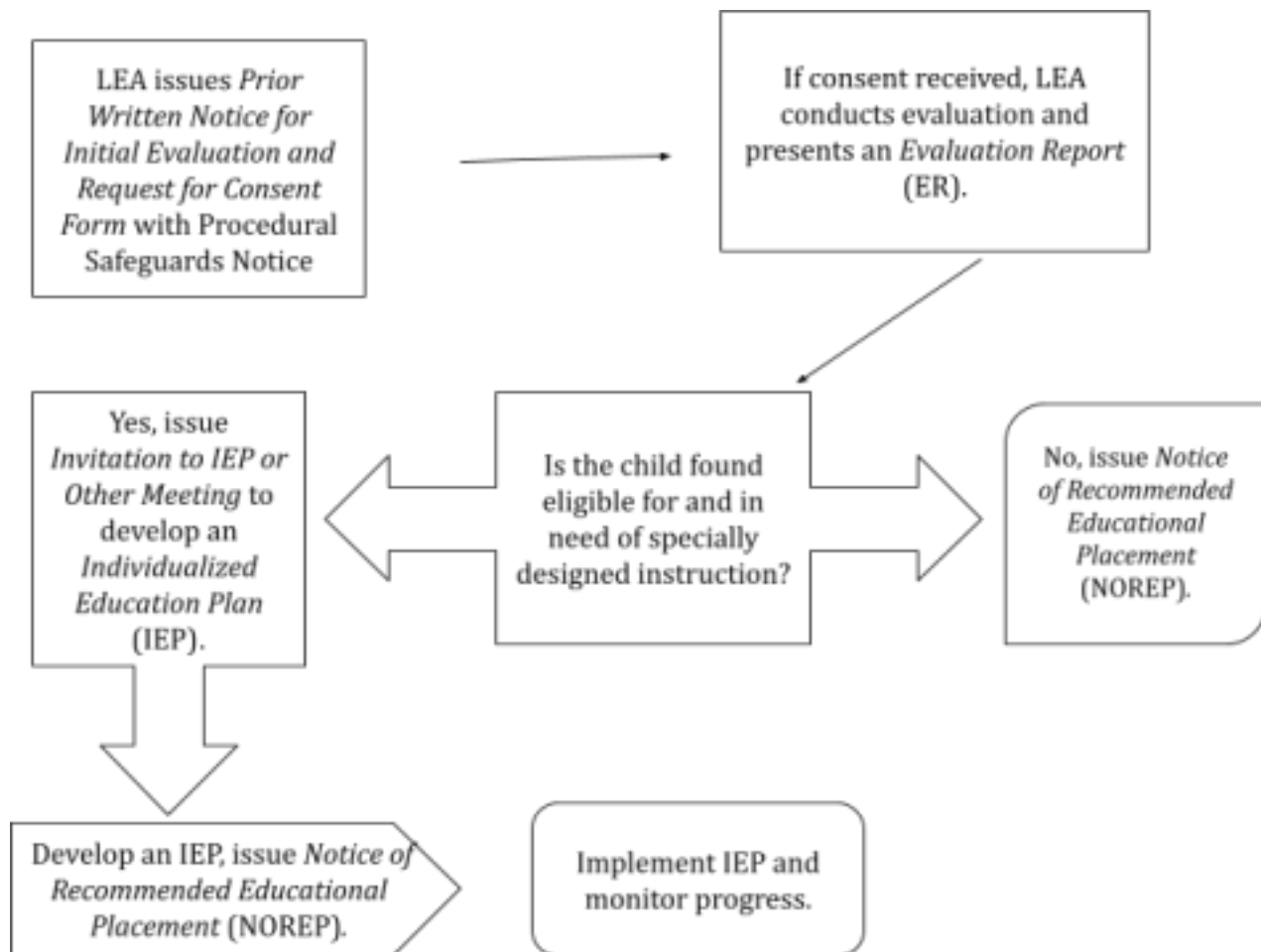
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The Special Education Evaluation/IEP Process - Parent Initiated Request



The Special Education Evaluation/IEP Process - LEA Initiated Request

9. What happens if the district determines my child needs special education?

If the evaluation shows that your child is in need of special education and related services, you will receive an invitation to participate in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting.

Your child's IEP will be developed in this meeting, and will be used as the guide for your child's education. **The IEP is your child's education plan.**

10. Where will my child with special needs receive services?

Special Education programs and services for children with disabilities are available in various locations and settings. They can include:

- Regular classroom or special education classroom in the public school within or outside of the child's home school district
- Special education services provided by the Intermediate Unit within or outside of the home school district
- Special education services in a Pennsylvania Department of Education approved private school
- Special education services and programs provided with parental consent in a residential school, residential facility, State school, or hospital or secure setting
- Special education services in an approved out-of-state program
- Special education instruction in the home

11. How old must my child be to receive special instruction?

In Pennsylvania, eligible children can receive special instruction from birth through age 21. Children, birth through age 3, can obtain these services through the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is responsible for providing special education services to children 3 to 21 years of age.

12. How long may my child stay in school?

A special education student may stay in school until he or she qualifies for a high school diploma or turns twenty-one.

If the child reaches twenty-one any time after the school begins, he or she may complete the entire school year, if the local school is agreeable.

13. What if a parent suspects their child needs special education?

If parents believe their child has special needs, they should send a written request to the school district or intermediate unit requesting an evaluation by a team including educational specialists and the parent. Requests may be made at any time during the school year. The evaluation must be completed and the report given to you within 60 calendar days of your written request and approval, except during summer recess.

Keep a copy of all information sent to and received from the school district.

14. How does the school district determine where my child will receive education services?

The IEP team determines educational placement for children with special needs based on evaluation results and program design. The decision also includes review of the following criteria:

- The level of educational support which is necessary to allow the child to function successfully in school
 - The appropriate location for education services based on the child's age and academic and behavioral needs
 - The appropriate educational setting for the child based on ability and individual student need
 - The "least restrictive learning environment" which will meet the needs of the student.
- The federal law IDEA, 34 CRF 300.114 (ii) states: "Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs ONLY if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily."

15. What does the term "evaluation" mean and why is it important?

The evaluation process provides information to determine if the child needs special education and related services, by accessing how the child learns, what he or she already knows, and what kinds of special help he or she may need.

Parents as a part of the evaluation team should contribute information they have about their child. School professionals may give the child tests, interview or talk with him or her and observe what he or she does in the classroom.

The evaluation team determines whether a child is eligible and the nature and extent of his or her special education and related service needs.

Reevaluation occurs every 3 years and every 2 years for students with intellectual disability. A parent or teacher can request a reevaluation sooner, if a child's situation or condition warrants a reevaluation.

16. Can my child be evaluated for special education without my knowledge and permission?

The school must notify you, in writing, that your child has been referred for an evaluation. This notice should tell you:

- The reasons for the referral
- The procedures and types of tests that will be given to your child, and the approximate dates of when the evaluation will take place
- The parent(s) has the right to meet with the evaluator(s) to discuss the referral and evaluation procedure
- The parent(s) has the right to see, study and obtain copies of his or her child's school records
- The parent(s) has the right to object to the evaluation and to request a meeting and/or hearing

17. What is an IEP and why is it important?

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a plan designed to meet your child's special education needs identified in the evaluation report.

The IEP team should address the following question when creating the IEP:

- What are my child's current educational levels?
- What are the appropriate expectations and goals for my child?
- What do I want my child to learn during the school year?
- What special education services are needed to achieve these goals?

Comprehensive information concerning the IEP process can be found in two PEN publications: Putting The Pieces Together: An IEP Guide for School Age Children and the IEP Guide for Pre-school Parents.

How and when will my child's IEP plan be changed?

The IEP can be reviewed and revised at any time, but must be reviewed each year. The law requires that the **IEP be developed** at the conference with the child's parents and school professionals. Parents will be notified in writing of the time, location and purpose of the IEP conference. The notice will also include the names of other persons invited to the meeting.

The parent and the educational entity can agree not to convene an IEP Team meeting for the purpose of making changes to the current IEP. The parent and school officials may develop a written document to amend or modify the child's IEP. If changes are made, the school must ensure that the child's IEP Team is informed of those changes. Upon request, a parent must be provided a copy of the amended IEP.

18. Does the law provide for related services for eligible children?

The law provides for "related services" that are necessary to help your child benefit from, or gain access to his or her special education program. These services may include but are not limited to:

- Speech language pathology and audiology services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation (including therapeutic recreation), early identification and assessment of disabilities in children, counseling services (including rehabilitation counseling), orientation and mobility services and medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes.

Related services also include school health services, social work services in the schools, and parent counseling and training.

19. Do parents have the right to review their child's school records?

Federal and state law gives parents the right to review and receive copies of their child's school records. Parents of children currently or previously receiving special education can view or receive copies of their child's records within 45 days of their request.

You can not be charged for reviewing your child's records, but you can be charged the actual cost of copying them. The law also gives parents the right to ask and receive from school officials an explanation of any information contained in the record.

Parents **do not** have the right to see private notes of school officials, therapists or teachers that are not shared with anyone else and are not kept in your child's files, unless they are included in a court proceeding.

20. Are my child's school records kept confidential?

School records cannot be released to anyone outside the school system without your notification or consent. The school district must keep records of those individuals or agencies that have access to your child's records.

The school district must have a procedure parents can use to correct inaccurate or misleading information found in their child's records. Parents can ask for a due process hearing if the school does not make the requested record change.

21. How can parents learn about special education programs and laws?

Parents may be able to obtain free information, brochures and pamphlets from the following:

- local school districts,
- Intermediate Units and County Mental Health & Mental Retardation offices
- Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)

Legal Information:

Education Law Center of Pennsylvania (toll call) 215-238-6970

Free Mediation Services:

Pennsylvania Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) 800-992-4334
800-360-7282

Free IEP Facilitation Assistance:

IEP Facilitation Form and Assistance (ODR) 800-222-3353

Parents can order free PEN publications on a variety of special education topics by calling our toll free number 800-522-58 or by visiting our website, www.parentednet.org

DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

As a parent, you are uniquely qualified to know your child's learning strengths and weaknesses. School professionals will utilize your knowledge in designing a special education program for your child's benefit. Your child may be eligible for special education if your child:

1. Has a physical, sensory, mental or emotional disability (these include mental retardation, emotional disturbance, an orthopedic impairment, a hearing impairment, deafness, a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment including blindness, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities) *and*
2. Needs special education as determined by an evaluation team.

Your child must meet **both** qualifications in order to be eligible for special education. In Pennsylvania, all children eligible for special education have the right to a free and appropriate public education.

Note: Children who have disabilities which substantially limit their participation in or access to school programs, but who do not need special education, may qualify for reasonable accommodations in the regular classroom under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and other Pennsylvania education regulations. The rules - called Chapter 15 - that apply are different from those for students needing special education who qualify by meeting the two-part criteria listed above.

Your child may need specially designed instruction that isn't normally needed by other children in the general education classroom to make progress in school. This need for special education is the second part of the two-part decision to qualify a child for special education services.

SCREENING

Your child's school has a screening process in place that identifies students who may need special education. This process includes:

A review of the student's records including attendance and report cards,

A review of the student's vision and hearing,

An assessment of the student's functioning in the curriculum including curriculum-based and performance-based assessment for students with academic concerns,

A systematic observation of the student's behavior in the classroom or area in which the student is displaying difficulty.

For students with academic or behavior concerns, an intervention must be developed based on the results of the screening. The student's response to the intervention is looked at closely and if screening activities have produced little or no improvement within 60 school days, the student will be formally referred for evaluation for special education. You may request that the evaluation take place without going through these screening activities.

THE EVALUATION

The evaluation process gathers the information that will be used to determine if your child needs special education and, if so, the types of programs and services needed. Your child may be evaluated by a school psychologist. Other evaluations may include tests by a hearing specialist for a child with a hearing problem, or an evaluation from a doctor for a child with a health concern. The evaluation must also include input from a therapist if certain related services, such as physical or occupational therapy, are needed.

A child may be referred for the first evaluation in several ways:

You may ask your school to evaluate your child for special education at any time. This can be done by sending a letter to the principal of your child's school. A "Permission to Evaluate" form will be sent to you. 2. The school may also contact you and must ask permission to have your child evaluated. You must consent in writing to your child's evaluation. School officials cannot proceed without your permission. If permission is not received and the school continues to find that an evaluation is necessary, they may ask for a due process hearing and get approval from an impartial hearing officer to evaluate your child. More information about due process hearings is found under the section titled "What if I Disagree With School Officials About My Child's Education Program".

A reevaluation is conducted at least every three years unless your child is disabled due to mental retardation, in which case reevaluations are conducted at least every two years. When additional data is needed to complete a reevaluation to determine whether your child continues to be a child with a disability and needs special education, then the school must seek your permission to perform the additional evaluation. If the school district has made what it believes are "reasonable attempts" but failed to receive your permission, it may proceed with the reevaluation. Each school district decides what "reasonable attempts" are. Such attempts may consist of:

- .Telephone calls,
- .Registered letters with return receipts required,
- .Visits to the home or parents' place of business.

Also, if the school determines that no additional data is needed, they will notify you of this determination. You and your school district may agree in writing that the three-year reevaluation is not necessary. This is not an option if your child has an intellectual disability.

All evaluations needed to determine your child's need for special education will be provided by your child's school district at no charge. Results of the evaluations will be made available for your review. You may also get evaluation reports from professionals outside the school system and send them to your child's school. The results of these outside evaluations will be considered in determining if your child has a disability and needs special education. If you wish for the school district to pay for these outside evaluations, you may make that request in writing. If the school district refuses, they must initiate a special education due process hearing.

WHAT THE EVALUATION WILL TELL YOU

The evaluation will include information about your child's skills, social behavior, learning problems, learning strengths, and educational needs.

All evaluations and reevaluations must include a review of the testing and assessments that were conducted, information from the parents, classroom observations, and the observations of teachers and related service personnel. The evaluation or reevaluation must also tell you what additions or changes are needed to help your child meet goals which will be described in your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP), and to take part in and progress in the general curriculum (the skills and knowledge taught in a specific school district).

An evaluation team reviews all materials and writes a report called an Evaluation Report (ER) that tells if your child has one or more disabilities and if your child needs special education. It may recommend the type of programs and services your child needs. The ER may state that your child is not eligible and does not need special education services. You will receive a written notice of this determination and have the right to dispute it at a hearing.

The entire evaluation process must be completed within 60 calendar days (not including summer vacation) from the date you give permission by signing the "Permission to Evaluate" form given to you by your school district. A copy of the ER must be given to you and a summary of the report will be communicated to you at least 10 days before the IEP meeting. A parent may waive this 10-day provision.

If your child is being evaluated for a learning disability, parents (as members of the evaluation team) will be given an opportunity to sign the report. Next to your signature you will indicate whether or not you agree with the report. If you do no, you may submit a statement of your own conclusions. This is sometimes called a dissenting opinion, which will become part of the final ER. A copy of the final ER must be given to the parents.

Additional information may be obtained in the booklet "Pennsylvania Guide to Special Education For School Aged Children" or on through the Pennsylvania Department of Education website.

SUPPORT SERVICES

- **SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

The Canton Area School District offers several program services to the students of the district. Those students identified as falling under the guidelines for Academic Learning Support for Specific Learning Disabilities and Intellectual Disabilities, Speech and Language Disabilities, Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment and Physically Disabled will receive services if eligible. Students requiring the more intensive services for Life Skills Support and Emotional Support are served within the district whenever possible but may be assigned to inter-district classes which are age/grade-appropriate through contractual agreements with neighboring school districts.

- **GIFTED SUPPORT SERVICES**

Gifted support students are served in a variety of settings within the elementary school. Screening procedures are in place to assist in the identification of students for these services. Also, students who are thought to be Gifted may be referred to the principal by a regular education teacher as

well as by a parent or guardian.

- **SECTION 504/ADA STUDENTS**

When a student's medical disability requires specific accommodations in the regular education classroom, parents may request that a 504 Accommodation Plan be written.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Under Pennsylvania and federal law, a child with a disability has a right to **special education** and **related services** that are provided:

1. *At public expense*
2. *Under public supervision and direction*
3. *Without charge to preschool (ages 3-5), elementary or secondary school students*
4. *In conformity with an **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** which means that students with disabilities who need special education must receive a **free appropriate public education (FAPE)***
5. *In the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)*

FAPE includes **related services** that help your child get to school and benefit from the special education program. These may include:

- *Special transportation*
- *Physical or occupational therapy*
- *Other services which help or support your child as your child grows and learns*

YOUR CHILD'S INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)

The IEP team writes the Individualized Education Program (IEP). This plan will be written at a meeting and will include a description of all the programs and services necessary to help your child be successful. The IEP team uses information that is contained in the ER to write the IEP.

As a parent, you are an IEP team member. It is important that you attend these meetings. Meetings will be scheduled to fit in with your schedule and school official's schedules. You will get a written notice of when, where, and why the meeting will be held and a list of the other people who are invited to attend. The IEP meeting is to be scheduled at a time and place that is mutually agreed upon by you and your school district. If the date or time is not convenient, you may ask for a change. Parents may also be included by telephone if it is impossible for them to attend the meeting in person.

REQUIRED MEMBERS OF EACH IEP TEAM

1. The child's parent(s)
2. At least one of your child's general education teachers (if your child is, or might become, part of general education classes)
3. At least one special education teacher
4. A representative of the school district who:
 - a. Is qualified to provide or supervise special education programs
 - b. Knows about the general curriculum
 - c. Knows about the availability of the resources the local education agency (LEA) can offer
5. Someone who can interpret the evaluation results, who may already be a team member

6. At your request or that of the school district, other people who know your child well or who have worked with your child. You may bring an advocate to advise you or anyone else who will be able to add information about your child's educational experience.
7. Your child at age 14 when planning will be done for life after graduation or any time before that age when you want your child to be present, and it is appropriate.
8. A representative from a vocational-technical school if a vocational-technical school is being considered for your child.

One person may fill more than one of the above roles. The minimum number of people at the IEP meeting should be four in most circumstances: you, the local education agency (LEA) representative, a special education teacher, and a general education teacher (if your child will participate at all in general education). The general education teacher may not attend all meetings or stay for the entire meeting time, but must be a team member. Mandated members of the IEP team may be excused from the meeting if you and the school district agree in writing. If a member is excused and his/her area of expertise is being discussed, he/she must provide written input before the meeting.

If you choose not to attend the IEP meeting, it may be held without you.

IEP TIMELINES

The IEP must be completed within 30 calendar days after the evaluation team issues its Evaluation Report. The IEP plan must be put into action as soon as possible, but no later than 10 school days after the IEP is completed.

Your child's program is reviewed every year at an IEP meeting or more often if requested by you or any other IEP team member. Additional evaluations (reevaluations) are conducted at least every three years (but parents and school officials may agree in writing that re-evaluation is not necessary) or every two years if your child has mental retardation.

IEP CONTENTS

The IEP team will review all the evaluation material and will determine how your child is performing in school now. The IEP team will write annual goals and short term learning objectives (for students with disabilities who take the alternate statewide assessment aligned to alternate standards) that can be measured and are designed to meet the needs of your child.

- *Annual goals will describe what your child can be expected to learn during the year.*
- *Short term objectives or benchmarks (for students with disabilities who take the alternate statewide assessment aligned to alternate standards) are the sequential steps your child must take in order to reach these goals.*

The IEP team will determine:

- *The special education services and programs to be provided to your child which will be used to meet the individual needs of your child.*
- *Where, what kind, how much, and how often special education and related services will be provided. For example, the IEP may say "individual speech therapy, 30-minute periods, three times per week, in the speech room." Special transportation utilized by other children in the neighborhood, also falls*

under this category. For example, the IEP may say "a bus that will lift a wheelchair from the curb taking Jimmy from his home to school with a ride no longer than 30 minutes."

- *The date services and programs will begin and how long the services and programs will last.*
- *The tests or other methods of evaluation that will be used to decide if the student is meeting the annual goals and learning objectives and how and when this progress will be reported to you.*
- *Progress on meeting annual goals must be reported periodically, such as through the use of quarterly reports.*
- *How much, if any, the student will NOT participate in the general class, or in the general education curriculum; when your child will be in settings with other special education students only; when your student in special education will NOT be studying skills of knowledge that are directly linked to the skills and knowledge studies by the children in general education.*
- *The adjustments and supplemental aids and services in the general education setting, if any, for your child to succeed in a general education class. This could include, for example, giving the child untimed tests or having someone help the child take class notes.*
- *The adjustments needed, if any, for the child to participate in statewide or district wide tests. If the child is not able to participate, even with adjustments, another assessment will be done that will show the child's skills. Participation in this alternate assessment will be documented in the IEP.*
- *Supports that school personnel may need to implement the IEP, such as resource materials or equipment.*

In developing the IEP, the team must consider:

- *Your concerns*
- *Whether a child exhibits behavior that interferes with the child's learning or the learning of others and therefore needs a behavior management plan*
- *The needs of children with limited English language skills*
- *The use of Braille for children with visual problems*
- *The communication needs of students, including students who are deaf or hard of hearing*
- *Whether the child needs assistive technology devices or services to communicate or participate in the activities which are going on around the child.*

Information on the following must be provided in the IEP, if appropriate for your child:

- *Extended School Year - In some cases, interruptions in the school schedule, such as summer break, will result in children with disabilities losing many of their basic skills, and taking a long time to get those skills back once school begins again. Extended School Year (ESY) services are to be provided during breaks in the educational schedule to prevent this loss as part of a free appropriate public education.*
- *Special or modified physical education (adaptive physical education) for children who cannot take part in regular physical education because of their disabilities.*

PLANNING FOR LIFE AFTER GRADUATION

As your child gets older, the IEP team will design a program to help your child prepare for life when your child is finished with school. This is called transition planning because planning is done through the IEP to facilitate the transition from school to the world of work or other activities in which the young adult may be involved. Your child will learn the skills needed in the future while he or she is still in school.

By the time your child is 16, or sooner if the IEP team agrees, the IEP team must decide what kinds of courses your child will take. Examples include art courses, vocational courses, or courses to prepare your child for higher education, which may include college.

Planning for transition from school to adult living must begin when your child turns 16 or sooner if the IEP team thinks early planning would be appropriate. The IEP team (including your child, if possible) must discuss what you and your child want your child to be doing when high school is completed. These plans must include the kind of education training your child will receive, the kind of job your child might have, where your child will live, and how your child will spend time in the community.

EDUCATIONAL SETTING

The special education program will be completely developed before the IEP team decides where the program will be provided. The IEP team will look at different classes or schools to see where that program can be delivered. The first place it will consider will be the general classroom in the neighborhood school where your child would attend if your child were not eligible for special education.

The law requires that children with disabilities be placed in situations that will give them as many opportunities as appropriate to be with students who are not disabled. This is called placing the student in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The LRE is the general class in the neighborhood school unless the IEP team determines that the special needs of the child cannot be met there even with supplemental aids and services.

THE APPROPRIATE CLASS

The classroom chosen for your child will depend upon the amount and kind of special instruction or services your child needs. A special education teacher may be able to give instruction in the general classroom.

For some children, placement in a special education class for some of the day is necessary. Students who receive most of their instruction in basic academic subjects in special education classes will have opportunities to participate in other activities in school with general education students. These opportunities might include participation in elective subjects such as art or music, belonging to a general homeroom, socializing in the lunchroom, and attending assemblies and other enrichment programs with general education students.

School districts in Pennsylvania must make available the following types of classes for the placement of their children with special needs if an IEP team decides that a particular type of class is necessary. These classes are formed around the learning needs of children who are assigned to them:

- *Learning support class - for children whose greatest need is for help in academic areas such as reading and math.*
- *Emotional support class - for children whose greatest need is for social, emotional, and behavioral help.*
- *Life skills support class - for children whose greatest need is to learn skills that will allow them to live and work independent of their families.*
- *Sensory support skills class - for children who require help in dealing with disabilities resulting from limited vision or hearing.*

- *Speech and language support class - for children who have difficulty speaking and communicating.*
- *Physical support class - for children who need programs that consider their physical disabilities.*
- *Autistic support class - for children with autism.*
- *Multiple disabilities support class - for children with more than one disability, the combination of which results in needs requiring many services and much support.*

Children with different disabilities can be placed together in one class if their learning needs are similar and they can all benefit from the same level and manner of instruction.

The law requires that special education students be placed in classes with students of the same age range. At the elementary level (grades K - 6), a class cannot have children who vary in age by more than three years. At the secondary level (grades 7 - 12), an age range of no more than four years is allowed. An exception can be made by the IEP team for an individual child based on the child's needs. It must be explained in writing in the IEP.

NOTICE OF RECOMMENDED EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT (NOREP)

Once you have developed the **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** with the **IEP** team, you will receive a **Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP)**. The **NOREP** explains the educational placement or class recommended for your child and explains your rights. You must approve the **IEP** and educational placement in writing for your child's first special education placement before the school is allowed to begin implementation. For subsequent IEPs services will continue without your signature on the **NOREP**.

If you are placing your child in a private school and are asking the school district to pay for this private school because you believe your child is not receiving a free appropriate public education, you must give advance notice to school officials. This notice can be given at the IEP meeting or in writing 10 business days before you remove your child from public school. If you do not give this notice, the reimbursement to you may be reduced or denied. If the school district gave notice of their intent to evaluate your child for special education prior to your removal of your child, reimbursement may be reduced or denied if you did not make your child available for the evaluation. Reimbursement may be reduced or denied for the private placement if a court thinks your actions have been "unreasonable." An exception to the reduction or denial of reimbursement will be made if you are unable to read or write in English, physical or serious emotional harm to the child may result if the parent adhered to the prior notice requirements, the school prevented the parent from providing the notice to the school, or the school failed to give the parent notice of these rights and procedures.

WHAT ARE THE SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO MY CHILD AND ME?

High School Graduation

All students receiving special education services in Pennsylvania are guaranteed the right to an opportunity to earn a high school diploma. A high school diploma will be awarded to a student who successfully completes the same courses and earns the same credits as a general education student, or who completes the special education program developed by the **IEP** team.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, a child who attains the age of twenty-one (21) years during the school term and who has not graduated from high school may continue to attend the public schools in his district free of charge until the end of the school term. If school officials believe

your child's IEP has been completed and your child is eligible for graduation, or if your child reached the age of 21, you will receive written notice of the termination. If you disagree with the notice, you may request an informal meeting with school officials, mediation, or a special education due process hearing.

Your Child's School Records

All parents are guaranteed the right to see their child's public school records without delay, within 45 days after asking for them, before any meeting regarding an **IEP**, or before a due process hearing. You may be charged for the copying of these records. Parents are also guaranteed the right to ask for and receive an explanation of any information in the records.

The law guarantees that your child's school records be kept confidential. No one should see those records who do not have an educational interest in your child. Someone has an educational interest in your child if that person teaches your child or otherwise is responsible for some aspect of your child's education. Records cannot be given to anyone outside the school system without your permission unless there is a legal reason for doing so. Your district must have a procedure for you to follow to correct the records that you feel are wrong or misleading.

Materials, Classrooms and School Buildings

Equipment and materials may be different for children with disabilities because of their individual needs, but they should be of the same quality as the equipment and materials that are purchased for students in general education classes. Each special education class must be as close as appropriate to the ebb and flow of usual school activities and located where noise will not interfere with instruction. It should be located only in a space that is designed for purposes of instruction, be readily accessible, and be composed of at least 28 square feet per student.

Discipline for the Student Receiving Special Education Services

Behavior sometimes results from a child's disability. When behavior caused by the disability results in the violation of school rules, inappropriate discipline by school officials is not permitted.

Programs to control or change behavior must be designed using positive approaches to help children correct or control their behavior. Positive approaches include recognizing and rewarding appropriate behaviors so that they will replace those behaviors that are inappropriate. They do not include punishing, embarrassing or isolating your child.

Discipline must not include use of mechanical restraints or physically restraining a child, except in an emergency situation where there is a danger that the child will be harmed or harm someone else. The use of restraints in those situations will trigger an IEP team meeting to review the current IEP to ensure it is appropriate and remains effective. Certain mechanical restraints, such as seat belts, can be used to help children control their movements if the parents agree and their use is made clear in the IEP.

None the following methods of punishment may be used with children:

- *Corporal punishment*
- *Punishment for behavior that is caused by the student's disability*
- *Locked rooms, locked boxes, or other locked structures or spaces from which the student cannot readily exit*
- *Noxious substances*
- *Deprivation of basic rights, such as withholding meals, water, or fresh air*

- *Treatment of a demeaning nature*
- *Electric shock*
- *Suspensions or removals from classes for disciplinary reasons that form a pattern. The following provides additional information with regard to these removals.*

There are special rules in Pennsylvania for excluding children receiving special education services for disciplinary reasons. Before a student is excluded from school for more than 10 school days in a row or 15 total school days in any one school year, the IEP team must meet and a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP) must be signed, because such exclusions are considered changes in placement. The exclusion of a child with mental retardation for any amount of time is considered a change of placement and requires all of the steps mentioned above. When a student is subjected to a series of removals that accumulate to more than 10 days in a year, but less than 15, these removals may be a change in placement, and if so require prior notice to the parents for approval. This determination of whether or not the series of removals is a change in placement is done on a case-by-case basis.

Factors such as the length of time of each removal, the total amount of time the child is removed, and the proximity of the removals to one another are used to determine if the series of removals is a change in placement. If you do not agree with the change in placement on the NOREP, your child remains in the existing placement until due process is complete. School officials may seek a court order to exclude your child from school to "override" your disapproval.

When a child's placement is changed for disciplinary reasons, the IEP team (including the parents) must meet to review the IEP to decide if it is appropriate and if it contains an appropriate plan that addresses the child's problem behaviors. If no plan is included in the IEP *a functional behavioral assessment* must be done and a behavior plan developed. A *functional behavioral assessment* reviews the child's behavior in the setting where the problems are occurring and analyzes what is happening to trigger and reinforce the inappropriate behaviors. The IEP team then outlines steps to take to reduce problem behaviors and replace them with appropriate ones. If a plan already exists, it must be reviewed and, if necessary, changed.

In addition, a "manifestation determination" must be conducted by the IEP team to decide if your child's behavior was caused by your child's disability or is a "manifestation" of the disability. In order to determine that a behavior was a manifestation of the disability, the team must decide that the conduct in question was caused by or had a direct relationship to your child's disability; or the conduct in question was the direct result of failure to implement your child's IEP. Children with disabilities cannot be disciplined for behaviors which are related to or are manifestations of their disabilities.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act allows school officials to change your child's placement for no more than 45 school days, without your permission, in school situations involving possession of a weapon, possession of a controlled substance, or serious bodily injury. In the new 45-day education placement (called an interim alternative educational setting), your child must be able to receive the services in the IEP and continue to demonstrate progress in the general education curriculum. The new placement must also offer services to deal with your child's problem behavior so it does not occur again.

Basic Rights for Parents

As a parent you have a right to be notified (sometimes called procedural safeguard) that service to protect the rights of your child who is a child with a disability or thought to be a child with a disability. Generally, the school has the duty to inform parents of these procedural safeguards:

1. Upon initial referral or parental request for evaluation;

2. With notice of a disciplinary change in placement;
3. Upon the first occurrence of filing for a due process hearing.

Additionally the law requires parents to be informed:

4. When the school proposes to change the identification, evaluation, educational placement, and the provision of a free appropriate public education or refuses your request to change the identification, evaluation, educational placement, or the provision of a free appropriate public education.
5. Of your child's progress toward annual IEP goals at least as often as progress is reported for students in general education.
6. Of the procedures to maintain the privacy of your child's educational needs. Your child's record will be seen only by those who need to work with your child. Your school district must show you its policy about the student records and confidentiality if requested. Detailed information on confidentiality will be described in the notice given you on those instances listed above.

WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH SCHOOL OFFICIALS ABOUT MY CHILD'S EDUCATION PROGRAM?

The "Due Process" Rights of Parents

If you do not believe your child's special education program is working, you should first talk to your child's teacher. If you wish to visit your child's classroom to observe your child's program, you must follow the school's visitation policy. You can also request an IEP meeting to discuss changing your child's program if you think a change is necessary. The IEP team may then decide that a reevaluation is needed to gather more information about your child. Anytime school officials suggest a reevaluation of your child or your child's program, you will be contacted in writing and given the opportunity to agree or disagree. You may request an **IEP** team meeting, a mediation session, or a due process hearing in order to resolve differences that you may have with school officials regarding your child's education.

The Bureau of Special Education has established ConsultLine, a toll-free information line for your questions and concerns: 1-800-879-2301. ConsultLine is designed to assist parents and advocates of children with disabilities or children thought to be disabled. If you have questions concerning your child's disability, special education program, or the laws relating to the provision of services in your child's IEP, the special education specialists at ConsultLine may be able to assist you.

Glossary of Special Education Terms

Assistive Technology Device (AT): A piece of equipment or product which is used to increase, maintain or improve the way a child with a disability interacts and communicates with the world around them. This

does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted or the replacement of such a device.

Assistive Technology Services: Services to help a child with a disability use an assistive technology device. These services include evaluating the needs of the child; providing the device; and then training the child, the child's family and the professionals who work with that child in the use of the device.

Chapter 14: The state law pertaining to the delivery of special education services and programs. It is called a regulation or sometimes called a rule

Child With a Disability: A child evaluated as having mental retardation, a hearing impairment including deafness, a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment including blindness, emotional disturbance, or orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, another health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who as a result of the disability needs special education and related services.

Curriculum Based Assessment (CBA): a type of ongoing assessment that monitors student performance against the curriculum, providing insights into student progress and the effectiveness of instruction

Due Process: The procedures that parents can use to disagree with the decisions of school district officials concerning special education. The parent is informed of this right by written notice, which describes the options of a pre-hearing conference, a preliminary resolution, a formal hearing, and appeals.

DIBELS - Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills: is a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of literacy skills

Evaluation: The process used to determine if a child has a disability and if special education is needed. The evaluation looks at how the child learns, the kinds of instruction that would be successful and the kinds of instruction that have been tried and have not resulted in success

Evaluation Report (ER): The report that is compiled and written by the evaluation team (which includes parents) following an evaluation. It describes all of the information gathered from the team members, including the results of assessment. From the report, the evaluation team determines the student's eligibility and need for special education programs.

Evaluation Team: A team of educators, other professional individuals, and the child's parents that reviews all formal testing of a child and all other evaluation material. The evaluation team must issue a written report stating if the child is a child with a disability who needs special education and making suggestions about the programs and services needed.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): A program of education and related services for a child with a disability that is designed to meet the child's special education needs. Appropriate services are those which allow the child to make meaningful progress in the educational setting. FAPE is provided without charge to parents.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA '04): The federal law which governs the provision of special education services and the rights of parents of a child with disabilities.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP): Your child's educational plan based upon the evaluation/re-evaluation report and recommendations including supports and services along with

specially designed instruction.

Local Education Agency (LEA): The local school district and/or organization financially responsible for your child's educational plan.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): Students who are eligible for special education will be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with students who are not disabled.

Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP): The form issued to parents to inform them of the placement recommended by the IEP team.

Parent: A natural parent, adoptive parent, surrogate parent, or foster parent who has been assigned educational decision-making rights. The term may also apply to an individual acting in the place of a natural or adoptive parent (including grandparent or other relative) with whom the child lives and who has educational decision-making rights, or an individual who is legally responsible for the child.

Related Services: Services necessary to provide specially designed instruction to ensure the child benefits from the special education programs. Examples are special transportation, counseling, school health services, and physical therapy.

Special Education: An educational program individually designed to meet the unique education needs for a child with a disability. A special education professional is directly involved as either a consultant or a provider of services.

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI): Adapting the content, methods, or delivery of the instruction as is appropriate based on the unique needs of the child with disability.

Transition Services: Specific planning in school that helps to prepare students with disabilities to participate more effectively in higher education or job training, community participation, independent living, continuing and adult education, and employment when they leave school.