



# **Special Education Informational Handouts for Parents**

# Table of Contents

## Response to Intervention (RtI)

What is RtI?

Part 1: Three-Tier Model of School Supports

Part 2: The Problem-Solving Method of Decision making

Part 3: Using Data to Inform Instruction

The Role of Parents in an RtI Process

## Parent Participation in Meetings

## Parent Involvement in the Referral Process

## Referral and Evaluation

## Evaluation and Reevaluation

- Additional Procedures for Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)
- Special Education Eligibility Considerations

## What Does It Mean?

### Evaluation and Reevaluation

### Special Education Eligibility Categories

### Additional Procedures for Specific Learning Disabilities

### Least Restrictive Environment

### Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

- Present Levels of Performance
- Annual Goals
- Progress toward Goals
- Special Education and Related Services
- Frequency, Location, and Duration of Services
- Extended School Year Services
- Participation in General Curriculum
- Transition
- Assistive Technology
- Revocation of Consent

### Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)

### Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIPs)

## Secondary Transition

### Discipline

- In School Suspension
- Out of School Suspension
- Manifestation Determination Review (MDR)
- Removal for Drugs, Weapons or Serious Bodily Injury

### Transfer of Rights at Age of Majority

# Response to Intervention (Rtl)

## **What is Rtl?**

Response to Intervention (Rtl) is a process designed to help schools focus on and provide high-quality instruction and interventions to students who may struggle with learning. An intervention is a specific type of instruction that is used to help with a specific type of problem. Interventions are matched to student needs. Student progress is monitored often to check the effectiveness of the instruction and interventions. The data collected on a student's progress are used to shape instruction and make educational decisions. Use of an Rtl process can help avoid a "wait to fail" situation because students get help promptly within the general education environment.

Rtl has three important parts: 1) using a three tier model of school supports, 2) using a problem-solving method for decision-making, and 3) using data to inform instruction.

## **Part 1: Three-Tier Model of School Supports**

Tier 1 is the foundation. This is the instruction that all students receive in the general education classroom with their general education teacher. Schools need to make sure that the materials and instructional practices they use are of high quality and have been shown by research to be effective (research-based). Instructional materials are designed and developed for a specific reason and it is important that the materials are used as they are intended.

Tier 2 interventions are provided with an increased level of intensity in addition to core instruction for small groups of students who show some risk of not meeting grade level standards. Tier 2 interventions usually involve additional practice and skill building. There are many different kinds of interventions and instruction that can happen in the classroom, outside the classroom, or in small group.

Tier 3 interventions are an even higher level of intensity from Tier 2 interventions and are also provided in addition to core instruction. Tier 3 interventions are typically provided to an individual student or perhaps two to three students at one time by a staff member. Interventions are tailored specifically to meet the needs of each student.

# The Three-Tier Model of School Supports

## Academic Systems

Tier 3: Individual Students/  
Very Small Group  
Assessment-based  
High Intensity

Tier 2: Some Students (at-risk)  
High Efficiency  
Rapid Response

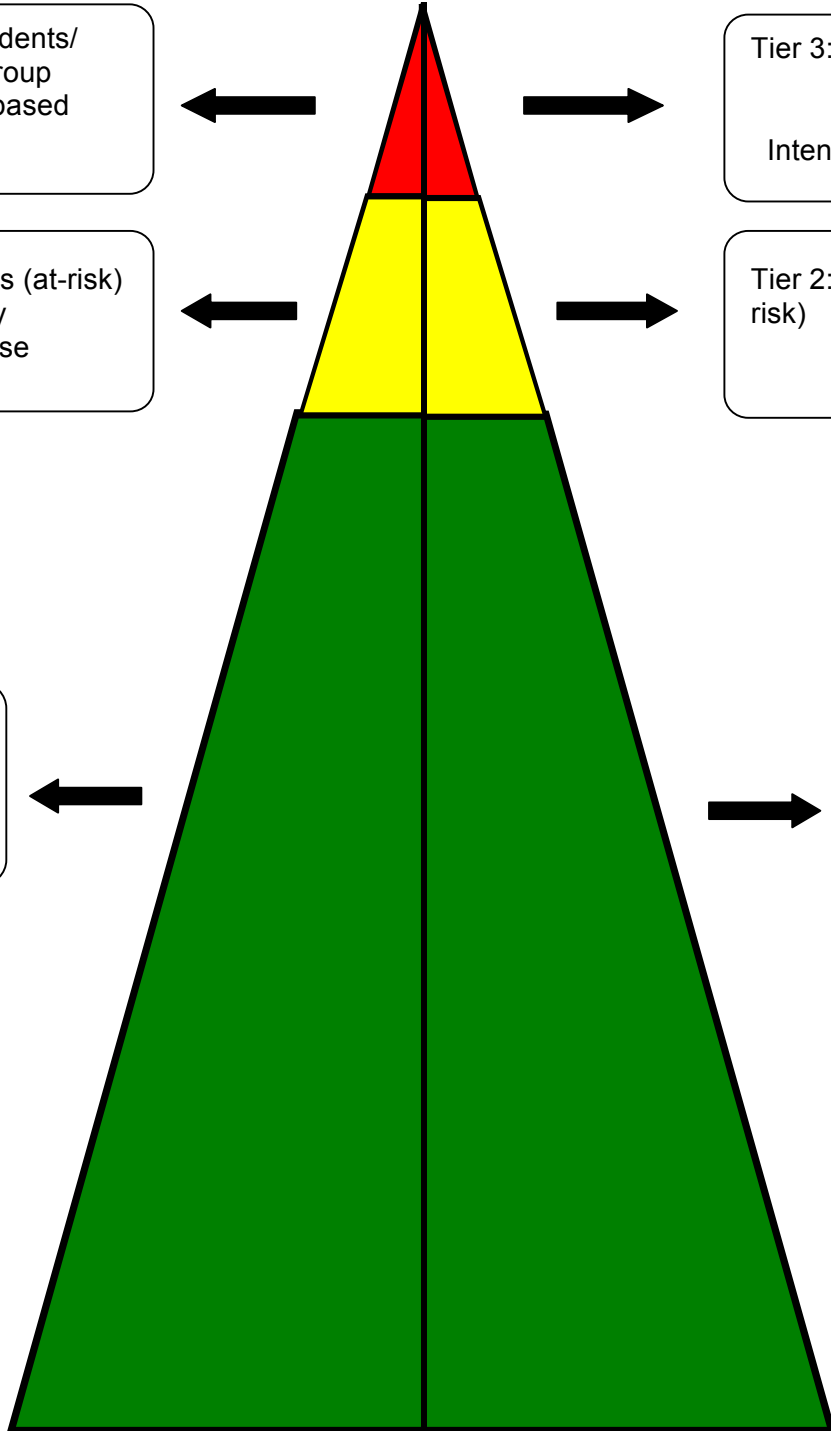
Tier 1:  
All Students  
Preventive  
Proactive

## Behavioral Systems

Tier 3: Individual Students/  
Very Small Group  
Assessment-based  
Intense, Durable Procedures

Tier 2: Some Students (at-risk)  
High Efficiency  
Rapid Response

Tier 1:  
All Students  
All Settings  
Preventive  
Proactive



## **Part 2: The Problem-Solving Method of Decision-Making**

In RtI, the problem-solving method is used to match instructional resources to educational need. The problem-solving method is as follows:

- Define the problem: Determine the gap or difference between what the student is expected to do and what the student is actually doing.
- Analyze the problem: Use information collected from a variety of sources, such as school work, tests, parents' input, etc. to determine why the student may be having problems with learning or behavior.
- Develop and implement a plan:
  - Set a goal that describes the expected improvement in the student's learning;
  - Choose the intervention(s) specific to the problem;
  - Identify how the student's progress will be monitored; and
  - Carry out the interventions and check to make sure they are being done correctly.
- Monitor Progress: Collect and use student data to determine if the intervention plan is working or if changes are needed.

## **Part 3: Using Data to Inform Instruction**

In an RtI model, as interventions get more intensive, student progress is monitored more often. Knowing if a student's performance is improving helps the team members plan for the student's learning. A small group of educators familiar with the student and the learning and behavioral expectations and the parent(s) of the student are members of the group that participate in the development and ongoing decision-making of the student's learning plan.

The information collected from the screening and progress monitoring materials are used to help the team answer the following questions about the student's learning:

- Is the student making progress?
- Are the current interventions helping the student learn in the identified problem area?
- Is the student making enough progress to close the gap in the identified area?
- If the interventions are no longer provided, is the student able to continue to make progress? If not, can the current interventions be continued with general education resources?

## The Role of Parents in an Rtl Process

Parents are important partners in all aspects of their child's education. In an Rtl process, school teams should involve parents from the beginning. Concerns about a student experiencing academic and/or behavioral difficulties are presented by the child's teacher to a building-level team. The building team consists of school staff who review available student information and collect additional information and collect additional information from the parents to gain a better understanding of the student's needs. As the process continues, parents should be active members of the team and participate in the problem-solving process.

If your child is identified as being at risk for learning or behavioral difficulties, to be involved you can:

- Attend team meetings. Remember, you are the expert regarding your child!
- Ask what interventions are being used for academic and/or behavioral problems.
- When possible, use the same strategies or interventions at home.
- Ask the school what formal guidelines they are using for progress monitoring.
- Ask your school to provide you with regular progress monitoring reports.
- Praise the child for any progress or general improvement in the area(s) of concern.
- When possible, make suggestions for strategies or interventions based on what you know works well at home.
- Always ask questions when things are not clear!

If you believe that your child is in need of special education services, you have the legal right to ask that the school evaluate your child to determine whether he or she is eligible to receive special education services. *You can ask the school to evaluate your child at any time, regardless of where your child is at in the Rtl process.*

## Parent Participation in Meetings

School districts are required to ensure parent participation in the discussions regarding their child's evaluation. School districts are also required to ensure parent participation in the meetings to determine eligibility and plan the child's IEP. This means that the local school district must contact parents in a timely manner to set a meeting time that is mutually convenient.

There are different types of meetings that are held for different reasons – evaluations, eligibility determination meetings, annual reviews to develop the IEP for the coming year, transition, change in placement, and others.

The following are some ideas parents can use to increase their involvement in school meetings.

### *Before the Meetings*

- Tell the school if you have difficulty speaking or understanding English or if you are deaf and could use an interpreter or translator to understand what is said at the meeting.
- Prepare a folder to take to the conference that contains: (a) your child's current IEP and progress report, (b) information you want to share about your child, (c) questions, (d) paper on which to take notes, and (e) any other information you want to discuss.
- Review your child's school records, reports, IEPs and any other information you have that will be helpful during the meeting. Ask your child about his/her concerns and suggestions, too.
- Request and review copies of any evaluations or draft goals that may be discussed at the meeting.
- Write down questions, concerns, and any suggestions you have regarding special education, related services, or placement.
- Prepare a statement about your child, including positive things that he/she can do. Sometimes your child is able to do certain tasks at home that have not yet been demonstrated at school.
- Plan to have your child attend the meeting to speak about what he/she likes about school and what he/she would like to learn. If 18 years of age or older, your child has the right to decide if he/she will attend, unless you have obtained legal guardianship.
- Invite other people to the meeting who might help you feel at ease or who have important information to share about your child. It often helps to have someone with you to take notes at the meeting, so that you can focus on the meeting itself. Let the school know whom you have invited.



### **During the Meetings**

- Introduce yourself and your child. Give your child a chance to talk about what is important to him/her. Make certain that you talk about your child's strengths and needs. You may want to read a prepared statement, mentioned above.
- Ask the other IEP team members to introduce themselves by name and job title. You have the right to ask that any person present who was not listed on the school district's meeting notice be excused from the meeting. *Please note that the district does not have to honor this request if the person is relevant to the discussion.*
- Maintain a positive attitude.
- Try to stay focused.
- Take notes on discussions, recommendations, follow-up items, and scheduled dates/appointments.
- Ask school personnel to explain terms, language, or statements that are unclear.
- Set a regular time to contact the teacher to discuss your child's progress.
- Ask to schedule an additional meeting if your questions and concerns cannot be answered in one meeting.

### **After the Meetings**

- Follow through on any commitments you made during the meeting.
- Add documents from the meeting to your files.
- Contact the teacher periodically to see how the program is going.
- If you are not in agreement with what occurred at the IEP meeting, be certain to write a statement of disagreement to be attached to the IEP.

## Parent Involvement in the Referral Process

Parents and school personnel should establish a positive relationship with shared goals and a common understanding of the child's needs at home, at school, and in the community. It is essential that parents and school work cooperatively together to improve student performance. Below you will find some tips to help you with parent involvement.

### Be an active participant in your child's education:

- Inform yourself about what help is available in or through your child's school.
- Talk to other parents, teachers, doctors, and community providers.
- Find resources like the ISTAC Parents, Parent Mentors, ISBE Parent Training, Information Centers (PTIs) and Equip for Equality's Special Education Clinic.
- Be able to talk about your child's strengths and needs.
- Learn about your child's legal rights.
- Participate in the meetings that look at information to decide if your child is eligible to receive special education services.
- Attend and be prepared to participate in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. Parents are key decision makers and an equal member of the IEP team.
- Ask questions if you do not understand terms, language, or other things that happen during your child's meeting(s).
- Call, email, or request a meeting if you are worried about how your child is doing at school.

### In addition:

- Share letters, reports, or other materials that can help the school understand your child and provide appropriate services to your child. This information could be from teachers, doctors, or community agencies. Be sure to keep a copy of these items for your records.
- Start a file or log in which you write important dates and milestones of your child's learning. This will also be a good place to record the results of important conversations and meetings you have had with teachers and others regarding your child's progress. A binder works great!
- Send emails or letters confirming important conversations regarding your child and/or promises made with respect to what the school will or will not do.
- Always put in writing any important requests to the school, including requests for an evaluation (as well as requests for IEP meetings and records).
- Keep a copy of all letters that you send.
- Whenever possible send your correspondence by certified mail, return receipt requested to assure delivery of the letter, or hand carry that letter and request a receipt.
- Keep printed copies of important e-mail messages to or from the school.
- Keep all papers and letters from the school that you feel are important such as IEPs, samples of your child's work, and notices regarding the dates of meetings. Keep these documents in your file.
- Develop an ongoing working relationship with those persons who are responsible for providing services to your child. Get to know the names and responsibilities of all those working with your child.
- Communicate positive information as well as concerns.

# Referral and Evaluation

## Definitions

A “referral” in the context of special education services is a process asking the school district to evaluate a student to decide if the student qualifies to receive special education services. A referral can be made either by the school district (through a teacher or other school personnel involved in the student’s education) or by a parent or guardian. The referral is a required first step before an evaluation can take place.

The “date of referral” is the date of written parental consent for an evaluation. Screening procedures shall not be considered an evaluation.

Within 14 school days after receiving the written request, the district will decide whether to evaluate the child or not. If the district determines an evaluation is warranted, then the district must provide the parents with the paperwork to provide formal written consent.

If the district determines that the evaluation is not necessary, it must notify the parent in writing of the decision not to evaluate and the reasons for the decision.

The district must advise the parents of their right to request a due process hearing to challenge its decision.

Parents need to submit a request for evaluation to have their child considered to be eligible for special education services. It is best to put your request in writing.

Not all referrals result in an evaluation being conducted.

To be eligible to receive special education services, the child must have a disability that impacts educational performance.

## Evaluation and Reevaluation

Evaluation is defined in regulations as procedures used to determine whether a child has a disability and the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs.

The school district must access the child in all areas of suspected disability including:

- Academic performance
- Health
- Vision
- Hearing
- Social & emotional status
- Communication
- Motor abilities
- General intelligence
- Functional performance
- Other areas as needed

The areas listed above are often referred to as “domains”.

Assessments are provided and administered in the child’s native language or mode of communication to get accurate information on what the child knows and can do.

The school district must use a variety of assessments, tools, and strategies to conduct the evaluation.

When conducting an initial evaluation, a child must be tested in all areas of suspected disability.

Data gathered from evaluations are used to assist in the development of the IEP.

Assessments should be valid and reliable for their designed purposes.

Assessments must be administered by personnel who are trained to do so.

Assessments and other evaluation materials used should be administered:

- So as not to be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis, and
- In the child’s native language or other mode of communication

Parent written informed consent must be obtained before the evaluation can be conducted.

Information from parents should be included as part of the evaluation.

Information should be collected through a variety of approaches (observations, interviews, tests, curriculum-based assessment, and so on) and from a variety of sources (parents, teachers, specialists, peers, and the child).

Parents should be given a copy of the conference report and recommendations.

Parents should be informed of their right to obtain an independent educational evaluation (IEE) at district expense if they disagree with the evaluation findings.

The evaluations should yield information on what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally.

This applies when evaluating all children including those:

- For whom English is not the native language;
- Who communicate by signing;
- Who use alternative augmentative communication; and
- Who use other means to communicate.

Please note the following:

- IDEA prohibits basing eligibility determination or special education programming upon the results of only one test, measure, or assessment procedure. A variety of tools must be used.
- As a parent, you can agree or disagree to any or all of the testing.
- Think about what the child knows and can do. Examine how the child learns and demonstrates knowledge.
- It is not enough to conduct a thorough examination of what a child cannot do when making decisions about educational programming.

### **The Big Picture: Reevaluations**

Reevaluations must occur at least once every 3 years, unless the parent and the school district agree that a reevaluation is unnecessary based on the existing information on the student. If the district believes that a reevaluation is unnecessary, a parent still has the right to request that the reevaluation go forward.

## Additional Procedure for Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)

Schools in Illinois shall implement the use of a process that determines how the child responds to scientific-research-base interventions as part of the evaluation procedure.

**SLD** may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to:

- Listen
- Think
- Speak
- Read
- Write
- Spell
- Do mathematical calculations

**SLD** can include conditions such as

- Perceptual disabilities
- Brain injury
- Minimal brain dysfunction
- Dyslexia
- Developmental aphasia

**SLD** does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of:

- Visual, hearing, or motor disabilities
- Mental retardation
- Emotional disturbance
- Environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage

IEP teams cannot determine that a child has an **SLD** if the child's learning problems primarily result from:

- Lack of appropriate instruction in reading
- Lack of appropriate instruction in math
- Limited English proficiency

## Special Education Eligibility Considerations

Within a scientific, research-based intervention process, such as RtI, school teams are able to use student progress data collected at each tier to document a student's response to scientific, research-based interventions as part of the special education evaluation process. Evaluation to determine special education eligibility may occur at any tier, although it typically occurs within Tier 3 when a student either:

- *Does not respond to the most intensive interventions*  
or
- *Responds to the interventions but is not able to maintain his/her performance if the intensity level is decreased or the interventions are faded.*

It is also important to note that a parent may request a special education evaluation at any point during the intervention process. The use of the RtI process cannot delay the evaluation, if needed. The district must fully consider the parents' request and decide whether or not to conduct the evaluation. The district must notify the parents in writing of its decision.

State special education regulations require that school districts must use an RtI process as part of the special education evaluation process when a specific learning disability (SLD) is suspected. After using an RtI process for this purpose, a district may also, but is not required to, use a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement as part of the evaluation process for determining whether a child has a SLD. However, they will not be able use severe discrepancy alone to determine eligibility.



## Evaluation and Reevaluation

Assessments must be administered by personnel who are trained to do so.

Assessments and other evaluation materials used should be administered:

- So as not to be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis, and
- In the child's native language or other mode of communication.

### What does it Mean?

Evaluation means procedures used to determine whether a child has a disability and the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs.

The school district must assess the child in all areas of suspected disability including:

- Academic Performance
- Health
- Vision
- Hearing
- Social and emotional status
- Communication
- Motor abilities
- General intelligence
- Functional performance
- Other areas as needed.

NOTE: Often these areas are called "domains" for purposes of the evaluation.

Public agencies are prohibited from using a measure or assessment for purposes different from the purpose for which the measure was designed.

Assessments are provided and administered in the child's native language or mode of communication (unless it is not feasible to do so) to get accurate information on what the child knows and can do.

### What Needs to Happen?

The school district must use a variety of assessments, tools, and strategies to conduct the evaluation.

When conducting an initial evaluation, a child must be tested in all areas of suspected disability.

Data gathered from evaluations are used to assist in the development of the IEP.

Assessments should be valid and reliable for their designed purposes.

### What Parents Need to Know or Do

Parent written informed consent must be obtained before the evaluation can be conducted.

Information from parents should be included as part of the evaluation.

Information should be collected through a variety of approaches (observations, interviews, tests, curriculum-based assessment, and so on) and from a variety of sources (parents, teachers, specialists, peers, and the child).

Parents should be given a copy of the conference report and recommendations.

Parents should be informed of their right to obtain an independent educational evaluation (IEE) at district expense if they disagree with the evaluation findings.

The evaluation should yield information on what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally.

This applies when evaluating all children including those:

- For whom English is not the native language;
- Who communicates by signing; and
- Who use alternative augmentative communication; and
- How to use other means to communicate.

## Special Education Eligibility Categories

### What Does it Mean?

A group of qualified professionals and the parents look at the child's evaluation results. Together, they decide if the child is a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEA.

If the child is found to be a "child with a disability," as defined by IDEA, he or she is eligible for special education and related services.

Within 30 calendar days after a child is determined eligible, the IEP Team must meet to write an IEP for the child.

### What Needs to Happen?

In order for the child to receive special education and related services, the child must be identified as eligible under one of these categories:

- Autism
- Cognitive Disability
- Deaf-blindness
- Deafness
- Developmental Delay
- Emotional Disability
- Hearing Impairment
- Multiple Disabilities
- Other Health Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech/Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment

### What Parents Need to Know or Do

There are hundreds of terms and words we use to describe our children. Do not let the category names discourage you.

An evaluation must be conducted to determine if your child is eligible to receive special education and/or related services.

You need to give written consent before your child can be evaluated.

The school cannot test or help your child until you have returned the signed papers.

You may ask for a hearing to challenge the eligibility decision.

Evaluations are done by school staff, or where necessary, consultants or specialists retained by the school district, but you can bring your own information from doctors, tutors, or others who work with your child.

## Additional Procedures for Specific Learning Disabilities

### What Does it Mean?

There are additional requirements for identifying children with specific learning disabilities (SLD).

### What Needs to Happen?

Districts **must** use a scientific, research-based process for identifying children with specific learning disabilities (SLD).

**In addition** to using a scientific, research-based process for evaluation, districts **may** use a severe discrepancy\* model (between intellectual ability and achievement) for determining whether a child has a specific learning disability.

### What Parents Need to Know or Do

Districts **cannot** deny a parent's request for an evaluation because the child is being monitored by a scientific, research-based process.

Districts **must** use scientific, research-based interventions as part of the process for determining eligibility for services under the category of specific learning disabilities (SLD). They **may** choose to use a severe discrepancy\* model as well.

Without written parental consent, an evaluation may not be completed.

\*Severe discrepancy typically means a large or significant difference in ability and achievement. Children who are of average intelligence are expected to perform at that level of ability. When they don't, they may be referred for a full evaluation to see what is causing the discrepancy.

Under the model of evaluation, children may struggle and even fail for several years before the discrepancy between ability and achievement is large enough to be judged significant.

## Least Restrictive Environment

### What Does it Mean?

Students with disabilities must be educated with children who do not have disabilities as much as possible.

Education placement decisions are made based on the student's needs and may include the following locations (this is not an exhaustive list):

- General education
- Resource room (Special class)
- Self-contained room (Special classes)
- Separate day school (Special Schools)
- Residential program (Special Schools)
- Hospital/homebound program.

### What Needs to Happen?

Students with disabilities should be removed from general education classes to separate classes or special schools only if the disability is so severe that education in general education classes with supplementary aids and services is not satisfactory.

Placement decisions are made by a group of persons, including the parents, who are knowledgeable about:

- the student
- the meaning of the evaluation data
- the placement options

### What Parents Need to Know or Do

Decide what educational supports the student needs.

The first step when talking about placement is to adjust or modify the student's education program or provide extra supports, that way the student can continue to learn alongside the rest of the students.

# Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

## **Present Levels of Performance**

### **What does it Mean?**

Describes how the student is doing in different areas and how he/she uses what they've learned throughout the year.

### **What Needs to Happen?**

The IEP needs to say two (2) things in this section:

- How the child's disability affects his or her participation in the general education curriculum.
- How the child performs in academic and nonacademic settings.

### **What Parents Need to Know or Do**

Share the child's interests and activities and how the child's disability may affect those things.

## **Annual Goals**

### **What Does it Mean?**

A goal is something that can be obtained within a school year.

A goal must be measurable.

Instructional recommendations should be supported by performance data that established the need.

### **What Needs to Happen?**

Each goal will list:

- the steps needed to achieve the goal by the end of the year
- the way it will be measured
- who will be responsible for working on the goal
- how progress will be reported to parents

### **What Parents Need to Know or Do**

Special education services should be based on data, not opinion.

Data should form the basis for instruction and the goals should be written to allow access to the general curriculum and other activities during or after school.

## **Progress toward Goals**

### **What Does it Mean?**

The child's progress must be measured.

### **What Needs to Happen?**

The IEP will include how the school will measure the progress and when the reports of progress will be issued.

### **What Parents Need to Know or Do**

You should know when you will receive information about your child's progress. Make sure the measurement is clear enough so that you know whether your child is being successful or not.

## **Special Education and Related Services**

### **What Does it Mean?**

The IEP must include special education and related services and other supports and services for the student to:

- advance toward annual goals;
- progress in the general curriculum;
- participate in extracurricular and nonacademic activities; and
- be educated and participate with all children.

### **What Needs to Happen?**

The IEP team will decide which special education services and which related services, modifications, accommodations and other services, the student needs to be part of the general curriculum and other activities. As much as possible, the services should be research-based.

The IEP team will decide what supports the parents, educators and paraprofessionals need to address the student's educational needs.

### **What Parents Need to Know or Do**

The IEP team decides what services and supports your child receives. Your child has a right to be educated and participate with all children in the least restrictive environment.

## **Frequency, Location, and Duration of Services**

### **What Does it Mean?**

Each of the services the student needs should be written in the IEP. This is the "what, when, where, and for how long" part of the IEP.

### **What Needs to Happen?**

The IEP should say:

- how long or how often each session will last (the number of minutes)
- where the services will be provided
- when the services will begin and end

### **What Parents Need to Know or Do**

Know the number of minutes in each session.

Know if the services will be provided in the general education classroom or another setting (a resource room, a therapy room).

Know the starting and ending dates of the student's services.

## **Extended School Year Services**

### **What Does it Mean?**

Extended school year services (ESY) means special education and related services provided to a student with a disability that are:

- beyond the normal school day/year
- stated in the student's IEP
- no cost to the parents of the student

### **What Needs to Happen?**

The IEP team determines ESY services.

Schools must ensure that ESY services are available if necessary to provide a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE).

The decision about what services will be provided should be individually based on the needs of the student.

Loss of knowledge/skills or an extraordinarily long time in relearning skills (regression/recoupment) can be part of but not the only reason for determining ESY.

### **What Parents Need to Know or Do**

ESY services may not be limited to particular categories of disability.

Schools must determine the type, amount, and duration of services on an individual basis.

No single factor can determine ESY.

Discuss the student's loss of skills during breaks.

Look at the amount of time it takes for the student to regain skills after breaks.

Keep information that shows your child's progress, or lack of it, after returning to school from breaks.

ESY services:

- may not be the same as regular school year services;
- may be just related services such as speech therapy or physical therapy; and
- can be provided in school, home, or community setting.

## **Participation In General Curriculum**

### **What Does it Mean?**

The IEP must explain how the child's disability affects his/her participation in the general education setting and other school activities.

If the district proposes to remove the child from any part of the general education curriculum, the district must explain why in the IEP.

### **What Needs to Happen?**

The IEP team will decide when the student will be in a general education classroom and when they won't.

The IEP team will decide what modifications are needed for the student to succeed in general education classes.



## **What Parents Need to Know or Do**

Understand why and how much your child will be participating in general education classes.

Think of accommodations and modifications that might allow your child to be successful (both academically and socially) in the general education classroom.

Think about the opportunities for your child in extracurricular and nonacademic activities such as lunch, recess, P. E., art, music, and after-school clubs and activities.

## **Transition**

### **What Does it Mean?**

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities that focuses on improving academic and skill achievement to prepare for life after school.

Goals should include the need for:

- training
- education
- employment
- independent living, where appropriate

Transition services may include academic instruction, related services, post-secondary education, vocational training, supported employment, community experiences, daily living skills and work evaluation.

### **What Needs to Happen?**

For students who will reach the age of 14 ½ during the school year, the IEP must document a statement of transition service needs that focuses on the student's course of study and goals to address those needs.

Transition goals must be part of the IEP and reviewed every year until the student is out of school.

Plans must include student's strengths, preferences, and interests.

Goals must be measurable.

A statement of who will provide the services the student needs to meet their transition goals.

Student must be invited to the IEP meeting.

The district must consider the student's interests and preferences if the student does not attend.

## **What Parents Need to Know or Do**

Think about what your child needs to learn to help them be successful after graduation.

Help students explore work and career options while still in high school.

Decide what skills the young person needs to live and work in the community after high school.

Make connections with education and training programs, colleges, agencies, and support services.

Help select classes and services that will help the child be successful in his or her adult life.

Learn what agencies provide services to adults with disabilities in your community and invite them to your child's IEP.

## **Assistive Technology**

### **What Does it Mean?**

Assistive Technology is technology used by individuals with disabilities in order to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible.

The term "assistive technology" encompasses a broad range of devices from "low tech" (e.g., pencil grips, splints, paper stabilizers) to "high tech" (e.g., computers, voice synthesizers, Braille readers).

These devices include the entire range of supportive tools and equipment from adapted spoons to wheelchairs and computer systems for environmental control.

### **What Needs to Happen?**

Consideration should be given to the needs of the student for assistive technology devices and services.

The IEP team must decide if the student needs assistive technology devices and services in order to receive a Free, Appropriate, Public Education (FAPE).

### **What Parents Need to Know or Do**

Tell the IEP team about the things that might help the student in school, at home, or in the community.

Share concerns that you have for your child's ability to do things and ask if there is any type of assistive technology that might provide support.

## **Revocation of Consent**

### **What Does it Mean?**

A parent may revoke consent for the district to provide special education services at any time after the initial consent for services has been provided. Revocation may be provided orally or in writing.

### **What Needs to Happen?**

After the parent has revoked consent, the district must terminate all special education services to the student once the district has provided prior written notice to the parent that services will be terminated.

### **What Parents Need to Know or Do**

In most cases, all protections and rights given to parents of students with disabilities will be terminated along with the termination of special education services.

School districts may not use procedures such as due process or mediation to dispute the parent's decision to revoke consent.

If the parent changes his/her mind after revoking consent and after the district has provided prior written notice for terminating services, the district will need to evaluate the student's eligibility for special education again.

*If the parent disagrees with the services being provided to the student but does not disagree with the student's special education eligibility, the parent should initiate a complaint or request due process, rather than revoke consent.*

# Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)

## What Does it Mean?

The Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) is a process to improve understanding of problem behavior in order to identify what skills need to be taught, and to develop a better behavior plan. The process includes observation, interviews and data collection to identify when, where, and why the behavior is occurring.

## What Needs to Happen?

The FBA is used to answer the question “what function does this behavior have for the student?” The answer to that question is either to get something (such as attention, rewards, sensory stimulation) or to avoid or escape something (such as a difficult task, anxiety, boredom).

Identifying the function guides the development of a plan which can help the school teach missing skills and make changes so that the need for the behavior no longer exists.

A good FBA should include a hypothesis about the function of the behavior, based on the following information:

- An objective description of the behavior
- The places or situations where the behavior happens
- The places or situations where the behavior does not happen
- Events that happen just before the behavior
- Events that happen just after the behavior
- Additional information, including the student’s health, medication, and strengths

## What Parents Need to Know or Do

Learn about Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs)

If you want to request a FBA, please do so in writing. It is also best to have someone at the school sign and date a copy of the letter or send it certified mail, return receipt requested.

Come to the meeting prepared to share information/concerns regarding the child’s behaviors at home.

## Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIPs)

### What Does it Mean?

If a child's behavior gets in the way of his/her learning or the learning of other students, then the IEP team should consider the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports.

### What Needs to Happen?

Some students may need a behavioral intervention plan included in the IEP.

The IEP of a student who requires a behavioral intervention plan (BIP) shall:

- summarize the findings of the functional behavioral assessment;
- summarize prior interventions implemented;
- describe any behavioral interventions to be used, including those aimed at developing or strengthening alternative or more appropriate behaviors;
- identify the measurable behavioral changes expected and methods of evaluation;
- identify a schedule for a review of the interventions' effectiveness; and
- identify provisions for communicating with the parents about their child's behavior and coordinating school-based and home-based interventions.

### What Parents Need to Know or Do

Learn about Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs).

A positive behavior intervention plan (BIP) is not a plan to discipline or punish but is a plan that is used to teach or reinforce positive behaviors.

Ask for a BIP before your child gets into serious trouble.

A BIP also details what the school staff should do to help the students be successful.

Students are more successful when the same things happen at home and at school.

Come to the meeting prepared to share information/concerns regarding the child's behavior at home.

## Secondary Transition

### What Does it Mean?

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities, services, experiences and instruction. Transition services should assist the student in moving from school to adult life activities including post-secondary education, vocational training, employment, adult education, adult services, and independent living.

Students with disabilities who require continuing education experiences (e.g., transition services) to make a successful transition from school to adult life are eligible to continue through age 21 inclusive (until the day before his/her 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday).

Students who have graduated with a regular diploma are not eligible to continue to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE).

Students with disabilities who have fulfilled the minimum State graduation requirements are eligible to receive a regular education diploma.

### What Needs to Happen?

The transition plan must include:

- Appropriate, measurable post-secondary goals based upon age-appropriate assessments related to education, training, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills.
- Transition services that are needed to assist the child in reaching those goals, including courses of study and any other needed services to be provided by entities other than the school district.

The school district must provide the student with a copy of the Delegation of Rights at the IEP meeting in the year during which the student turns 17 years of age. The student can end the Delegate of Rights at any time, otherwise it will be in effect for one year after the date of completing.

At least one year before a student is to receive a regular high school diploma, the school district must send both the parent and student written notice that a diploma will be issued. The notice must explain that eligibility for special education services ends after the student receives the diploma. The notice should also explain that the parent or the student may request an IEP meeting to review the school district's recommendations.

Students with disabilities can participate in graduation ceremonies while maintaining their rights to continued eligibility for special education services.

The IEP Team must consider this section of the transition plan for students who have developmental disabilities. The IEP team should assist families in making a connection or linkage with their local Pre-Admission and Screening (PAS) Agency to first complete the "PUNS" (Prioritization of Unmet Needs data system) survey and an application packet that will be submitted to the Department of Human Services Division of Developmental Disabilities. The survey can be found at <http://www.dd.illinois.gov/LocalAgency.cfm> or you may call 1-888-DD-PLANS or 1-866-376-8446 (TTY).

### **What Parents Need to Know or Do**

The student and his/her parents/guardians actively share their vision for life as an adult in the areas of employment, post-secondary education, community participation including recreation and health care, and independent living options such as an apartment, a dormitory, or a supported living arrangement.

Parents, families, and guardians can assist in transition planning with the IEP Team by helping find the answers to questions about the student, including: long-range employment and life goals, interests and talents, learning styles, positive personality traits, achievements, social skills, work experiences (paid and unpaid) and where he/she might like to work, needs for accommodations and support, and options after high school (college, trade school, military, work, living arrangements, recreation, healthcare, etc).

# Discipline

## **In School Suspension**

### **What Does it Mean?**

When a student with an IEP receives an in-school suspension, he or she is removed from class for a specific number of days as a result of breaking school rules. The student is in the school building, but not attending classes.

### **What Needs to Happen?**

The school must notify the parents immediately, and provide the parents with a full statement of the reasons for the suspension, and their right to a review of the decision.

### **What Parents Need to Know or Do**

Often, an in-school suspension will include doing school work, without being in the classroom.

During the time the student with an IEP is in in-school suspension, the school is only required to provide educational services if the school district also provides educational services to non-disabled students in the same circumstances.

## **Out of School Suspension**

### **What Does it Mean?**

When a student with an IEP receives out-of-school suspension, he or she is removed from school for not more than 10 consecutive school days as a result of breaking school rules.

A student may receive additional suspensions of not more than 10 consecutive school days in the same school year for separate incidents of misconduct.

### **What Needs to Happen?**

The school must notify the parents immediately, and provide the parents with a full statement of the reasons for the suspension, and their right to a review of the decision. It's important for parents to understand why their child was suspended.

You have the right to request a review of the decision to suspend your child.

After a student with an IEP has been removed from his or her current placement for 10 school days in the same school year, the district must provide educational services during any additional suspensions, even if in another setting.

### **What Parents Need to Know or Do**

Additionally, if the student is suspended for more than 10 school days in the same school year, the district is required to hold an IEP team meeting to review the student's behavioral intervention plan. If the student's IEP does not have a behavioral intervention plan, then one must be developed.

Make sure your child received the services they need.

Think of ways to assist the school in preventing your child from being suspended again.



## Manifestation Determination Review(MDR)

### What Does it Mean?

A meeting of the district, parent, and relevant members of the IEP team to decide if a student's behavior is a symptom of the disability.

### What Needs to Happen?

If the student is removed for more than 10 consecutive school days, or if a series of removals totals more than 10 days in a school year, the MDR meeting needs to be held to decide if the student's behavior is a symptom of the disability.

To make the decision, the district, parents, and IEP team must look carefully at relevant information including:

- the IEP
- information from the parents
- observations of the student
- new or existing evaluation results

The team decides that behavior **IS** a manifestation of the disability if:

- the behavior was caused by the disability, or had a direct and substantial relationship to the disability, **OR**
- the behavior was a result of the school's failure to follow the IEP.

### What Parents Need to Know or Do

If the behavior **IS** a manifestation of the disability, then the team must do a functional behavioral assessment and develop a behavioral intervention plan. If a BIP already exists, the team must review it and make changes, if needed.

Your child cannot be removed from his/her current placement unless you agree.

However, if the incident involves a weapon or an illegal drug, the school district can still remove your child from the current placement, even if you disagree and even if the behavior is a manifestation of your child's disability.

If the behavior is **NOT** a manifestation of the disability, the student can be disciplined as any other student would be, **BUT** the school must continue to provide educational services. During this time, your child needs to continue to make progress on his/her IEP goals and to participate in the general education curriculum.

## Removal for Drugs, Weapons or Serious Bodily Injury

### What Does It Mean?

There are three (3) situations where a district can remove a student from their current placement for not more than 45 school days, regardless of whether the behavior is a manifestation of the disability:

- If the student brought a weapon to school or to a school function; or if the student possessed a weapon at school or at a school function.
- If the student knowingly has, uses, sells or tries to buy illegal or controlled substances at school or at a school function.
- If the student inflicted serious bodily injury on another person at school or a school function.

### **What Needs to Happen?**

The district will call the police, and can move the student to an Interim Alternative Educational Setting for not more than 45 school days.

The student's IEP team decides on the interim alternative educational setting.

### **What Parents Need to Know or Do**

A parent who disagrees with the change in placement has the right to request an expedited due process hearing.

## Transfer of Rights at Age of Majority

### What Does it Mean?

The rights and responsibilities for special education services that are given to parents will belong to the student at age 18.

In addition, the district must inform the parents and student of the student's right to delegate decision-making to another adult individual.

At least one year before turning 18, the parents and the student will receive notices in writing from the school about the change.

### What Needs to Happen?

The district must document that the parents and the student received the notice and were told about the transfer of rights.

The school must provide the student with a copy of the Delegation of Rights form.

### What Parents Need to Know or Do

At age 18, your child is now considered an adult and the rights you had are transferred or given to them.

The Delegation of Rights:

- may be terminated by your child at any time
- will remain in effect for one year
- must be signed by the student and the designee
- can be renewed each year

The school must use the ISBE form or one that is almost the same.

Prepare for transition by talking to your child early so that you can create a meaningful plan that reflects his/her preferences.