



TIPS ON GETTING A SPECIAL EDUCATION EVALUATION FOR YOUR CHILD

For Philadelphia Parents

IMPORTANT: ELC's publications are intended to give you a general idea of the law. However, each situation is different. If, after reading our publications, you have questions about how the law applies to your particular situation, contact us for a referral, or contact an attorney of your choice.

- ✓ The purpose of a special education evaluation is to find out whether your child has a disability (such as a learning disability, an emotional disturbance, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), mental retardation, a health impairment or other condition) that causes her to need a special type of instruction.
- ✓ Before asking for a special education evaluation, you may want to talk with school staff about other help that might be available. Sometimes, a change of reading group, more frequent parent-teacher meetings, time with a tutor, a prescription for glasses, or some other step that does *not* involve special education will solve the problem.
- ✓ All Philadelphia schools offer the Comprehensive Student Assistance Program ("CSAP"). CSAP can provide classroom-based and individualized help to get a student back on track without the need for formal evaluation for special education. Or a family can ask for a special education evaluation and also use the CSAP process - if CSAP works and the student's behavior or academic performance improves, the family can withdraw its evaluation request.

However, the District can't require a family to use the CSAP process before asking for a special education evaluation. For more information on CSAP, see <http://www.phila.k12.pa.us/offices/oss/servicesupport/csap.html>.

- ✓ If you've tried the CSAP process, or if you are sure that an evaluation for special education is needed:
 - Send or deliver a *letter* to the principal, stating clearly that you want your child evaluated for special education. Keep a copy.
 - Once the principal has received your letter, ask her (or ask the counselor) to allow you to sign a Permission to Evaluate form so that the evaluation can take place. Remember, the timeline for the District to evaluate your child does not begin to run until you have signed this form. Read the forms before you sign them so that you will understand how the District is planning to evaluate the child. Remember that you are part of the evaluation team and share whatever information, reports, and insights about your child's academic, functional, or behavioral problems and what you think is needed.
 - For a child age six or older, the school has *60 school days* from the date you sign the permission forms to do the evaluation and give you a written report. ("School days" means that only days when school is in session are counted.)
 - For a child between the ages of three and five, the rules are the same, except that the time limit for completing the evaluation and giving you the report is 60 *calendar* days.
- ✓ If the evaluation process does not seem to be moving forward, *talk again* with your child's counselor or principal. You can also contact the Regional Office for your school. If your school is in the "education management organization" or EMO region, you should contact Glenna Hazeltine, Administrator of Compliance for the EMO region schools, at 215-299-3652 or 215-979-5604 (her direct line).

- ✓ If you do not receive the evaluation report within the required time period, or if it seems clear that the deadline will not be met, you can *file a complaint* with the state of Pennsylvania. Call 800-879-2301 or write to the Division of Compliance, Monitoring and Planning, Pennsylvania Department of Education, 333 Market St., Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333. For more information, you can call the Division of Compliance, and you can check out ELC's website at the address listed below.

- ✓ Once the evaluation is complete, there are some further steps in the special education process. The Education Law Center publishes *The Right to Special Education in Pennsylvania: A Guide for Parents* and many fact sheets that discuss special education evaluations, how "Individualized Education Programs" (IEPs) are developed, how to resolve special education disputes, and more. All ELC's publications can be obtained from our website or by calling the telephone numbers listed below.

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