

NJ Department of Education, Office of Special Education

If you are concerned about a preschool child or student (age three through twenty-one) who may be developing or learning differently, you can call the school district in which the child resides. District phone numbers and addresses are available at <http://www.state.nj.us/nided/directory> or 1-800-322-8174

To the maximum extent appropriate, preschoolers and students with disabilities are educated with their typically developing peers. Placement in a typical classroom is the first consideration. For a preschool child this may be a school district general education preschool program or a nonsectarian early childhood program licensed or approved by a governmental agency. For further information: <http://www.nj.gov/njded/specialed>

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Process</i>
<i>Referral</i>	A referral is a written request for an evaluation that is given to the school district when it seems possible that a child may have a disability and might need special education and related services. Parents, school personnel and agencies concerned with the welfare of students may make a referral to the school district the student resides.
<i>Identification Meeting</i>	Within 20 calendar days of receiving a referral, the school district must hold a meeting to decide whether an evaluation will be conducted. If the school district decides to conduct an evaluation the group will select the types of testing and other procedures that will be used to determine if the child needs special education services.
<i>Evaluation</i>	An evaluation is the process used to determine whether a child is eligible for special education and related services. The process includes a review of any relevant data, and the individual administration of any tests, assessments and observations of the child. At least two child study team members must participate in the initial evaluation along with any other specialists whose observations are necessary for a meaningful assessment of the child's needs.
<i>Eligibility</i>	<p>When the evaluation is completed, the school district holds a collaborative meeting to determine if the child is eligible for special education and related services. Prior to the meeting, the school district must give the parent a copy of the evaluation reports(s) and other documents and information that will be used to determine the child's eligibility. The parent must receive this information no less than 10 calendar days before the meeting. To be eligible for special education and related services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A student must have a disability according to one of the eligibility categories; ▪ The disability must adversely affect the student's educational performance; and ▪ The student must be in need of special education and related services.
<i>Individualized Education Program (IEP)</i>	After it is determined that a child is eligible for special education and related services, a meeting is held to develop the child's IEP. The IEP is both a plan and a process. The plan is a written document that describes in detail a child's special education program. The process is the ongoing sharing of information between the family and school district to meet the child's developmental and educational needs. The IEP should describe how the individual child currently performs and the child's specific instructional needs. The IEP must include measurable annual goals and short term objectives or benchmarks. When parental consent is granted, the IEP is implemented as soon as possible following the IEP meeting and within 90 calendar days of the school's receipt of parental consent for the first evaluation. For resources on creating meaningful IEP's see <i>Tools for Teachers</i> at http://www.njddc.org/tools-teachers.pdf or contact the NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities at 609-292-3745.
<i>Annual Review</i>	Annually, or more often if necessary, the IEP team will meet to review and revise the IEP and determine placement.
<i>Reevaluation</i>	A child must be reevaluated every three years, or sooner if conditions warrant, or if the parent or the child's teacher requests it. Reevaluation is conducted when a change in eligibility is being considered.
<i>Parental Consent</i>	<p>When must the school district obtain parental consent?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before a child is evaluated for the first time to determine whether a child is eligible for special education; • Before a child's special education program begins for the first time; • Before a child is tested as part of a reevaluation; and • Before a child's records are released to a person or organization that is not otherwise authorized to see them.