

Parent Guide to Special Education

PRESENTED BY THE PARENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC)



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**MONTCALM AREA INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT (MAISD)
AN EDUCATIONAL PARTNER IN BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITIES**

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Our Vision: MAISD will be an educational partner in building strong communities.

Our Mission: In partnership with its communities, MAISD provides innovation & effective learning opportunities for students, schools, and families.

It is the policy of Montcalm Area Intermediate School District that no person shall be subjected to discrimination in any educational program, service, or activity that it provides, nor in any employment for which it is responsible. As such, MAISD and its Board of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender (including orientation or transgender identity), disability, age, religion, military status, ancestry, or genetic information. Inquiries related to discrimination should be directed to the MAISD Superintendent at 621 New Street, PO Box 367, Stanton MI 48888 or phone at 989-831-5261.

Dear Parents,

A Special Message

This handbook has been developed by the Montcalm Area Intermediate School District Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) to give you an introduction to the special education process and to acquaint you with special education programs and services.

Special education services are available to eligible students in the State of Michigan from birth through high school graduation or until students achieve their transition goals up to age twenty-six. Understanding the special education system can help you work with your child's school and teachers to develop the program that is needed for your child to succeed.

The members of the Parent Advisory Committee are passionate about the value and significance of special education. We believe that parents must play a major role in this venture for the process to be successful. But first, parents need to have insight about the programs and services, which make up the educational system. It's with this idea in mind that we have developed this handbook.

Our goal is to provide parents/guardians with factual information, along with various resources, to understand and negotiate the special education process.

Always remember that you are your child's best advocate. We believe that the best possible scenario occurs when parents and teachers form a partnership placing the student's needs first.

We hope this handbook will help you make the most of your child's special education experience.

May we walk together as we help our children move successfully towards reaching their goals. Come; celebrate your child's educational years with us at the Montcalm Area Intermediate School District!



MAISD Parent Advisory Committee

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring: all of which have the potential to turn a life around.



Leo Buscaglia

Our Mission: The mission of the Montcalm Area Intermediate School District Parent Advisory Committee is to promote partnerships among parents and educators that benefit students with disabilities.

The MAISD Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) is comprised of parents representing all seven districts within the Montcalm Area Intermediate School District. The PAC meets on the third Tuesday of the month during the school year to receive and share information about issues related to students with special needs and to perform the advisory functions described in the Michigan Special Education Rules. The PAC members are valuable resource people for other parents of children with special needs.

Meeting Dates: All meetings are held at 5:30 PM with a program following at 6:00 PM. Locations rotate throughout the county districts. Scheduled dates and locations are posted on the MAISD website.

The PAC hosts the “*Make a Difference Award*” Ceremony every May to recognize staff that has made a difference in special needs students and the lives of parents. Staff is nominated in six categories: Special Education Teacher, General Education Teacher, Administrative, Support, Ancillary Staff, and Peer-to-Peer Support.

Website Address: www.maisd.com. Under the Student Programs and Supports tab, Special Education tab, Resources, you will find the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) link.

Acknowledgments

Many individuals, through their support and assistance, contributed to the development of this handbook. We wish to thank all of those who took the time to support this project.

**Thank
you!**

Frequently Asked Questions

What is special education?

Special education is individually designed instruction, at no cost to the parent; to meet the unique needs of a child.

Why does my child need an evaluation?

The evaluation is done to answer these questions:

- ❖ Does the child have a disability?
- ❖ How is the child currently performing in school? (Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance [PLAAFP]).
- ❖ What are the child's educational needs?
- ❖ Does the child need special education and related services?
- ❖ What additions or modifications, if any, are needed to enable the child to meet annual goals in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and participate, as appropriate, in the general curriculum?

What are the steps in the evaluation process?

Before a child is evaluated for the first time, the school must notify the parent and describe any evaluation the school proposes to conduct. The parent must give informed consent for the child to be evaluated.

The next step involves gathering and reviewing existing information on the child by an IEP Team. This includes consideration of current classroom assessments, observations, and information provided by parents and school staff.

How is a child evaluated for the presence of a disability?

The testing is done individually in the child's native language. The standardized tests must be used correctly and fairly and be administered by trained, knowledgeable personnel.

Who decides if a child is eligible for services?

After the evaluation has been completed, the IEP Team, consisting of qualified professionals and the parent, will decide if the child is eligible for special education.

Who is a "child with a disability"?

The definition includes the following qualifications:

- ❖ Children from birth through age twenty-five, who have not graduated with a regular high school diploma.
- ❖ Children who have the characteristics for a specific disability as defined in the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education. (See the special education categories listed on pages 11 and 12 of this book.)
- ❖ Children who, because of that disability, need special education and related service support.

What happens after a child/student is found eligible?

Another role of the IEP Team is to develop the student's program or Individualized Education Program (IEP). As stated earlier, the IEP Team is comprised of the parent, school professionals, and the student, when appropriate. After the IEP is developed, the student begins to receive the special education and related services that were agreed upon by the IEP Team.

What is an IEP?

An "**Individualized Education Program**" means a written plan for a student with a disability that spells out the special education and related service the student will receive. The IEP is developed at a meeting that is scheduled at a mutually agreeable time. The written document is a record of the IEP Team meeting. The IEP is reviewed at least once a year.

What is included in the IEP?

The Michigan requirements are:

- ❖ A statement of the student's present level of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP);
- ❖ A statement of measurable annual goals and short-term objectives that address:
 - 1) how to help the student be involved in and progress in the general curriculum,
 - 2) how to meet each of the student's other educational needs related to his/her disability;
- ❖ A statement of how the student's progress toward the annual goals will be measured and how the parent will be regularly informed of that progress;
- ❖ A statement of special education program/services and supplementary aids to be provided to the student, and any program modifications or supports for the school personnel;
- ❖ The projected starting date for services as well as the duration, anticipated frequency, and location of where programs and services will be delivered;
- ❖ An explanation of when the student will not participate with non-disabled children in the regular class and other activities;
- ❖ A statement of any modifications the student needs in order to take the state and/or district-wide assessment tests; (If the IEP Team determines that the test is not appropriate for the student, a different assessment will be used.)
- ❖ A statement of transition needs that focus on the student's course of study beginning at age sixteen or younger, if appropriate. At age sixteen, transition services include other aspects of adult life and often involve other agencies.

What does parental consent mean on an IEP?

Parents have up to ten (10) days to review an annual IEP. If after ten (10) days the parent does not sign, or has not requested to reconvene the IEP, then the IEP will automatically be implemented. All initial and change of program placement IEPs must be signed by parents before services begin.

A parent also has a right at any time to withdraw and remove their child from special education programs and services. The parent must notify the district in writing. However, the reason does not need to be stated. At that time the child will be considered a general education student and will not be eligible for any special education services or accommodations provided to other non-disabled students. The child will also be subject to the same disciplinary procedures and timelines in disciplinary procedures as other students. If a child fails to make progress in general education curriculum, a parent always has the right to request an initial evaluation for special education.

Should the student be involved in the IEP?

Students often provide valuable insights regarding their strengths and needs. When they are involved in determining their own goals and objectives, they are more committed to achieving them. Each student should have the option to be a part of the IEP Team process.

Students need to participate in their own transition planning starting at age fourteen. These plans are updated annually.

Students who are age seventeen are notified that their rights will be transferred to them upon reaching the age of majority (eighteen). At age eighteen both the student and parents are notified that the rights are transferred to the student.

What is least restrictive environment (LRE)?

LRE looks at the setting in which the student receives an education. The law presumes that students with disabilities are most appropriately educated with their nondisabled peers in the general education setting. Attending special classes or separate schools, or removing students with disabilities from the regular classroom occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability prevents the student from achieving satisfactorily even when supplementary aids and services are used.

What is a “Free Appropriate Public Education” (FAPE)?

FAPE means that education and related services are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge. The services provided must meet the standards of the Department of Education for all students and be designed to meet the student’s IEP goals and short-term objectives.

What is extended school year (ESY)?

Extended school year must be considered for every student with a disability at each IEP Team meeting. ESY services must be provided if the IEP Team determines that such services are necessary to the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education.

If considering Extended School Year service, the IEP would determine if there are one or more annual goals where significant concerns exist regarding skill maintenance during a break in services. ESY is not needed for a Free Appropriate Public Education if there is no concern.

For each goal area of concern, answer the following questions if there is a concern:

1. Is there information that indicates to the IEP Team that in this goal area there is a serious potential for regression of skills beyond a reasonable period of recoupment? What data support this? **Or**
2. Is there information regarding the nature and/or severity of disability of the student that indicates to the IEP Team that there is a need to provide services in the identified goal area(s) of concern during breaks in the school year? What data support this? **Or**
3. Is there information that indicates to the IEP Team that in the identified goal area(s) of concern the student is at a critical stage of learning and/or in a critical area of learning where failure to provide a service beyond the normal school year will severely limit the student’s capacity to acquire essential skills?

To answer this question, first answer the following questions:

- a. Is there a skill that needs to be mastered immediately? If the student does not master the skill immediately, is the degree of mastery likely to be permanently reduced? What data support this? **Or**
- b. Is the student at a critical stage of development where there is a window of opportunity that will be lost if services are not provided? What data support this? **Or**
- c. Are there changes in the student’s medical, physical, or sensory status that makes it possible to predict an accelerated rate of learning during the ESY period (critical stage)? What data support this? **Or**
- d. Is the skill in a critical area of learning and will a break in services result in the loss of a window of opportunity for mastering the skill? What data support this?

If the answer to all of these questions is no, ESY services are not needed for a Free Appropriate Public Education. If the answer to one or more these questions are yes, the IEP Team needs to consider a plan for ESY services.

Other factors that must be considered in determining ESY:

- ❖ The determination of the need for ESY must be based on data.
- ❖ The determination of the need for ESY services cannot be based on a formula.
- ❖ ESY services can be provided in a variety of ways.
- ❖ LRE requirements for ESY services are not identical to LRE requirements for the normal school year.
- ❖ ESY services are only provided for those annual goals identified as an area of concern and which are determined to require ESY services.
- ❖ New annual goals are not developed for ESY services.
- ❖ Consideration of ESY services needs to be made in a timely manner.

How can a parent become more involved in the educational decisions that are made for my child?

Parents are encouraged to be involved in a variety of ways:

- ❖ Parents are key members in all decision-making meetings such as meetings that determine the identification, evaluation, educational placement, reevaluation, and the appropriate education of the student.
- ❖ Parents give consent for initial evaluations and reevaluations.
- ❖ Parents will receive regular reports on their student's progress.
- ❖ Parents must notify the school district if they intend to remove their student from the public school or plan to request a due process hearing.
- ❖ Parents are encouraged to be involved in parent groups at the local level or at the ISD level through an advisory group called the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). The Michigan Department of Education also involves parents in planning, implementing and reviewing activities.

What transportation service does a district provide for special education students?

The same transportation services available to general education students are available to special education students. In addition, specialized transportation services are provided by school districts if the IEP Team determines that the student needs those services to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE). The school district's responsibilities related to transportation include providing safe and efficient transportation for students, furnishing any specialized services documented on a student's IEP (such as a lift bus or safety harness), and following appropriate safety, medical, and traffic rules and procedures.

What are my responsibilities related to transportation of my special needs child?

It is important for parents/guardians to read transportation policies and procedures provided by their district or transportation office and to discuss those policies with your son/daughter, when possible. Besides reinforcing safety rules, it is the responsibility of parents to assist their child to the bus if he/she cannot travel independently between the residence and the bus due to physical problems, immature development, or inaccessibility of the residence. When a student is returned from school, a responsible person must be at home unless the parent/guardian has given written permission to leave an older student alone. Teamwork, communication, and cooperation between parents and schools are important in achieving safe transportation of students.

What are procedural safeguards?

Procedural Safeguards are legal safeguards that protect the rights of students with disabilities and their parents. It provides the information that parents need in order to make decisions about their student's education. Procedural Safeguards explain the procedures used to resolve disagreements between parties.

The Parent Handbook of Procedural Safeguards referenced in this handbook is from state and federal rules and regulations. Sometimes it is difficult to understand. If you have any questions regarding them, please contact the ISD, your local school district, a PAC member, or other sources listed in this handbook.

This document provides parents of students with disabilities, from birth through age twenty-six, an overview of their educational rights with respect to special education. This document incorporates all procedural safeguards to parents and students with disabilities afforded under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) and the IDEA implementing regulations.



Eligibility for Special Education Services

The *Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education* defines eligibility for special education services within thirteen categories of disability:

***Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder have a lifelong, developmental disability that may include disturbances in thinking, socializing, body movement and speech and language development. People with autism spectrum disorder may have difficulty relating to others in typical ways, insist on routine, be slow to develop communication patterns, have unusual responses to sensory stimuli (hearing, seeing, touch, etc.), and/or exhibit stereotyped play patterns and repetitive movements. **Rule 340.1715**

***Cognitive Impairment (CI)**

Students in this category were formerly named *educable mentally impaired (EMI)*, *trainably mentally impaired (TMI)*, or *severely mentally impaired (SMI)*. Students eligible as cognitively impaired have intellectual impairments which affects their ability to understand cognitive concepts and skills. The level of impairment may vary from mild to severe. Instructional activities typically focus on academic, vocational skills, daily living skills, health, and communication. **Rule 340.1705**

***Deaf-blindness (Db)**

Students who qualify as eligible for special education services as visually impaired and hearing impaired can be certified as having a deaf-blindness impairment. This combination of difficulties causes severe communication and other development problems so that a student's educational needs cannot be accommodated for without special education services. **Rule 340.1717**

***Early Childhood Developmental Delay (ECDD)**

Students in this category were formerly named *pre-primary impaired (PPI)*. Students with Early Childhood Developmental Delay are children through age seven years old whose development is significantly delayed in one or more areas, and who do not qualify under any other special education eligibility. **Rule 340.1711**

***Emotional Impairment (EI)**

Students with emotional impairment demonstrate behavioral problems related to withdrawal, depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, physical complaints, etc., over an extended period of time that negatively affect their ability to learn. **Rule 340.1706**

***Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH)**

Students with any type or degree of hearing loss that interferes with development or adversely affects educational performance fall into this category. These persons may have mild or moderate hearing loss or may be totally deaf. **Rule 340.1707**

***Other Health Impairment (OHI)**

Students with chronic health conditions (e.g., asthma, attention deficit disorder, epilepsy, or rheumatic fever) that adversely affect educational performance qualify in this category. They may require special materials or conditions to be successful in school. **Rule 340.1709A**

***Physical Impairment (PI)**

Students with severe orthopedic impairments have physical challenges which affect the ability to learn and may require adapted and/or special materials or equipment. **Rule 340.1709**

***Severe Multiple Impairment (SXI)**

Students with multiple impairments have more than one disability in intellectual, physical and or/functional abilities. They typically require intensive intervention and supports for the activities of daily living. **Rule 34.1714**

***Specific Learning Disability (LD)**

Students with specific learning disabilities have a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in their academic achievement and are not making academic progress despite intensive general education interventions. These students often experience difficulty with oral language, reading, writing, and/or mathematics. Social and behavioral problems may be present, but the ability to learn primarily impacts progress in school. **Rule 340.1713**

***Speech and Language Impairment (SLI)**

Students who have difficulty with understanding or with the use of language may qualify for special education services under speech or language impairment. A speech and language impairment may interfere with learning and/or social adjustment in school and elsewhere. Typical symptoms may include poor listening skills, unclear speech, slow vocabulary development, immature grammar, difficulties with conversation, unusual loudness or quality of voice, or stuttering. **Rule 340.1710**

***Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)**

Students who have an acquired injury to the brain (closed head injuries) are certified as having traumatic brain injury impairment. **Rule 340.1716**

***Visual Impairment (VI)**

Students who have severe problems with vision, whether partially sighted or blind, which interfere with development and learning. Characteristics may include visual acuity of 20/70 or less in the better eye after correction, or a peripheral field restricted to not more than 20 degrees. **Rule 340.1708**

Special Education Programs and Services

Early Childhood Special Education Programs and Services

Children from birth through age five who are eligible for special education may receive services through Early On (ages 0-3), Early Childhood Special Education Services home program, Early Childhood Special Education Program classrooms located throughout the ISD; or through itinerant speech language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy or other ancillary services.

Categorical Classrooms

A categorical classroom is designed for students whose impairment requires they receive at least 50% or more of their school day in a special education classroom. Students of any eligibility who need this intensive service may be enrolled in a categorical program. Categorical classroom options may be available within each local district. Montcalm Area Intermediate School District operates programs which are designed to meet the needs of students with more challenging learning difficulties whose needs cannot be met in the local school district.

Resource Program

A resource program may serve students up to a full school day. The student receives instruction in content area courses in regular education and also receives support in his/her area(s) of disability in special education. The resource room teacher is responsible to provide support to regular education teacher(s) who work with the students served in this program. The majority of students in the resource programs are working to attain the requirements of the general education curriculum and are working towards credit for graduation.

School Psychologist

The school psychologist's main function is in the evaluation of children who have been referred for an initial evaluation or reevaluation of special education eligibility. The school psychologist often serves as the leader of the multi-disciplinary evaluation team assigned to evaluate a child. In addition, the school psychologist provides insight into learning styles, accommodations, strengths/weaknesses, interventions, etc. for classroom teachers and parents.

Teacher Consultant

Teacher Consultants (TC's) serve as part of the diagnostic team-evaluating students, assisting in planning programs, and in consulting with teachers. In some incidents, TC's also provide instructions to students who are enrolled full time in regular education. Students of any eligibility category may be served through the TC model. TC's cannot teach a subject or give grades; they are responsible for remediation, teaching study skills or coordinating the student's program. Providing support to the regular education or special education teacher is the primary role of the TC's responsibility.

School Social Worker

The school social worker may provide direct service to eligible students in need of support in the affective area. Through play, individual discussion or group experiences, children can develop better understanding of feelings and improve relations with others. Also, the school social worker may consult with staff and parents regarding behavior, emotions, and other issues. In addition, the school social worker may be a member of a multi-disciplinary team in the evaluation of a student.

Speech and Language Therapist

The speech and language therapist may provide direct service or consultation for children who have articulation, fluency or language impairments. Services may be provided individually, in groups or with an entire class as is deemed appropriate. In addition, the therapist participates in evaluations of children and provides consultation to classroom teachers and parents.

Physical Therapy

The physical therapist may provide direct service or consultation for children who have impairments of a gross motor nature. Services can be offered individually or in small groups and can be delivered directly or through consultation. The physical therapist may also be a member of a multi-disciplinary evaluation team.

Occupational Therapy

The occupational therapist may provide direct service or consultation for children who have delays in the fine motor area. Students with sensory deficits may be appropriately served by an occupational therapist. Services may be offered individually or in small groups and are delivered directly or via consultation. The occupational therapist may also be a member of a multi-disciplinary evaluation team.

Homebound/Hospitalized Services

Educational and ancillary services for students unable to attend school for medical reasons and are confined to the home may be provided in the student's home. A physician's statement and an IEPT are required to initiate these services. The frequency and amount of service, with the minimum being two non-consecutive hours per week, is determined through the IEP.

Orientation and Mobility Services

The orientation and mobility specialist may be involved in evaluating students who are visually impaired. In addition, the specialist may provide direct service or consultation for those visually impaired students who need to develop skills to safely move through their environment.

Possible Accommodations Or Modifications To Be Considered In The IEP

<p><u>Pacing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust deadlines • Vary activity often • Omit assignments requiring timed copying • Adjust amount of work necessary to meet requirements • Provide home set of text/material for preview/review • Other _____ <p><u>Environment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan seating strategically: Bus, classroom, lunchroom, auditorium • Alter physical room arrangement • Define areas concretely • Reduce distractions: Visual, Auditory, Spatial, Movement • Teach positive rules for use of space • Other _____ <p><u>Assignments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give directions in small distinct steps (written, picture, verbal) • Provide print copy for oral directions • Reduce difficulty level • Shorten assignments • Reduce paper and pencil tasks • Read or tape record directions • Give extra cues or prompts • Allow student to record or type assignments • Adapt worksheets, packets • Provide alternative assignment/strategy when demands of class conflict with student capabilities. Limit penalizing for errors that reflect student's disability. • Provide samples of what an "A" assignment looks like • Other _____ <p><u>Presentation of Subject Matter</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach to student's learning style: Visual, Auditory, Tactile Experiential • Use individual/small group instruction • Utilize specialized <p><u>Home/School Communication</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teams meeting, daily journal • Other _____ <p><u>Motivation and Reinforcement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal • Non verbal • Positive reinforcement • Tap strengths/interests • Behavior management • Other _____ 	<p><u>Materials</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements of material on page • Note-taking assistance/carbonless or Xerox copy of lecture notes • Use supplementary materials • Taped text and/or other class materials • Typed copy of teacher material • Electronic typewriter, calculator, computer, video recorder, telephone adaptations, tape recorder Augmentative communication device • Other _____ <p><u>Self-Management/Follow Through</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow visual daily schedule • Use calendars • Check often for understanding/review • Request parent reinforcement • Have student repeat directions • Teach study skills • Use study sheets to organize material • Design/write/use long-term assignment time lines • Review and practice real situations • Plan for generalization • Teacher skill in several settings/environments • Other _____ <p><u>Testing Adaptations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral responses (taped) • Application in real setting (read test to student) • Preview of test language (extended time frame) • Short answer (multiple choice) • Modified format (shortened questions) • Administered by resource person • Other _____ <p><u>Social Interactions Supports</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer advocacy, greetings • Sharing, peer tutoring • Partial participation, negotiation • Focus on social process rather than activity/end product • Structured shared experiences in school extracurricular • Cooperative learning groups • Use of multiple/rotating peers • Teach friendship skills/sharing/negotiations • Teach social communications skills • Conversational turn taking • Structured activities to create opportunities for social interaction • Other _____
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The Special Education Process

Local school districts and public school academies follow the same general procedure in evaluation special education students and planning their education programs. The following is a brief outline of the process. Each step is explained in the following pages.

Referral

When a student is suspected of having a disability, a signed written referral for special education evaluation may be submitted to the school district or the district will schedule a meeting with the required participants (parent input must be included) to review existing educational data and make a decision if additional data is needed to conduct an evaluation for special education eligibility.

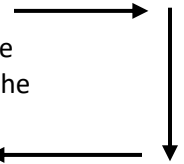


Parent Consent Received

Parent/guardian must give consent for an initial evaluation of the child. Once consent is given the school district must complete the evaluation within thirty (30) school days. However, if reasons arise that this timeline cannot be met, a signed mutually agreed upon extension may be developed with the parent/guardian.



30 School Days



Evaluation by Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation Team (MET)

The student is evaluated by a team of professionals and a meeting is held to discuss the results of the evaluations. Parent input must be sought. The team will decide to make a recommendation for eligibility for special education services or ineligibility.



Individualized Educational Planning Team (IEPT) Meeting

An IEPT meeting is held to which the parent is invited. The MET report is presented at this meeting. Eligibility for special education is determined. Programs and services are recommended and an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is developed.



OR



Parent Notification

The decision of the IEPT is explained. All parents' rights are fully explained.

Parents Disagree with IEPT

Mediation is available to you or the school district to resolve disagreements prior to filing a state complaint or due process hearing.



Parents have the opportunity to Meaningful participation of the IEP Process

For initial IEPs the district offers Notice of the Provision of Services and Programs by their offer of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Parents must consent on the Notice Form for the initial provision of services to the districts offer. For all other IEP meetings parent consent is not required on the Notice Form.

Parents must request a hearing in writing, providing notice to the school district and the Michigan Department of Education



Placement

The student is placed in the appropriate program and/or services

Mediation

Complaint

Hearing

IEP Implemented

The IEP is put into action.

Referral

The Process

Prior to a referral, it is a best practice that a district has a pre-referral team to offer suggestions for interventions to students who are struggling with learning or behavioral issues. These teams often involve parent participation and input. School teams implement different strategies and monitor a child's progress in academic or behavioral areas to help gain insight as to why a student is not being successful. If the student continues to display slow achievement, the team may initiate a written special education evaluation if they suspect the student has a disability that interferes with learning.

Most often, a referral comes from a teacher. However, anyone who is concerned, including social workers, parents, or a representative of an agency may refer a person suspected of having a disability.

A referral is the first step in the special education process. After a referral is made, school personnel will evaluate the child. As a parent, you have the right to receive a written notice before the school evaluates your child for the first time. This notice must be in writing and in your native language or other principal mode of communication that is understandable to you. In addition, the notice must describe the proposed action and explain why an evaluation is proposed. ***It is important that you ask questions at this stage of the process.*** Don't be afraid to ask school personnel about the process. ***Ask*** about the referral. ***Ask*** about the evaluation process.

Within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of the referral, the school district shall notify you in writing and request your permission to evaluate your child. This notice must be in your native language and must be understandable to you. This notice also needs to explain why an evaluation is proposed. You should respond to this request within seven (7) calendar days because the school district cannot proceed with the evaluation without your written consent. If you decline permission to evaluate your child, the school district may not provide special education services.

Remember: A referral is the starting point of the special education process. It does not guarantee special education placement.



Evaluations & Eligibility

by the Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team

The first step in identifying a student with a suspected disability and in need of special education programs and/or related services is the evaluation of the student. This is done by a **Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET)**. This team is made up of educational specialist with knowledge in the area of your child's suspected disability. They may be teachers, school psychologists, speech therapists, social workers, or other specialists. These persons use tests and procedures different from those basic tests given to all children in a school, grade or class. They select tests/procedures to use with your individual child based on areas of suspected need.

The **MET** will assess and evaluate your child's strengths and weaknesses. It also will review and analyze all available information about your child's suspected disability, including school records, evaluation results, medical history, and other information that only you can provide about your child. You may wish to share with the MET any outside evaluations at this time.

Once this MET evaluation is completed, a written MET report with an eligibility recommendation is presented at the **Individualized Educational Planning Team (IEPT)** meeting. **You are an important participant in this meeting.** Using this information, the IEPT determines whether or not your child is eligible for special education.

Based upon the individual needs of your child, one or more of these areas could be evaluated:

- ❖ Achievement Level – *The skill level in school subjects such as math, reading, and writing.*
- ❖ Adaptive Skills – *The skills used in the school or home environment.*
- ❖ Cognitive Ability – *The capacity to think and learn.*
- ❖ Motor Ability – *The ability to move in a coordinated, purposeful manner.*
- ❖ Personality – *The accuracy with which one perceives self, others, and the environment.*
- ❖ Social-Emotional Adjustment – *The skills to build and maintain appropriate interpersonal relationships.*
- ❖ Speech and Language Skills – *The ability to use and understand verbal and non-verbal communication.*
- ❖ Development – *The child's pattern of growth.*
- ❖ Health – *Physical conditions interfering with school performance.*

As a parent, during this MET process, you also have the right to:

- ❖ Participate in meetings.
- ❖ Have an interpreter/translator present, if appropriate.
- ❖ Have an evaluation conducted by a multidisciplinary evaluation team that includes persons knowledgeable in the area of the suspected disability. This evaluation must be conducted within thirty (30) school days after the school has received your written permission to evaluate.
- ❖ Have more than one test or evaluation procedures used to determine eligibility and the appropriate education program, for your child.
- ❖ Be assured testing is non-discriminatory and adapted, if necessary, to meet your child's needs.
- ❖ Have any evaluations you may obtain elsewhere be considered along with the school district's evaluation data.
- ❖ Be notified of each evaluation procedure, test, record, or report the IEPT uses in determining eligibility and need for special education programs or services.
- ❖ Have a re-evaluation every three (3) years, or more frequently if needed, to determine if your child is still eligible.

Remember: The MET evaluation is very important. Make sure to offer the team all the information you can, concerning your child.

Independent Educational Evaluation

As a parent, you have the right to obtain an independent educational evaluation at your own expense. You also have the right to have the results of that evaluation considered in any decision made for determining eligibility or providing services to your child.

If you disagree with any of the evaluations conducted by the school district, you may request a similar independent evaluation at public expense. This request is to be made at or following the Individualized Educational Planning Team (IEPT) meeting where evaluation results are presented. The district must notify you in writing within seven (7) days of its intent to honor the request. If the school district feels its evaluation is sufficient, a hearing officer may be asked to review the appropriateness of your request for an independent evaluation.

As a parent, you also have the following rights regarding independent educational evaluation:

- ❖ ***To be told where an independent educational evaluation may be obtained.*** You may also elect to use evaluators other than those identified by the school district as long as those evaluators meet the qualifications.
- ❖ ***To be provided information regarding examiner qualifications, procedure for reimbursement, and reasonable expected costs.***
- ❖ ***To obtain an evaluation at your own expense.***



Educational Planning

Individualized Educational Planning Team (IEPT)

The **Individualized Educational Planning Team (IEPT)** is required by law and is one of the most important committees in your school. **You are an important member of this committee.** It is a special committee formed to review the specific needs of your child. It assures that your child's learning program meets your child's particular needs.

An IEPT must be convened to develop an **Individualized Educational Program (IEP)** for every student currently receiving – or who will receive – special education services. The IEPT determines the student's eligibility, and the appropriateness of programs and/or services to be provided. The IEPT review relevant information and recommendations provided by the MET.

Who attends the Individualized Education Planning Team meeting?

Participants in an IEPT meeting shall, at a minimum, include the following:

- ❖ By law, parents must be invited as active participants in the meeting. ***As a parent, you should take this invitation very seriously and try your best to attend.*** If the IEPT time and place are inconvenient, it is your right to request a more agreeable time and place. You, as a parent are a member of the IEPT and have a right to be involved in any decision made about your child's educational program. As a committee member, you are assured that no one person is acting alone to develop and decide on the school services for your child.
- ❖ The student should be invited, if appropriate. If the student is sixteen years old or older, she/he must be invited.
- ❖ A representative of the school district, other than the student's teacher, who is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of special education (i.e., principal, special education director, special education teacher).
- ❖ The student's teacher or, if the student is not previously enrolled, a teacher who is appropriate for the student's age and ability. If the child is enrolled in regular education, at least one of the participants must be a regular full-time teacher to whom the student is assigned.
- ❖ A member of the Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) will present the team's written report at the initial IEPT meetings and any other IEPT meetings preceded by a MET re-evaluation.
- ❖ The parent or school district may invite other participants.

How often does the Individualized Education Planning Team meet?

The IEP must be reviewed annually, and may be revised at any time a change may be needed. The IEPT meeting shall be held at a mutually agreed upon time and place. If you are unable to attend the meeting, you have the right and responsibility to provide input in other ways.

The IEPT discussed the following and prepares a written report of:

- ❖ Your child's present level of educational performance and functional performance.
- ❖ Present level of educational performance and functional performance includes how your child's disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum and in performing daily living skills. For preschoolers participation in appropriate activities must be addressed.
- ❖ Eligibility for special education (at those meetings when a MET report is presented).
- ❖ Annual goals and short-term instructional objectives (STOs) specific to your child's educational needs.
- ❖ Appropriate objective criteria, evaluation procedures and schedules for determining whether the instructional objectives are being achieved.
- ❖ Special education and related services needed, giving consideration to the accessibility of physical facilities, transportation, adaptive devices, aides or restraints, and communication needs.
- ❖ The projected dates for initiation of programs and services and their anticipated duration.
- ❖ The extent, if any, to which your child is not able to participate in regular education programs with non-disabled children.

- ❖ The extent of participation in state or district-wide assessments and necessary modification and how your child's progress towards goals will be reported to you.
- ❖ Program and service options in terms of the least restrictive environment.
- ❖ For any student sixteen years and older, if appropriate, a statement of necessary transition services.
- ❖ One year before your child reaches the age of majority, a statement of his/her adult rights.
- ❖ Consider the need for extended school year services.

The IEPT, working together, develop the student's program. If there are differences of opinion at the IEPT, it is not necessarily a bad sign. Differences of opinion may be a sign that both you and the school are sincerely concerned about the student. It is important to continue working toward a consensus agreement. However, if at the end of an IEPT meeting all the parties are not in agreement, you have a right to appeal the recommendation through the mediation or hearing process.

Additional considerations:

During the IEPT process, you also have the right to:

- ❖ Be notified before an Individualized Educational Planning Team meeting is convened and have the purpose of the meeting explained to you.
- ❖ Invite a person(s) to accompany you to the meeting.
- ❖ Request that a representative of your resident school district be invited to any three (3) year re-evaluation IEPT meetings conducted by the operating district.
- ❖ Request that your child attend the meeting, if this is appropriate.
- ❖ Review written evaluations prior to the IEPT with your child's special education teacher or other qualified individual from the school district.
- ❖ Receive a copy of the Individualized Education Program at the conclusion of the IEPT meeting.

IEP Addendum

The purpose of the IEP Addendum is to make minor changes to the IEP during the year the IEP is in effect. If substantial or comprehensive changes need to be made to a student's IEP, an IEP Team meeting should be convened to develop a new, complete IEP Team Report.

The IEP Addendum may **not** be used for the following purposes:

1. To determine or re-determine any special education eligibility;
2. To change the type of program for the student; or
3. To exit the student from special education.

The parent must participate in the development of the addendum, as well as other required members of the IEP team. The student's current IEP will remain in effect until the next review or re-evaluation date. The IEP Addendum cannot be implemented if the parent refuses consent, and the parent is entitled to a full review of the IEP upon request.

Because an addendum to an IEP is never an initial IEP placing a student into special education, the parent's signature on the IEP Addendum form is not required in order to implement the IEP. However, the parent must have the opportunity to sign the IEP Addendum in agreement or in disagreement before it is implemented by being notified ten (10) days prior to implementation.



Helpful Hints

Making the Most of the IEPT Process

Before the IEPT Meeting:

- ❖ Obtain as much information as you can before the IEPT meeting. Talk with your child's teacher, the people who evaluated your child, and read your child's records.
- ❖ If possible, meet with your child's teacher and observe your child in his/her present program.
- ❖ If your child has received services from another agency, collect as much information as you can and share it with the school.
- ❖ If possible, both parents should plan to attend the IEPT meeting. You may also want to bring someone else with you for support or a friend or relative who is familiar with your child.
- ❖ Familiarize yourself with terminology used in IEPT meeting. (*See Glossary - Terms & Definitions on pages 35-41 and Special Education Acronyms on page 42-44.*)
- ❖ Write down your questions and concerns to take to the meeting.
- ❖ Make a list of goals and objectives you feel are appropriate to be included in your child's IEP.
- ❖ If your child has had previous IEPT meetings, bring the most recent IEP with you.

At the IEPT Meeting:

- ❖ Participate fully in the meeting, sharing your opinions and ideas about the educational needs and programs for your child.
- ❖ Ask for an explanation of any terms that are new to you.
- ❖ Ask about the advantages and disadvantages of various programs proposed.
- ❖ Ask for the reasoning behind a suggestion if you don't understand it.
- ❖ Ask what related services (e.g., school social work, speech, etc.) your child needs.
- ❖ Ask what you can do at home to help your child reach educational goals.
- ❖ Be sure you understand the contents of the IEP before you sign it. If you are uncertain, ask for a copy of the IEPT report, take it home and think about it for a day or two before signing, and return it to the district.

Remember: This is a legal contract. After the initial IEP, the IEP will go into effect when signed or at the end of ten (10) school days if unsigned.

- ❖ The length of an IEPT meeting may vary. The meeting should take as long as necessary to discuss your child's needs and complete an appropriate IEP. Reconvening the meeting is sometimes necessary to adequately address individual needs.

After the IEP Meeting:

- ❖ You are an important part of your child's educational team. Visit the school. Get to know your child's teacher and principal.
- ❖ Keep the IEPT report and all other pertinent special education records together and place them in a safe location. You might want a special notebook or file for this purpose.
- ❖ Keep positive communication channels open between school and home. Share unexpected information that may affect your child's behavior (i.e., illness, divorce, a new baby, etc.)
- ❖ Do not hesitate to request a conference with your child's teacher any time you have questions or concerns.

Remember: In most cases, the evaluation done by the school MET will be sufficient. Most parents do not opt for an independent evaluation. But should you feel you need one, you have the right to request it. After the initial IEP, and within a specified time period, an unsigned IEP implies consent.

Communication

If you have a problem

Remember that communication is the key to any successful program. Regular meetings with your student's teacher and team of school personnel can keep things running smoothly. ***It is essential that you become a part of your student's team.*** If a problem does develop, try to work on it as soon as possible. Listen to what the other members of the team have to say and communicate your point of view calmly and clearly.

- ❖ Your first step may begin with scheduling a meeting with your student's teacher(s) and therapist(s). Talk to them first, identify the problem(s), discuss options and look for a solution.
- ❖ The school district or teacher consultant, social worker, psychologist and/or other team members would be the next set of people to get involved in trying to reach a solution.
- ❖ If the principal cannot resolve a problem to your satisfaction, you may contact the local Special Education Director/Coordinator or district Superintendent.
- ❖ If the problem is still unresolved, you may contact the MAISD Monitor or the MAISD Associate Superintendent for Special Education.
- ❖ If all of these steps have been tried, and your child's IEP is not being implemented, you may file a complaint with the Intermediate School District (MAISD).

Remember: You may request a new IEPT meeting at any time. Coming to a satisfactory solution by compromising and/or negotiating with your student's school team may be the most effective method of problem-solving.



Communication is Key



Appendix A

IEP Preparations

The IEP should help determine how your child gets from “here to there”.

- ❖ **First and foremost, come prepared to the IEP!** Discuss your thoughts with the teacher/team prior to the IEP. The “Parent Input to IEP” form, that is located in Appendix B, can be used for this process. A plan should be pretty well decided by the time of the IEP. The IEP meeting should be the time to put that pre-plan in writing! When possible, include your child in the planning and IEP to promote self-advocacy.
- ❖ Begin to think about **Life Skills**, not only the modifications needed in the school for your child to succeed each day . . . but where we are headed? What do we need to do to plan to get there?
- ❖ Start with **Transition** planning! Example: Where do you see your child at age twenty-two? Start working towards achieving those goals and expectations now.
- ❖ Ask how you can work on skills at home with your child to achieve the stated goals.
- ❖ Consider problems or concerns you have. If possible, address these **prior** to the IEP so teachers can be prepared.
- ❖ Take a few minutes and review previous IEPs and/or progress reports.
- ❖ Review what your expectations are for your child’s education.
- ❖ Review the need for a behavior intervention plan.
- ❖ Review or reconsider what your child’s strengths are.
- ❖ If your child takes medication, review any changes in medication with the teacher.
- ❖ When thinking of your child’s needs, don’t be limited by what you think may or may not be available at the school. It’s called an IEP because each program must be individualized for each student.

Ten Questions to Ask at the IEP

1. Did my child make the expected progress this past year?

2. If not, why not?

3. Did any particular problems occur at school this last year?

4. What are the proposed goals for this next year?

5. How will these goals be measured?

6. To what extent will my child be included with general education students?

7. Are transition services necessary at this point?

8. Are there any other services my child needs to be successful in school?

9. Is my child getting along with his/her peers?

10. What can I do at home to support my child's progress at school?

Other Important Considerations

Three (3) Year Re-evaluations

Every student with eligibility for special education services qualifies to receive a comprehensive re-evaluation at least every three years.

Transition Planning to Adult Life

Transition (as defined by the IEP) refers to an organized set of activities designed to help a student with disabilities prepare for adult roles and responsibilities. At age sixteen, the IEP Team must consider the need for transition services. This is documented on the transition page of the IEP and includes a statement of transition service needs. Post-secondary vision planning focuses on the student's course of study (whether the student will participate in classes leading to a diploma or a certificate of completion). Referral(s) to outside agencies should be considered for needed transition services, such as the Michigan Department of Rehabilitation Services and/or Montcalm Care Network. The local educational agency must invite the student and may ask permission to invite a representative of any agency that is likely to be responsible for providing post-secondary transition services. If the student does not attend, the student's preferences and interests must be considered. If an invited agency does not attend, the school district should take other steps to ensure the agency's participation in transition planning. A written transition plan should be part of the IEP every year beginning at age sixteen. Transition plans should address all aspects of a student's life including high school and post-secondary education, vocational training, daily living skills, housing, recreation, community involvement and employment.

Age of Majority

Age of majority (age eighteen) means that a student is a legal adult who makes decisions at his/her IEPT meeting as well as in other areas of life. At this time, the rights of the parent transfer to the student unless guardianship, partial guardianship or power of attorney is obtained. School personnel will provide each student and his/her parents with information on this topic at least one year before the student reaches the age of eighteen. If rights will be transferred to the young adult, encourage the school to assist in training the student in the IEP process and, if possible, in chairing the IEPT meeting before the age of majority. Participation in the IEP will be easier if the student has already been an active member of the IEP team and has had training in self-advocacy and self-determination. After age eighteen, the student will help determine participants in the IEPT meetings, which may or may not include his/her parent(s) and/or an advocate.

Graduation

In Michigan, a student with disabilities, who is eligible, may receive services from the public school agency until age twenty-six, unless that student fulfills the graduation requirements of the school or achieves his/her transition goals. If graduation requirements are fulfilled and the student receives his/her diploma, the student is no longer eligible for services. Remember, there is a difference between participating in a graduation ceremony and the actual awarding of the diploma. Your student may wish to participate in all senior activities, even if he/she may continue with his/her education in a transition program.



Students Enrolled in Private Schools

A public agency may not be required to pay for the cost of education (including special education and related services) if:

1. The parent does not inform the IEP Team before removing his or her child from the public school that he or she is rejecting the proposed placement of the IEP Team;
2. The parent does not make the student available for evaluation; **or**
3. The action is determined to be “unreasonable” by the judicial system.

The parent must inform the IEP Team, in writing, of his or her concerns and intent to enroll his or her child in a private school at public expense. This notice must be received by the public agency **ten (10) business days** prior to the removal of the student and enrollment in a private school.

A district is not required to pay for the cost of education, including special education and related services, of a child with a disability at a private school or facility in which the parents unilaterally place the child without the consent or referral by the district, if that district made a free and appropriate public education available to the child and the parents elected to place the child in such private school or facility.

Children enrolled in private schools by their parents may participate in special education programs and related services. Special education related services may be provided to children with disabilities on the premises of private schools, including parochial schools to the extent consistent with law.

Surrogate Parents

Sometimes a school district is unable to identify or discover the whereabouts of parents whose child may need special education services. A child may be a ward of the state or is an unaccompanied homeless child or youth. In such cases, the school district will appoint a surrogate or “stand-in” parent. This appointed individual will then, in the absence of parents, represent the child.

The district will work with this surrogate parent in matters regarding identification, evaluation and educational placement of the child, and the provision of a free, appropriate public education for that child.

When appointing such an individual, as a surrogate parent, the school district will make sure that the person has no conflicting interests in regard to the education and well-being of the child. An individual will be chosen who has the knowledge and skills to adequately represent the child. Such an individual will not be an employee of the school district or agency that is involved with the care of the child. The surrogate parent may represent the child in all matters related to identification, evaluation, educational services and the provision of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE).

Education Records

Michigan law requires that school districts maintain records on all students enrolled in or receiving special education from the public schools. These records include such factual data as date of birth, residence, health records, attendance and achievement in school.

Students enrolled in special education programs have records including the above data in addition factual information on required special education procedures such as: referrals, evaluations, and educational planning team meetings.

In regards to your child’s education records, you have the right to:

- ❖ Receive, upon request, a list of the types of education records kept on your child.
- ❖ Expect that your child’s records, including information stored on computers, will be kept confidential.
- ❖ Inspect and review any of your child’s records.
- ❖ Receive copies of the records. You may be charged for the cost of duplication.
- ❖ Have someone at your child’s school explain any item you do not understand. Have a person of your choosing inspect and review the records.
- ❖ Ask for a change in any record on the grounds that it is inaccurate, misleading, or violates privacy rights.
- ❖ Request a formal administrative review on the issue if the district refused to make a change.
- ❖ Receive notice when the personally identifiable information collected, maintained, or used is no longer needed. The information must be destroyed at your request.

Confidentiality

Parental consent must be obtained before personally identifiable information is disclosed to anyone other than officials of participating agencies collecting or using this information. Parental consent need not be obtained if the information is to be used to meet a requirement under IDEA. An educational agency subject to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) may not release information from education records to participating agencies without parental consent unless authorized to do so under FERPA.



Suspension and Expulsion

Each public school agency has its own suspension and expulsion policies. However, if your child has either a known or suspected disability, federal and state laws may provide him or her with certain protections when it comes to suspension or expulsion.

A school district is not required to provide special education services to your child if he/she has been removed from their current school placement for ten (10) school days or less. If a child has been removed for more than ten (10) school days in a row, the district must continue to provide services so that your child can participate in the general education curriculum, although in a different setting. The services must also assist your child to progress towards meeting their goals of the IEP and schedule if needed, a functional behavioral assessment. This assessment may help in preventing the behavior to occur again. Within ten (10) school days of a decision to change your child's placement; the district must hold a team meeting to determine if your child's misconduct is related to his/her disability. This team meeting is called a **Manifestation Determination Review**. Keep in mind that you have the same rights as you do when you attend an IEP meeting. You may dissent, ask for mediation, or request a hearing if you disagree with the team's decision. You also have the right to make a request for relevant team members to be present at the meeting.

Complaint Process

If you feel a school district is violating your child's special education rights, you have two options. 1) You can seek informal resolution or, 2) file a formal complaint. Informal resolution is often quicker and less adversarial. In either instance, it is recommended that you first contact the special education administrator in your district.

A formal state complaint is a specific written and signed allegation that includes the facts on which the allegation is based. A complaint must be sent to the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services of the Michigan Department of Education (OSE-EIS) and the local district. The state complaint will be "filed" and the sixty (60) day timeline for investigation will begin when both OSE-EIS and the district have a copy of the complaint containing all the required components. A Model State Complaint form is available on the Michigan Department of Education website at www.michigan.gov/OSE-EIS. Use of this form is not required but it will assist the complainant in addressing the required components of a state complaint. A ten (10) day resolution period is part of this process and it is highly encouraged to have the school district and the complainant resolve the issues during this time. In addition to this resolution period the use of mediation and other ways to resolve conflict issues should be tried.

Mediation

The purpose of mediation is to bring two parties together to settle differences so that a formal hearing is not necessary. **Mediation is voluntary and free.** You and the educational agency select a mediator, set ground rules, and both must agree to the mediated solution. When mediation is successful, both parties have an increased commitment to the **individualized** agreement that is reached.

- ❖ The state maintains a list of qualified mediators who are knowledgeable in special education laws and regulations for you and the ISD to select.
- ❖ The mediator's role is to assist you and the educational agency in arriving at a mutually agreed upon resolution.
- ❖ If you and the educational agency develop a resolution, you will receive a written copy.
- ❖ All mediation discussions are confidential and cannot be used in any subsequent due process or court proceeding.
- ❖ Mediation may help you to have a stronger role in the decision-making process.

Due Process Hearing Complaint

A parent, a public agency, or the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) may initiate a hearing by filing a written due process hearing complaint with the MDE and providing a copy of the due process hearing complaint to the other parties.

A hearing may be initiated on matters related to any of the following:

1. Identification;
2. Evaluation;
3. Educational placement;
4. Provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE);
5. Provision of appropriate Part C services to the child or the child's family;
6. Assignment of financial obligations for Part C services to the parent;
7. Determination that behavior was not a manifestation of the student's disability;
8. Determination of an appropriate interim alternative education setting by the individualized education program (IEP) Team; and
9. Placement in an interim alternative setting for not more than forty-five (45) days because maintaining the current placement is substantially likely to result in injury to the student or others.

The due process hearing complaint is properly filed when both the MDE and the other parties have received a copy of the complaint from the complaining party.

The due process hearing complaint must contain the following information:

1. The name of the student, address of residence of the student (or available contact information in the case of a homeless child or youth), and the name of the school the student attends;
2. A description of the nature of the problem, including related facts; and
3. A proposed resolution of the problem to the extent known and available to the party at that time.

A model due process hearing complaint form is available from your local special education coordinator or the Associate Superintendent for Special Education at the MAISD.

The information contained in the due process hearing complaint must be kept confidential.

Remember: A complete list of your child's education rights are outlined in the Procedural Safeguards Booklet at your local district or are available to view and download on the Parent Resources webpage on the Montcalm Area Intermediate School District website at www.maisd.com.

To access the PAC website page please click on the Student Programs & Services tab, Special Education tab (at left), Resources dropdown, Parent Advisory Committee dropdown.

Medicaid Overview for Parents

The Medicaid SBS Program

Michigan's **School Based Services (SBS)** program has its legal basis in the 1988 amendment to the **Social Security Act** [42USC1396b(c)]. This Act allows for partial reimbursement to schools for health services. These are provided to Medicaid eligible students with disabilities who qualify under the federal **Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA)**.

Nationally, more than 25 million children rely on Medicaid for health care and 43 states participate in the SBS program. In Michigan, nearly 900,000 children rely on Medicaid for health care. **All 57 Michigan intermediate schools districts participate in the SBS program.** The Montcalm Area Intermediate School District and the local school districts have participated in the program since 1994.

What the SBS Program Provides

In Michigan, The Medicaid School Based Services program:

- ❖ **Provides partial reimbursement for services such as**

Occupational therapy	Orientation and mobility services
Physical therapy	Transportation
Speech therapy	Nursing services
Psychological services	Case management
Social work services	Assistive technology services
- ❖ **Does not affect a family's Medicaid insurance benefits or the family's private health insurance benefits.** There is **NO COST** to the family, now or in the future. No private insurance companies will be billed for reimbursement for school-based health services.
- ❖ **Helps school districts** because it offsets some of the costs of health care that schools provide to children and students.
- ❖ **Is voluntary and requires parents/guardians to provide written consent** to release information about their child in order to bill Medicaid. This consent may be revoked at any time by the parent or guardian.

Confidentiality

Only authorized school personnel will be advised of your child's Medicaid eligibility or personal information.

New Regulations

State regulations require school districts to obtain parent/guardian consent to release information to bill the Medicaid program. The MAISD requests this consent at the time of your child's IEP.



Glossary – Terms and Definitions

Accommodations: Changes in curriculum or instruction that does not substantially modify the requirements of the class or alter the content standards or benchmarks. Accommodations are determined by the IEP Team and are documented in the student IEP Team report.

Adapted Physical Education: A diversified program of developmental activities, games, sports, and rhythms suited to the interests, capabilities and needs of children with disabilities who may not successfully engage in a regular physical education program.

Advocate: An individual, either a parent or professional with special knowledge or training concerning the issues of students with disabilities, who accompanies/represents parents and students at IEPT meetings, due process hearings and other non-judicial proceedings seeking enforcement of the education rights of that student.

Age of Majority/Transfer of Rights: When a student with a disability reaches the age of eighteen, all rights accorded to a parent transfer to the student. The parent and student must be informed of the transfer of rights at least one year prior to the student's eighteenth birthday.

Alternate Assessment: Federal law IDEA requires that the progress of all students be measured by statewide assessments. The IEP team will decide upon the appropriate state assessment for each student.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): Federal law requiring accommodations for people with disabilities in the community and workplace.

Ancillary and Other Related Services: Services especially designed to meet the unique needs of persons with disabilities through age twenty-five. These services include the following; audio logical, medical, psychiatric, psychological, speech and language, or educational evaluation; occupational, physical, recreational, music, art, or other therapy; accommodations and modifications; assistive technology devices and services; mobility and orientation services.

Annual Goal: A set of general statements, which represent expected achievement over a year's time for persons with disabilities enrolled in special education programs and services.

Assessment: Specific tools used to gather information. This includes formal and informal tests; student records; work products; and observations of the student in the classroom, other school environments, and the community. This information is used to evaluate the student's needs.

Assistive Technology Device: Any item, piece of equipment, or product that is used to increase, maintains, or improves functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. Assistive technology needs are determined by the IEP Team.

Assistive Technology Service: Any service that helps a student with a disability in the selection, acquisition or use of an assistive technology device. This includes training with the device.

Autism Spectrum Disorder: A neurological based development disorder occurring within the first three years of life. Now considered a spectrum disorder, with varying degrees of severity, it affects communication, socialization, and sensory perception.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): A plan developed by a team to address situations when behavior problems interfere with learning.

CA-60: Confidential information which may contain such records as: IEPs, medical information, testing, report cards, etc.

Complaint: A specific written and signed allegation by an agency, private individual, or organization that there is an unresolved violation, misinterpretation or misapplication of the law, the State or Intermediate School District (ISD) Plans, or Individualized Education Program (IEP), court decision, or decision of a hearing officer.

Comprehensive Evaluation: A series of assessments and observation, formal and informal, conducted for the purpose of determining eligibility for special education and related services and for determining the current level of educational performance.

Consent: An agreement in writing to carry out an activity after being fully informed in one's native language of all information relevant to the activity.

Continuum of Service: The range of supports and services that must be provided by a school district that allows students with disabilities to be provided a free appropriate public education.

Course of Study: A student's career pathway will determine the course of study to be developed. A general education curriculum following the Michigan Merit Curriculum leading to a high school diploma is one option. Students who will not be meeting high school content standards or earning high school credit will have a course of study focusing on a certificate of achievement.

Departmentalize: A secondary level delivery system in which two or more special education teachers group special education students by instructional content areas.

Disability, Person With: A person determined by an Individualized Educational Program Team (IEPT), or a hearing officer to have a characteristic or set of characteristics as defined in the descriptions of the disability (autistic spectrum disorder, emotional impairment, hearing impairment, cognitive impairment, deaf-blindness, early childhood developmental delay, other health impairment, physical impairment, specific learning disability, speech and language impairment, severe multiple impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment) and who, because of the disability, needs special education supports.

Dissenting Report: May be written by a parent or a professional, who disagrees with the IEP. This report must be attached to the final IEP.

Due Process: A procedure guaranteed by federal law, for resolving disputes regarding special education services.

Extended School Year (ESY): Special education programming that extends beyond the regular school year. Eligibility and services are determined by the IEP team at no cost to the parent of the child.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): The requirement in federal law that each student with a disability must receive a publicly funded education that is individually designed to meet that student's unique needs.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): A federal law which gives parents, and the student over eighteen years of age, access to and control over all education and school records.

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA): An assessment of the factors that affect a student's behavior, typically including a review of the environment and the student's needs.

Inclusion: The placement of a student with a disability in a general education classroom with his/her age-appropriate peers, with the supports necessary for him/her to benefit from his/her educational experiences. A program is designed to meet his/her individual needs.

Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE): An evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner(s) who is not employed by the public agency responsible for education of the student. A contracted agent for the purpose of conducting an independent evaluation is not considered an employee of the public school agency.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): The federal law that sets national standards for educating students with disabilities. State laws must meet or can exceed the standards of IDEA.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A specially designed instruction program developed by the IEP team, that describes the student's eligibility, the student's present level of performance, annual goals and short term objectives, specific educational and related services, amount of time spent in general education, the least restrictive environment, the reasons why the IEP is accepted or rejected, transition services, and the dates and frequency of services – as specific as possible. The IEP shall be reviewed annually or more often as needed.

Individualized Educational Program Team (IEPT): Persons appointed and invited (including parents) by the superintendent or designee to determine a student's eligibility for special education and, if eligible and in need of special education services, to develop an IEP. The IEP team also addresses decisions related to additional evaluation or reevaluations, as well as student discipline.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP): A plan of service developed by a team for a student with a disability between the ages of zero and three years; emphasize interagency collaboration.

Intermediate School District (ISD): The Montcalm Area ISD provides technical assistance and support to the local school districts and public school academies within the counties.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): The requirement that each student with a disability be educated and involved as much as possible with non-disabled peers in general education classes and activities. LRE spans placements from fully "self-contained" classrooms with little or no non-disabled peer contact to "full inclusion" wherein the student is involved with non-disabled peers for most or all of the school day. LRE is potentially different for each student.

Local Education Agency (LEA): The school district that is directly responsible for providing special education services in a geographical area.

Manifestation Determination Review: An IEPT meeting to address the relationship between the student's behavior problems and his/her disability.

Mediation: A process in which an impartial facilitator tries to help parents and the school district resolve disagreements.

MI Access: Michigan's alternate assessments to the MEAP. These assessments are based on the expected independence level that each student will achieve in adult life roles. The IEP Team should discuss the different options and select the best assessment tool for each student.

Modification: Changes in curriculum or instruction that substantially changes the requirements of the class or substantially alters the content standards and benchmarks.

Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET): Two or more professionals from separate disciplines (such as: psychologist, teacher(s), social worker, speech and language therapist, etc.) and the parent(s), who share

responsibility for conducting a comprehensive evaluation of a student suspected of having a disability or reevaluating a person with a disability.

Music Therapy: A method used by music therapists to teach students through musical games or playing instruments how to interact with others and develop communication skills.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): January 8, 2002, President Bush signed NCLB into law. It was an education reform plan making changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). It is looking for stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents and emphasis on teaching methods. The new version (2015) of NCLB is the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Occupational Therapist (OT): A professional who evaluates and determines purposeful activities to facilitate improvement of a student's physical, fine motor, sensory motor and self care functioning.

Office of Civil Rights (OCR): An agency with the U.S. Department of Education that enforces Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the ADA. OCR investigates allegations of discrimination based upon disability.

Orientation and Mobility (O&M): Support to increase the accessibility of the educational environment for a student with a disability.

Paraprofessional (Parapro): A trained assistant who is directed by the classroom teacher and/or teacher consultant, to help provide accommodations for students with disabilities. This may include helping the teacher make adaptations to the curriculum, assisting students with assignments, working with students in relation to the class as a whole, and helping other students understand the student's disability.

Parent: The mother, father, surrogate, or legally designated guardian of the person with a disability. Parent also means the actual student with a disability when he/she reaches the age of eighteen years, if a legal guardian has not been appointed by appropriate court proceedings.

Parent Advisory Committee (PAC): A committee made up of parents of students with disabilities from each local educational agency within the Intermediate School District (ISD) appointed by the ISD Board of Education. The PAC is responsible for participating in the development of the ISD Plan and advising the ISD Board of Education on matters relating to special education.

Person-Centered Plan (PCP): The process of helping a person with a disability develop a life plan based on his/her interest, strengths and needs.

Physical Therapist (PT): A professional who assesses and treats a student to improve his/her level of functioning, mainly in the area of mobility and walking skills.

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS): A system of picture symbol cards which are used as a communication tool when verbal language is not present. It may also enhance the development of verbal language.

Procedural Safeguards (also known as "Rights" or "Due Process"): Regulations designed to protect students with disabilities and their parents. A copy is available from your local school or on the Montcalm Area Intermediate School District website.

Psychological Evaluation: The portion of a student's overall special education evaluation that tests general aptitudes and abilities, eye-hand coordination, social skills, emotional development and thinking skills.

Public Expense: Provision of service(s) by the public school agency (PSA) at no cost to the parent(s). Under special circumstances, the PSA may pay for an outside evaluation, program, or service(s), which may include transportation and/or room and board.

Public School Academy: A public school governed by a board of education, created by a formal agreement/charter between a person or group of people and an approved educational agency or State, that is exempt from some state education regulations and local school district rules in exchange for agreeing to meet certain accountability requirements.

Public School Agency: A public school governed by a board of education, legally constituted within a State, which has administrative control and direction of a public elementary or secondary school (includes both local districts and public school academies/charter schools).

Related Service: Services required to assist an individual with disabilities to benefit from special education, including but not limited to: transportation, OT, PT, medical care.

Resource Room: A classroom program that may serve students up to a full day. The student may receive instruction in any or all of the content area courses, which include: language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science.

Section 504: Refers to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which protects the civil rights of persons with disabilities. It also applies to the provision of services for children whose disability is not severe enough to warrant eligibility for special education services, but could benefit from supportive services and classroom modifications.

Self-Contained Classroom: A separate classroom, located within a general education school, used by students with disabilities, which may have either the same categorical/educational impairment grouping or may serve students with different disabilities.

Sensory Diet: A strategy that consists of a carefully planned practical program of specific sensory activities that is scheduled according to each child's individual needs.

Short-Term Instructional Objectives (STIO): Objectives written in measurable terms that relate to the annual goals and represent expected achievement over several weeks or months but not more than one year. A report on the progress towards these objectives must be provided to parents at least as often as every marking period.

Special Education: Specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique educational needs of each student with a disability who is eligible for services; designed to help each student reach his/her maximum potential. All of the following may be included in the definition of special education: special education classroom instruction; instruction in physical education; instructional services such as preprimary, teacher consultant, speech and language, homebound and hospitalized, and juvenile detention facilities; ancillary and other related services such as occupational, physical, recreational, music, art or other therapy, mobility and orientation, school psychological and school social work services; supplemental aids, accommodations and modifications.

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC): A committee appointed by the State Board of Education to advise that Board on matters relating to the delivery of special education.

Teacher Consultant (TC): A certified special education teacher, with teacher consultant approval, who provides instructional support to students with disabilities, provides consultation to and/or team teaches with the general education classroom teacher and consults with parents.

Three Year Re-evaluation: This is also known as the MET (see definition of MET). The MET must be conducted every three years or sooner, if needed.

Transition: As defined by law, a set of decisions an IEP team makes to prepare students with disabilities for life after school; emphasizing interagency collaboration. (It is also a commonly used term that refers to a change of building, level, grade, classroom, or activity at any age.)

Transition Services: A coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities. These activities may include post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), and access to adult services, independent living, and community participation.

Visual Schedules and Supports: Tools that enable a student to keep track of daily activities and also help develop an understanding of time frames and environmental sequences. Examples include individual daily schedules, calendars, lists, and graphic organizers.



Special Education Acronyms

ADA	American with Disabilities Act
AD(H)D	Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder
AI	Autistic Impaired (now referred to as ASD)
AS	Asperger's Syndrome
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder (previously referred to as AI)
BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan
CBI	Community Based Instruction
CI	Cognitive Impairment (previously referred to as EMI, SCI, SMI, and TMI)
CP	Cerebral Palsy
Db	Deaf-blindness
DD	Developmental Disability/Delay
DHH	Deaf, Hard of Hearing (previously referred to as HI – Hearing Impairment)
ECDD	Early Childhood Developmental Delay (previously referred to as PPI)
EI	Emotional Impairment
EMI	Educable Mental Impairment (now referred to as CI)
ESY	Extended School Year
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FTE	Full Time Equivalency
HI	Hearing Impairment (now referred to as DHH – Deaf, Hard of Hearing)
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IDEIA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004
IEE	Independent Education Evaluation
IEP	Individualized Education Program

IEPT	Individualized Education Program Team
IFSP	Individualized Family Service Plan
ISD	Intermediate School District
LEA	Local Education Agency
LD	Learning Disability (now referred to as SLD)
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MAISD	Montcalm Area Intermediate School District
MDE	Michigan Department of Education
MET	Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team
MICI	Mild Cognitive Impairment
MOCI	Moderate Cognitive Impairment
MTSS	Multi-Tier System of Support
OHI	Other Health Impairment (previously referred to as POHI)
O&M	Orientation and Mobility
OSE/EIS	Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services
OT	Occupational Therapist
PAC	Parent Advisory Committee
PBS	Positive Behavior Support
PDD	Pervasive Developmental Delay
PECS	Picture Exchange Communication System
PI	Physical Impairment (previously referred to as POHI)
PLAAFP	Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (previously referred to as PLEP)
PLEP	Present Levels of Educational Performance (now referred to as PLAAFP)
POHI	Physical or Other Health Impairment (now referred to as PI or OHI)

PPI	Preprimary Impairment (now referred to as ECDD)
PSA	Public School Academy/Charter School
PT	Physical Therapist
RR	Resource Room
SCI	Severely Cognitively Impaired (now referred to as CI)
SEAC	State Special Education Advisory Committee
SLD	Specific Learning Disabled (previously referred to as LD)
SLI	Speech and Language Impairment
SMI	Severe Mental Impairment (now referred to as CI)
SSW	School Social Worker
SXI	Severe Multiple Impairment
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
TC	Teacher Consultant
TMI	Trainable Mental Impairment (now referred to as CI)
TSLI	Teacher of Speech and Language Impairment
VI	Visual Impairment

Resources For Parents

<p>The ARC of Michigan Home Office: 800-292-7851 www.arcmi.org</p>	<p>The Arc-Kent County 616-459-3339 www.ArcKent.org</p>
<p>Autism Society of Michigan Michigan only: 800-223-6722 Local: 517-882-2800 www.autism-mi.org</p>	<p>Center for Educational Networking (CEN) 517-908-3900 www.cenmi.org</p>
<p>Children’s Special Health Care Services 800-359-3722 www.michigan.gov/mdhhs</p>	<p>Child and Family Services of Michigan 517-349-6226 www.cfsm.org</p>
<p>Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) 888-232-7733 www.cec.sped.org</p>	<p>Cystic Fibrosis Foundation 800-344-4823 www.cff.org</p>
<p>Department of Health & Human Services 517-373-3740 www.michigan.gov/mdhhs</p>	<p>Down Syndrome Association of West Michigan 616-956-3488 www.dsawm.org</p>
<p>Early On Michigan 800-EARLY ON www.1800earlyon.org</p>	<p>Easter Seal Society of Michigan 800-757-3257 www.essmichigan.org</p>
<p>Epilepsy Support Services 517-337-9314</p>	<p>Family to Family Children’s Special Health Care Services Home Office: (800) 359-3722 www.f2fmichigan.org</p>
<p>Free Legal Aid Clinic, INC - Elder Law & Advocacy Center 313-833-0058 www.detroitflac.com</p>	<p>IDEA www.sites.ed.gov/idea/</p>
<p>Learning Disability Association Of Michigan 616-284-1650 www.lidaofmichigan.org</p>	<p>Legal Aid of Western Michigan 616-774-0672 www.lawestmi.org</p>
<p>Michigan Association for the Blind 800-466-8084 www.abvimichigan.org</p>	<p>MI Child 888-988-6300 www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/</p>
<p>Michigan Department of Education Main Office: 866-633-5788 www.michigan.gov/mde</p>	<p>Michigan Protection & Advocacy Service 800-288-5923 www.mpas.org</p>
<p>Michigan Special Education Mediation Services 833-543-7178 www.Mikids1st.org</p>	<p>Montcalm Center for Behavioral Health 800-377-0974 www.montcalmcenter.org</p>
<p>Muscular Dystrophy Association 800-572-1717 www.mda.org</p>	<p>National Association for Parents of the Visually Impaired 800-562-6265 www.napvi.org</p>

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition www.ncset.org	National Institute of Health (NIH) Information www./health.nih.gov
National Technical Assistance Center on Transition 704-687-8606 https://transitionta.org	Office of Special Education & Rehab Services www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html
Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights 952-838-9000 www.pacer.org	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports www.pbis.org
Social Security Administration (SSA) 800-772-1213 www.ssa.gov/	Spina Bifida Association of America 800-621-3141 www.spinabifidaassociation.org
United Cerebral Palsy Association Of Michigan 517-203-1200 www.ucpmichigan.org	U.S. Department of Education www.ed.gov/parents/

Local School Districts and Special Education Coordinators

Carson City-Crystal Area Schools
115 E. Main Street
Carson City, MI 48811
989.584.3138
www.carsoncity.k12.mi.us

*Special Education Director
John Sattler*

Flat River Academy
9481 W Jordan Road
Greenville, MI 48838
616.754.9360
<http://www.flatriveracademy.org>

*Special Education Coordinator
Hilary Karnatz*

Lakeview Community Schools
9800 Youngman Road
Lakeview, MI 48850
989.352.7221
www.lakeviewschools.net

*Special Education Coordinator
Holly Poll & Kori Davis*

Tri County Area Schools
94 Cherry Street
Sand Lake, MI 49343
616.636.5454
www.tricountyschools.com

*Special Education Director
Melissa Clegg*

Central Montcalm Public School
1480 Sheridan Road S.W.
Stanton, MI 48888
989.831.2000
www.central-montcalm.org

*Special Education Coordinator
Amy Meinhardt*

Greenville Public Schools
1414 Chase Road
Greenville, MI 48838
616.754.3686
www.gpsjackets.org

*Special Education Director
Amy Wierzbicki*

Montabella Community Schools
1456 E. North County Line Road
Blanchard, MI 49310
989.427.5414
www.montabella.com

*Special Education Coordinator
Jacki Fredricks*

Vestaburg Community School
7100 Avenue B
Vestaburg, MI 48891
989-268-5343
www.vcs-k12.net

*Special Education Director
Emily Groulx*

Montcalm Area Intermediate School District

Montcalm Area Intermediate School District
621 New Street, PO Box 367
Stanton, MI 48888
989.831.5261
www.maisd.com

Daniel Brant, Associate Superintendent Special Education
Kathryn Glanville, Coordinator, Program Accountability & Improvement

Appendix B

My Personal Directory

My child's eligibility for special education is: _____

School & address: _____

Building: _____ Office Phone: _____

Principal: _____ email: _____ phone & ext: _____

Counselor: _____ email: _____ phone & ext: _____

Teacher: _____ email: _____ phone & ext: _____

Speech Therapist: _____ email: _____ phone & ext: _____

Occupational Therapist: _____ email: _____ phone & ext: _____

Physical Therapist: _____ email: _____ phone & ext: _____

Social Worker: _____ email: _____ phone & ext: _____

Teacher Consultant: _____ email: _____ phone & ext: _____

My child's bus driver is: _____ Bus number is: _____ Bus phone & ext: _____

Special Transportation: _____

Other Important Names

Other names, numbers, and addresses that are important to me include:

Name: _____ Phone & ext. _____

Address: _____ email: _____

Name: _____ Phone & ext. _____

Address: _____ email: _____

Name: _____ Phone & ext. _____

Address: _____ email: _____

Name: _____ Phone & ext. _____

Address: _____ email: _____

Name: _____ Phone & ext. _____

Address: _____ email: _____

Name: _____ Phone & ext. _____

Address: _____ email: _____

Name: _____ Phone & ext. _____

Address: _____ email: _____

Dates to Remember

Use this page to keep track of important meetings about your child's education.

Dates to Remember

Notes

Parent Input to IEP

Please take a few minutes to complete this form for your student's upcoming special education meeting. The information you provide will assist the special education team in developing an appropriate educational plan for your student.

Please return this form to: _____

Student Name _____ Teacher _____

1. Student Strengths: (describe your student's social and educational strengths)

2. Behavioral performance: (describe behavior at home or school and list specific examples of behavior that interferes with academic performance)

3. Social interaction: (describe the student's interaction with parents, siblings, teachers, and other students including specific incidents where ever possible)

4. Please describe your concerns for your student (including future goals)

5. Please describe areas that you feel your student needs assistance

6. Describe any concerns that your student may have about school

7. Additional comments:

Signed: _____ Date _____