

The Basics of Special Education

10 Steps in the Special Education Process:

1. **Referral:** Child is identified as possibly needing special education and related services. Visit BuildUpMI.org or call 888-320-8384 to find your local coordinator. **Within 10 calendar days after the referral**, the school must inform parent of the referral and request written consent to evaluate the student.
2. **Evaluation:** Child is evaluated by the IEP team to gather information to understand the educational needs of the child and to guide decision-making on services for the child. **“The time from referral or from receipt of parental consent to an initial evaluation to the completion of the individualized education program or the determination of ineligibility shall not be more than 30 school days.” R 340.1721c**
3. **Eligibility is decided:** IEP team, including parents, determine if child is eligible for special education using all available information about the child.
4. **Child is found eligible for services:** Child will either be found eligible for special education services and move to steps 5-10. If not eligible, see next page.
5. **IEP Meeting is scheduled: An IEP meeting must be held within 30 calendar days after it is determined the child qualifies for special education.** Involve parents in process.
6. **IEP meeting is held and IEP is written:** Entire IEP team writes the IEP together, using collected child data. IEP determines any and all services the child is to receive.
7. **Services are provided:** Services must begin as soon as possible after IEP development. All service providers and parents must have access to the IEP.
8. **Progress is measured and reported to parents:** The IEP will specify how the child’s progress will be measured. Reports are shared with parents. The IEP is reviewed yearly.
9. **IEP is reviewed: IEP is reviewed at least once per year.** Document is revised to address any lack of expected progress. Either the school or parents can request a review.
10. **Child is reevaluated: Must occur at least every three years.** Occurs to establish continued eligibility and child’s recent educational needs.

If child is not found eligible for Special Education:

- Parents must receive a copy of the evaluation report and the documentation of that *determination*.
- Under the IDEA, parents must also be given information about what they can do if they disagree with the eligibility decision.

- IDEA gives parents the right to request mediation or a due process hearing to resolve a dispute about the child's identification, evaluation, or education placement.
- Parents also have a right to obtain an independent educational evaluation (IEE).

- A child who has a disability, but who is not eligible under IDEA, may be eligible for the protections afforded by other laws. It's not uncommon for a child to have a 504 plan at school to address disability-related educational needs (instead of an IEP).
- Teachers and parents will need to work together to design interventions for the child to use in the classroom that will ensure continued success.
- While a child may not have qualified for special education services, it is imperative to continuously monitor each child for developmental changes. As the child grows, he/she may become eligible for services. Ongoing assessment will give more information regarding developmental changes.