

# Special Education Evaluations

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## Did You Know?!

A parent can ask for a student to be evaluated for special education services at any time. This includes an Initial Evaluation a Reevaluation or Additional Evaluations. The request needs to be in writing.

## Did You Know?!

A school district, or any person knowledgeable about the student, can ask for a student to be evaluated for special education services at any time.

## Did You Know?!

A school district has a duty to identify all students residing in their district who might need special education services. This duty is called Child Find. Child Find is from birth through age 21.

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The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires all states to have policies and procedures in place to ensure that all children with disabilities who are in need of Special Education Services and Related Services are:

Identified

Located

Evaluated

An **evaluation** is a process to determine whether a student has a disability and the nature and extent of the Special Education Services and Related Services the student needs.

A **disability** is an impairment that interferes with a child's ability to learn.

A disability is **described** as a child who has a mental, physical, or emotional impairment.

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Evaluations are a crucial part of developing an appropriate Individualized Education Program (IEP) and it has been my experience when I ask the question, "**Do you believe you have a clear picture of the student and what their unique social, emotional and educational needs are?**" The answer is typically "no".

## **First: Request an Evaluation (Referral)**

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The request for an Initial Evaluation a Reevaluation or for Additional Evaluations needs to be in writing. An **example** of an **Initial Evaluation Request** is in the addendum section and available on the [www.sealk12.org](http://www.sealk12.org) web site. The example can be modified and used to request a Reevaluation or Additional Evaluations.

The timelines are the same regardless if the request is for an Initial Evaluation a Reevaluation or for Additional Evaluations.

The request for an Initial Evaluation should be for both Special Education Services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

**Important:** The date the school district receives the request for an evaluation triggers the timelines the school district must follow.

## **Second: Prepare**

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It is extremely important a parent put their thoughts together in writing when they are asking for an Initial Evaluation a Reevaluation or for Additional Evaluations. Putting thoughts together will help parents when they are sitting in a meeting with the school district and/or when they are making their request for evaluation in writing.

In the addendum section and available on the [www.sealk12.org](http://www.sealk12.org) web site you will find an **example** of a **What Is Known** document. The example can, and should be, modified, deleted and added to, in order to describe the individual student.

The **What Is Known** document is not a requirement however this document has become extremely important for parents and guardians when attending meetings not only with the school district but medical professionals, first responders, etc.

## **Third: School District Must**

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The request has been made for an evaluation. The school district now needs to decide if they will evaluate.

Say what?!

The school district can say no to the request however, the school district **must** include the parent in a meeting to discuss and decide whether or not the student will be evaluated.

The meeting **must** take place within 25 school days of receipt of the original request to evaluate and the school district **must** give the parent a Prior Written Notice (PWN) within 25 school days of receipt of the original request to evaluate, regarding the decision to evaluate or not.

When the meeting is held parents should bring copies of their **What Is Known** document to hand to the team. Parents should also provide any additional documents they might have. Medical notes, outside evaluations, therapy notes, etc.

#### **Fourth: Consent Papers**

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If the decision is to evaluate, the school district must have parent consent to begin an evaluation. Once they have parent consent the school district now has an additional 35 school days to complete the evaluation, but the 35 school days does **not** start until the parent has signed Consent Papers.

And here is the tricky part. The parent needs to carefully look at the Consent Papers. Repeatedly Consent Papers do not include all the areas discussed in the meeting to decide whether to evaluate or not and/or they are not specific.

For example, sensory processing. Checking the Fine Motor box does not mean the school district will be doing a sensory processing profile. It must be written in. Fine Motor can include other areas, for instance, handwriting, etc.

#### **Fifth: Eligibility Meeting (Evaluation Meeting)**

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The school district must hold an Eligibility Meeting within the 35 school days after the parent has signed consent. This document does not include the details of the Eligibility Meeting however this is a crucial and important meeting.

**Important:** Parents may, and should, ask for draft copies of evaluation reports and the data that was collected **prior** to the Eligibility Meeting. Make sure the request is in writing and a specific date is listed for when the parent wants the information. Parents should ask for the information as an email attachment to share with others if needed.