

CPSE Process

How will I know if my preschool-age child needs special education?

The Referral

If your child received early intervention services as an infant or toddler up to age three, and may still need special education, your service coordinator will assist you with transition planning and making a referral to the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE).

If your preschool-age child (3-5 years old) did not receive early intervention services, but has some delays or lags in development such as difficulty in talking, moving around, thinking, or learning or is facing physical or behavioral challenges — you, or professionals who know your child, may make a referral to the chairperson of your school district's Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) who will assist you in completing the referral process.

The CPSE must include: the parent of the child, a regular education teacher (if the child is or may be participating in the regular education environment), a special education teacher or related service provider, a representative of the local school district who serves as the chairperson of the CPSE, an individual who can interpret evaluation results, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise about the child, an additional parent member (unless the parent(s) of the child request that this person not participate), and a licensed or certified professional from the Department of Health's Early Intervention Program (for a child in transition from the Early Intervention Program). A certified or licensed preschool representative from the municipality must be notified of scheduled meetings; however, the CPSE meetings can be held whether or not the municipal representative attends.

The Evaluation Process

When your child is referred to the CPSE, you will be given a list of agencies approved by the State Education Department to provide preschool special education evaluations. You will be asked to select one of the approved evaluators, then sign a consent form for your child to be evaluated at no cost to you or your family.

The CPSE will also give you a copy of the due process procedural safeguards notice. If your child's evaluation is not timely or, if you disagree with the evaluation results or the recommendation of the CPSE, you have the right to

ask for an independent evaluation, mediation or an impartial hearing. A copy of the evaluation report, including a summary of the evaluation, will be provided to you and to other CPSE members. You will be asked to meet with them to talk about the evaluation results. If the CPSE finds your child is not eligible for special education programs and/or services, you will be given the reasons for the decision in writing.

How will my child receive special education programs and services?

The CPSE Recommendation and the Individual Education Program (IEP)

If your child has a disability that may be affecting his or her learning, the CPSE will find your child to be an eligible "preschool student with a disability." The CPSE will also recommend the program or services to meet your child's individual needs and where they will be provided. If your child is an eligible preschool student with a disability, you and the other CPSE members will write an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for your child that will list the recommended services to be provided, how often, and for how long. The recommendations will be forwarded to your local school district Board of Education for approval. Most children with disabilities can receive the special education services they need in settings with their non-disabled peers. They also should participate in developmentally appropriate activities. The CPSE must consider how to provide the services in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), where your child can learn close to your home with other children of the same age who do not have disabilities. Services may be provided at an approved or licensed pre-kindergarten or Head Start program, the work-site of a provider, the student's home, a hospital, a State facility or a child care location.