

Where Can I Get Help?

The system of requesting and receiving special education services is designed to be an **easy process for parents** to manage without the help of an attorney.

If you are having trouble requesting or receiving services for your child, **find out if your child's school has a parent mentor**, which is a parent of a child with a disability who helps other parents work with the school system on special education issues.

In addition, most legal aid offices handle special education claims. So if you are having trouble with the school, **contact your local legal aid office** for help. If you don't know how to contact your local legal aid program, call 1-866-LAW-OHIO or visit www.ohiolegalservices.org.



Ohio State Legal Services

555 Buttles Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43215
614-221-7201
1-800-589-5888

To find a free civil legal aid program in your county, go to www.ohiolegalservices.org or call toll-free 1-866-LAW-OHIO (1-866-529-6446)

Ohio Legal Rights Service (OLRS)

50 West Broad Street, Suite 1400
Columbus, Ohio 43215-5923
614-466-7264 or 1-800-282-9181
TTY: 614-728-2553 or
1-800-858-3542
www.olrs.ohio.gov

Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities

165 West Center Street, Suite 302
Marion, OH 43302-3741
740-382-5452 or 1-800-374-2806
www.ocecd.org

Education for Children with Disabilities



A Guide to Receiving
Special Education Services
for Ohio Students and Families

Who Needs Special Education Services?

All children with disabilities that affect their education can get special education services.

Who is eligible for services?

Children from age 3 through age 22 can get special education services if they have a disability that affects learning.

What is a disability?

Even if your child has never been diagnosed with a disability, there are some signs that he/she needs special education services:

- ◆ Failing grades or being held back
- ◆ Struggling in school despite ability or effort
- ◆ Difficulty reading or spelling
- ◆ Difficulty with numbers or time
- ◆ Unable to pay attention
- ◆ Physical challenges, such as trouble holding a pencil

What services are available?

Schools can accommodate a child's disability in many ways, including:

- ◆ Physical accommodations
- ◆ Specially-trained teachers or aides
- ◆ Extended time for testing or class work
- ◆ Behavioral intervention plans, counseling



How Can I Get Special Education Services for My Child?

Federal law creates specific procedures for requesting and providing special education services.



1. Request an Evaluation in Writing

Write a letter to your child's school requesting that your child be evaluated.

2. School Performs an Evaluation

After obtaining parental consent, the school will perform an evaluation that consists of meeting with teachers and performing tests that are related to the child's suspected disability. The school will determine whether the child has a disability based on this evaluation.

3. School and Parents Develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP)

If the school determines that the child has a disability, the child's teachers, counselors, and school officials will meet with the parents to form a plan that will meet the child's specific needs. Once there is agreement on the plan, the school is required to follow its terms.

What Rights Do We Have?

Federal and Ohio laws provide parents and children with specific rights and ways to enforce those rights.

- ◆ Special education services **must be free** to the child and family, even if the school proposes placing the child in a private school.
- ◆ The school **may not bring an attorney** to meetings with a family unless the family also brings an attorney.
- ◆ The family **has a right to bring an attorney** to their child's IEP meetings.
- ◆ Homeless youth living away from their parents **must receive a surrogate parent** who will act in the student's interests.
- ◆ If you disagree with the school's evaluation, you can request a **free reevaluation**.
- ◆ If you disagree with the school's reevaluation or the services your child is receiving, you can request a hearing by an **impartial hearing officer**.
- ◆ If you win your argument in a hearing or in court, you can receive **attorney's fees**.
- ◆ If you feel that your rights are being ignored, contact one of the organizations listed on the back page for assistance.

