

Pierce County School System

# Special Education Supervision and Monitoring Manual

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Belinda Tiller, Director of Student Services

Pierce County School System

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This manual is to be used as a guide for implementation and in conjunction with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) and its regulations, The Georgia State Department of Education's Rules, implemented April 18, 2011, and the Georgia Implementation Manuals 1 and 2. This Special Education Supervision and Monitoring Manual details the procedures that Pierce County School System, Director of Special Education, and School Administrators will follow to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations pertaining to educating students with special needs. If any information in this manual conflicts with current rules, the rules supersede.

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## Area of General Supervision I: Identification Processes

### Indicators:

9: Disproportionality in Special Education

10: Disproportionality by Category

11: Child Find

12: Early Transition

## Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information

See State Rule: 160-4-7-.08

### **DEFINITION**

Education records are records that directly relate to a student and are maintained by an educational agency or institution.

### **COMPONENTS**

- *Confidential Information*
- *Access rights and required procedures*
- *Amendment of Records at parent request*
- *Results of hearing*
- *Parent Consent*
- *Safeguards*
- *Destruction of Confidential Information*

<b>Description</b>
All information which identifies a student as being a student with a disability is kept confidential. This includes but not limited to all IEP paperwork. Information from IEPs will only be shared with staff members who have a need to know. All IEPs and supporting documents are to remain in a secure location, under lock and key, at the school and district levels.
<b>Method to Monitor for Compliance</b>
Records will be handled and maintained in such a manner as to insure confidentiality.
<b>Monitoring Staff</b>
District Level – Director of Student Services, School Psychologist, Due Process Compliance Coordinator, Student Services Secretary School Level – Principal, Special Education Coordinator, Special Education Teacher

**Student Support Team**  
**See State Rule: 160-4-2-.32**

**DEFINITION**

Student Support Team (SST) is an interdisciplinary group that uses a systematic process to address learning and / or behavior problems of students, K – 12, in a school.

**COMPONENTS**

- *Requirement for local school SST*
- *Student evaluation*
- *SST Members*
- *Parents / Guardian participation*
- *Steps of SST Process*
- *Documentation of SST Activities*
- *Exceptions to the use of the SST Process*

<b>Description</b>
When the SST requests a psychological evaluation, the RTI/SST Coordinator from the referring school must submit all RTI/SST documentation to the Special Education Office.
<b>Method to Monitor for Compliance</b>
District leaders in collaboration with Principals will ensure that SST is using the data – driven problem solving process by providing ongoing professional development on the: RTI process, organization of paperwork, clear definitions of roles and responsibilities, processes, procedures and legal aspects of SST. SST Coordinator at each school <b>will monitor</b> the students being referred to SST by collaborating with the referring teacher / team upon consideration of SST referral based on RTI / progress monitoring findings. SST Coordinator at each school <b>will monitor</b> progress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following guidelines outlined in Procedures &amp; Forms RTI / SST / 504 Plans Manual along with TIER 3 SST forms.</li> <li>• Conducting monthly fidelity checks to ensure quality of interventions.</li> <li>• Sharing progress with administrators during monthly Design Team meetings before referral for psychological evaluation.</li> <li>• Director of Student Services will monitor the placement rate of initial referrals to special education (high / low percentage of referrals found eligible).</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring Staff</b>
District Level – District RTI/SST Coordinator, Director of Student Services, Due Process Compliance Coordinator, Student Services Secretary School Level – Principal, Assistant Principal, School RTI/SST Coordinators, Special Education Coordinator(s)

## What is the Student Support Team?

SST teams had their origin in a federal lawsuit known as Marshall vs. Georgia (1984). It dealt primarily with disproportionate placement of minority students in Special Education. Within this case, it became obvious that in Georgia there was no standard process for students to obtain individualized help in the regular classroom for learning or behavior difficulties but many times were placed in Special Education often being removed from the general education classroom.

As part of Georgia's commitment to the federal court to remedy technical violations found in the trial, the State of Georgia mandated that a Student Support Team (SST) would be established in every Georgia public school, K – 12. The court accepted this commitment, thereby making SST mandate a permanent injunction.

The SST is a joint effort between regular education and special education to identify and plan alternative instructional strategies for children prior to or in lieu of a special education referral. Each building level team is comprised of such persons as administrators, classroom teachers, requesting teachers, special education teachers, academic coaches, counselors, school psychologist, central office personnel, and parents.

This interdisciplinary group which plans for interventions in a student's education program shall engage in a six step process to include: (1) identification of needs, (2) assessment, if necessary, (3) academic (educational) and / or behavior plan, (4) implementation, (5) follow-up and support, and (6) continuous monitoring and evaluation.

Students who are experiencing difficulties, in a number of areas, benefit from the activities of the SST. This includes students who are experiencing a lack of progress as well as those students who are in need of a more challenging academic program. At any time during this process, if the team has sufficient evidence that the student has a disability, the team should determine whether an evaluation or 504 Plan is necessary. **For students with obvious severe disabilities and / or in crisis for whom delay of referral would be detrimental to the student, the SST may bypass implementation of alternative strategies prior to referral. The reason for bypassing this process must be clearly documented.**

The overall function of the Student Support Team committee discusses, develops and implements research based interventions for teachers / staff to use with students. The SST is an intervention process for teachers and parents that provide an avenue for student success.

## **The SST Team**

The SST shall include at a minimum the referring teacher and at least two of the following participants, as appropriate to the needs of the student:

1. Parent / guardian shall be invited to participate in all meetings of their child's SST and in the development of interventions for their child.
2. RTI/SST Coordinator / Chairperson
3. Principal
4. Regular / General Education Teacher(s)
5. Lead teacher / Grade-Level Chairperson
6. Subject Area Specialist / Academic Coaches
7. Special Education Teacher
8. Counselor
9. School Psychologist
10. ESOL teacher
11. School / outside agency / social worker
12. Central Office personnel
13. Section 504 Coordinator / Special Education Director
14. Other appropriate personnel / district leaders:

## Team Member Roles

Team Members	Role
Parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental involvement and support are critical in assuring the successful development, implementation, and continuing support of effective intervention approaches</li> <li>• Attend SST / RTI meetings, as requested</li> </ul>
District Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the SST</li> <li>• Appoint or help principals appoint (or serve as) the SST chairperson</li> <li>• Provide leadership for the staff to ensure a basic understanding of the SST process</li> <li>• Provide information about local school operations and serve as a liaison between SST and the District</li> <li>• Train SST members on their roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Coordinate Tier 3 / SST professional development for staff</li> <li>• Provide school administrators and Central Office staff with annual feedback on the efficiency, effectiveness, and potential needs impacting SST support</li> <li>• Ensures SST-related records or documentation are adequately completed, maintained, and available for school and system-wide analysis, e.g., SST Annual Review</li> <li>• Surveys staff as to the effectiveness of SST actions</li> <li>• Collaborate with school staff to conduct regular fidelity checks to determine if the intervention is implemented the way it was intended</li> </ul>
School SST Coordinator / Chairperson <i>Facilitates meeting, accountable for time, checks for meaning and understanding, keeps group focused, remains positive and compliments group, diffuses emotionally charged statements, prioritizes concerns and actions, expects accountability from group, encourages input from all members and asks for specifics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinates &amp; attends SST meetings</li> <li>• Conducts monthly SST meetings</li> <li>• Invites mandatory &amp; appropriate members</li> <li>• Determines SST agenda for each SST meeting</li> <li>• Maintains SST files &amp; paperwork</li> <li>• Updates SST log</li> <li>• Attend district SST chairperson meetings</li> <li>• Ensures the SST referral and intervention process is not routinely used to address poorly defined academic or behavioral issues, e.g., those not first addressed through pre-referral Tier I and / or Tier 2 intervention</li> <li>• Communicates with the principal, Central Office Student Services staff, and other school staff members regarding specific intervention cases or difficulties</li> <li>• Ensures that SST documentation, whether action is pending, started, or completed, follows a student to the receiving school if a child transfers to another school</li> <li>• Participates in school-based SST Annual Reviews</li> <li>• Collaborate with school staff to conduct regular fidelity checks to determine if the intervention is implemented the way it was intended</li> <li>• The functions of the SST Chairperson(s) are to ensure that the intervention and referral procedures outlined in this and related documents are fully met and to also manage the day-to-day operations of the SST</li> </ul>
Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School principals are responsible for deciding on the most suitable SST organizational model for their school</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retains all responsible for deciding on the most suitable SST organizational model for their school</li> <li>• Retains all responsibility for proper and effective implementation of the SST / RTI procedures</li> <li>• The principal may delegate the management, administrative, and oversight duties related to SST requirements to a SST Chairperson</li> <li>• Principals will select the School RTI /SST Chairperson within the first 10 calendar days of the school year. The individuals selected, as well as other key individuals identified by the school principal ( e.g. newly assigned SST or critical student support staff, team model contact person, etc.) must attend all initial and recurring training provided</li> <li>• Arranges for coverage of staff needing to be present at SST meetings</li> <li>• Collaborate with school staff to conduct regular fidelity checks to determine if the intervention is implemented the way it was intended</li> </ul>
Recorder / Note taker	<p>Documents SST minutes containing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student name</li> <li>• Name of team members</li> <li>• Meeting dates</li> <li>• Identification of student learning and / or behavior problems</li> <li>• Records of assessments</li> <li>• Intervention (education) plan and implementation results (progress monitoring)</li> <li>• Takes notes during the meeting and provides a record of the discussion in a format that is useful to the school and participants on the 'Summary of Meeting Form'</li> <li>• Distributes intervention plans to appropriate members</li> </ul>
Referring teacher or RTI Team <i>(The referring teacher is making the case to support the learner's needs.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathers information / identification of learning and / or behavior weaknesses, reviews data</li> <li>• Develops intervention plan</li> <li>• Implements intervention plan</li> <li>• Evaluates and documents progress</li> <li>• Continues to monitor and evaluate student's progress</li> <li>• Pinpoint targeted learning / behavior weaknesses</li> </ul>
Regular Education Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in shared responsibilities such as assessment, observation, planning, etc.</li> <li>• Observe and help collect data on referred students</li> <li>• Participate in SST staff / professional development</li> <li>• Be familiar with intervention resources / programs readily available within the school / district</li> <li>• Identify and intervene with at-risk students having difficulties and / or performing below grade level</li> <li>• Initiate support, and participate in Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 interventions when needed</li> <li>• Encourage early parent participation, commitment, and support of needed interventions</li> <li>• Complete necessary documents and actions as detailed by the SST Chairperson</li> <li>• Develop, maintain, and monitor the intervention plan, and/or behavior contract</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement interventions with fidelity</li> <li>• Respects and listens to other individuals, questions statements to get clearer information, helps recorder, helps group stay on task, comes prepared, and is accountable for agreed upon actions</li> </ul>
School Psychologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides consult on Tier 1, 2, and 3 interventions</li> <li>• Supports SST team</li> <li>• Shares knowledge in their field</li> </ul>
Director of Special Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor active referral cases</li> <li>• Share SST information of students that transfer into system</li> <li>• Manage school-based Section 504 Accommodations program</li> <li>• Manage referral processes for special education assessment</li> </ul>
Other appropriate personnel <i>Miscellaneous team members offer additional insight and expertise in developing appropriate intervention plans for students and are valuable team members</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize own area of expertise in the development of student-centered interventions</li> <li>• Perform or participate in any needed pre-referral or intervention actions or screenings that are within the member's area of expertise (e.g., work with teacher on Tier 2 interventions, observations, social and health histories, etc.) and provide the results of such data gathering actions as appropriate</li> <li>• Assist the team in making intervention plans that not only targets the changes needed for effective student achievement but also enhances the student's strengths</li> <li>• Assist the team in making intervention plans that not only targets the changes needed for effective student achievement but also enhances the student's strengths</li> <li>• Assist in helping teachers, parents, students, and others feel welcome and an integral part of the intervention process</li> <li>• Assist the SST Chair in identifying team issues, concerns, and strategies to enhance team effectiveness and cohesion</li> <li>• Be familiar with and committed to problem-solving processes and related procedures such as curricular-based measures</li> <li>• Ask critical questions that help the team gather pertinent information about the whole child and his or her unique situation</li> </ul>
Counselor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor educational needs of at-risk, pregnant, homeless, home-bound, and / or unaccompanied youth who perform either academically or behaviorally below expectations</li> </ul>

## **Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Student Support Teams**

**taken from Georgia Department of Education**

### **Who makes up the Student Support Team?**

Membership varies from school to school. Typically there are three to five members. They may be an administrator, a counselor, a regular education teacher, a special education teacher, a school social worker, a parent, a media specialist, a school psychologist or other central office persons, as appropriate.

### **How does one get on this team and how long would one serve as a member?**

Members may be appointed or may volunteer, and some are invited to serve on a particular case that needs their expertise. Service time for standing members may vary from a semester to several years.

### **Who may request assistance from the SST?**

The problem-solving expertise of the SST is for the benefit of the entire school. Any unresolved problem that is impeding the learning process may be referred to the SST, by a teacher, administrator, parent or even a student.

### **What happens when SST addresses a problem?**

A brainstorming process is used to generate recommendations for solving the problem. These are usually given to a teacher to implement with a student.

### **How long is the SST strategy implemented?**

This depends on the specific problem. Usually, six weeks is sufficient to determine whether the recommendations will succeed. If not, the process may be used again to fine-tune the strategy. Some cases are of short duration, yet a few students may be followed by SST for their entire school career.

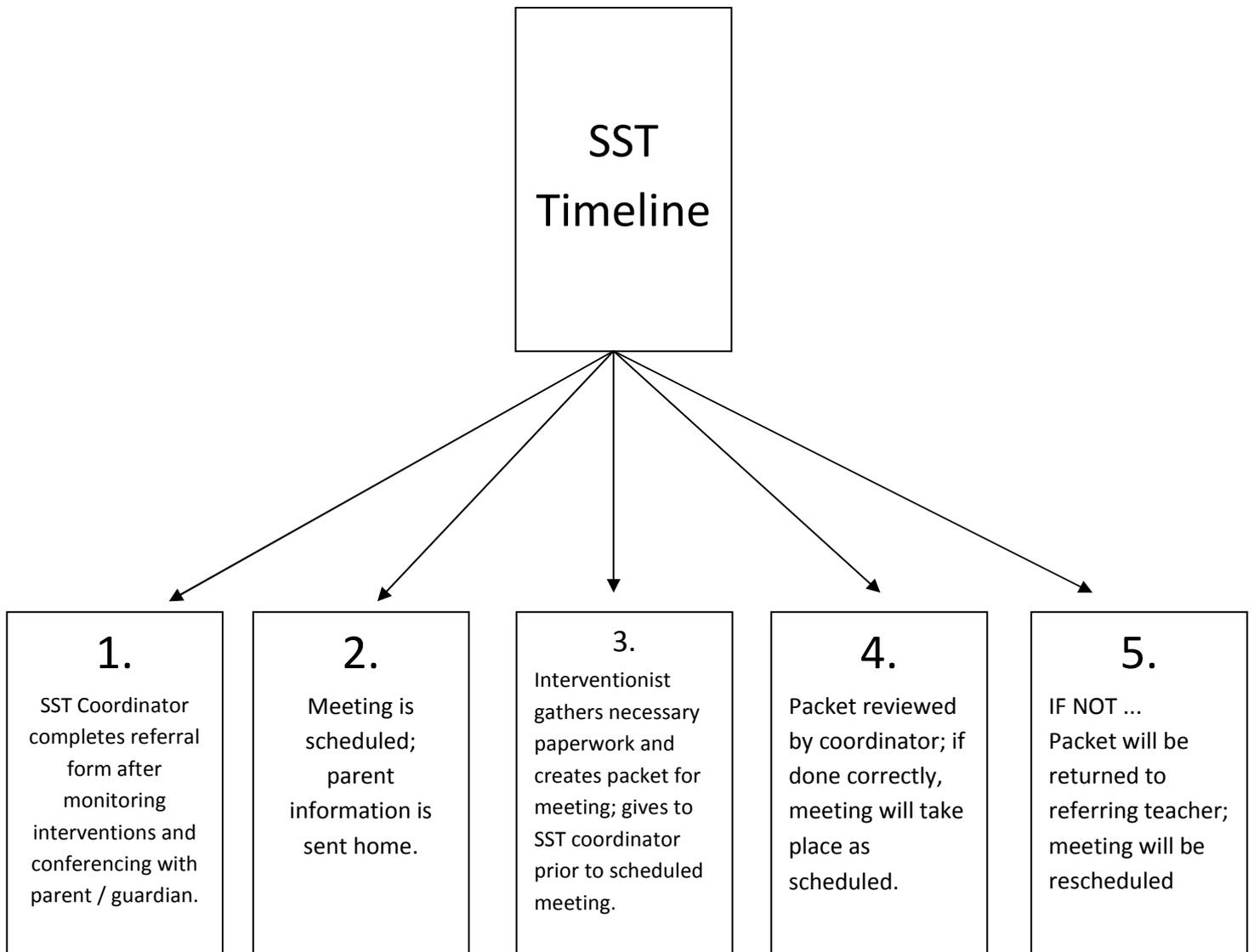
### **Can the SST refer students for evaluation for special education consideration?**

Yes, but only after several important decision criteria are met: one, that reasonable classroom interventions of sufficient duration have been carefully attempted, without success; and two, that the cause of the problem is suspected to be a disability that cannot be resolved without special education services. Exceptions would be pre-schoolers; and seriously disabled students for whom SST would delay obviously needed special education services. They may bypass SST, with the reason documented.

### **What data could be cited to indicate the effectiveness of an SST?**

Many indicators could be gathered in a school that would show success of the SST process, from teacher satisfaction to pre/post student performance. In systems that are regarded as having excellent SSTs, one measure is that, of students referred on by SST for special education evaluation, 80 to 90 percent of them end up qualifying for such services.

**Organizational Model**



## Special Education Eligibility Procedures

Referral for Special Education may be considered when the following guidelines are followed;

- Student's performance has been identified and analyzed.
- Student has participated at Tier 2 and Tier 3 in at least 2 research-based intervention cycles (6 weeks each, group and / or individual). The student's progress resulting from these interventions was evaluated by SST committee.
- Special Education Teacher must have joined the SST committee at Tier 3.
- Data documenting the rate of improvement (or lack thereof) over time for a targeted problem was collected.
- After Tier 3 interventions have been completed, data must confirm at least two of the following in order to find an individual eligible for referral for an evaluation for possible special education placement:
  - Student's slope of growth continues to be below grade-level
  - Student's performance on progress monitoring probes has not resulted in 4 consecutive data points above the universal screener cut off, either at present or during previous evaluations of performance.
  - Student's level of performance continues to be significantly discrepant from grade-level peers.

***Vision and hearing screening should be done at Tier 2 to rule out possible sensory issues which could have an impact on the student's response to intervention(s). Parent permission may be required.***

If these guidelines have been considered, a comprehensive evaluation for special education may be deemed appropriate. If an evaluation for special education is determined to be appropriate by the SST the following procedures should occur:

- The school's SST Coordinator shall complete:
  - Parental Consent for Evaluation (giving parent list of possible test to be administered)
  - Initial Referral for Psychological Evaluation
  - Initial Referral Checklist (attaching all required documents listed)
- The school's **SST Coordinator** shall complete the Initial Referral to Special Education Form and attach all required documents (see Initial Referral Checklist). The principal must review and then sign the approval form in the referral packet prior to submitting the packet to the **District RTI Coordinator**. The **District RTI Coordinator** will forward the completed referral packets to **Special Education office**.
- Upon receipt of the packet, the Student Services Director or Due Process Compliance Coordinator will check contents for completeness and also sign the **Initial Referral for Psychological Evaluation**.
- In the case of incomplete information or discrepancies, the Student Services Director will collaborate with Principal and SST Coordinator of referring school to resolve issues. Once all issues with the **Initial Referral to Special Education Packet** are resolved, the **District RTI Coordinator** shall forward the packet to the **Director of Student Services**.

- The **Director of Student Services** shall send correspondence to the parent and a copy of the same to the Principal. The correspondence shall include the following documents: **Prior Written Notice; Parents' Rights; and Consent to Evaluate.**
- Once signed consent is received by a school system employee, it should be immediately forwarded to the **SPED** office to the attention of the **Director of Student Services.**
- The **Director of Student Services** shall forward the referral packet to the **School Psychologist**, and request a comprehensive evaluation. The window for completion of the evaluation shall be planned by **Psychological Services** but shall not exceed 40 days of the date parental consent was obtained.
- Upon completion of the evaluation, the **School Psychologist** shall submit the completed comprehensive evaluation to the **Student Services Secretary** for processing.
- Upon completion of the evaluation, the **Special Education Department** will send a copy of the psychological to the respective school **Special Education Coordinator** who will assign the **Special Education Case Manager.**
- The **Special Education Coordinator / Case Manager** will set up an Initial Eligibility meeting to include: Prior Written Notice and Your Rights as Parents.
- The **Special Education Teacher / Case Manager** will invite the psychologist, a regular education teacher, a special education teacher, an LEA, and any other members important to the team. The special education teacher will write a *DRAFT* eligibility prior to the initial meeting. A completed eligibility is required if the student qualifies for special education services or if the student does not qualify.
- If the student is found eligible for special education services, this same committee will write an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- The entire process beginning with Consent to Evaluate and ending with possible special education eligibility should not exceed 60 days.

### **Parent Request**

Parents maintain their due process right to request an evaluation. Whenever the parent requests an evaluation, the parent must be given a copy of "Your Rights as Parents – Special Education". However, **eligibility for special education should not be considered without documentation of prior instructional interventions.** A SST bypass procedure does exist for rare cases or extreme circumstances (as mentioned above on page 5). If the SST process has been bypassed, the data necessary for eligibility may need to be gathered during the evaluation process by the SST Coordinator and / or regular education teachers. If the Special Education Department refuses the parent's request, the department must give the parent written notice explaining the reason(s) why the decline to initiate an evaluation along with data this decision was based upon and other factors considered. The parent then has the right to request a due process hearing to seek favorable ruling that the evaluation must be conducted.

## Child Find

### See State Rule: 160-4-7-.03

#### **DEFINITION**

Child Find is a component of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that requires states to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities, aged birth to 21, who are in need of early intervention or special education services.

#### **COMPONENTS**

- *Child find notice is published in newspaper, announced on district website, and flyers placed in several locations within community*
- *Provides for screening and evaluation of all children with suspected disability ages 3-21 including:*
- *Children birth through age three through Babies Can't Wait*
- *Preschool children, ages 3 – 5*
- *Children enrolled in the LEA schools including public charter schools*
- *Children who are suspected of being children with disabilities*
- *Highly mobile children, including migrant children*
- *Children who are detained or incarcerated in jails or correctional facilities*
- *Children enrolled in home school / study programs*
- *Parentally-placed private school children, including religious, elementary and secondary schools*
- *Screening to determine appropriate educational strategies is not to be considered an evaluation*
- *Student referrals must be accompanied by documentation of scientific, research or evidence based academic and / or behavioral interventions that demonstrate insufficient rate of progress*
- *Exception allowed only when evaluation and / or placement is required due to a significant disability*

<b>Description</b>
Screening and possible evaluation of all children with suspected disability ages 3 – 21 will be conducted within 60 days of parental consent
<b>Method to Monitor for Compliance</b>
Director of Special Education maintains notification by the following sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>  Pierce County District Website – <a href="http://www.pierce.k12.ga.us">www.pierce.k12.ga.us</a> – ongoing yearly</li><li>  The Blackshear Times recurring advertisement twice per year</li><li>  Child – Find informational flyers posted in community clinic, school clinic, and post offices</li></ul> The District shall ensure compliance of this Georgia Rule at all district levels. <p>When a disability is suspected, babies through age three are usually referred to Babies Can't Wait (BCW) by parents, physicians, daycare providers, and / or family / friends. BCW will transition to the local school system with parent permission prior to the child turning three. Children ages three through five receive services through the Pierce County Early Intervention Program. In addition to BCW, these referrals may be from Headstart or Pierce County Pre-K if a disability is suspected. Preschool Evaluation teams complete screening activities for students age 3 through 5 to include transition meetings and meet with Babies Can't Wait and submit to Director of Special Education on monthly timeline reports.</p>
<b>Monitoring Staff</b>
District Level – Director of Student Services, Early Intervention Coordinator Special Education Secretary School Level – Principal, Assistant Principal, Special Education Coordinators

## GENERAL CHILD FIND PROCEDURES

1. Semi-annually, the Pierce County Special Education Department will initiate an awareness campaign for the purpose of discovering those individuals who are candidates for special education and/or related services. The Pierce County Special Education Department personnel will mail notices about special education and related services to various businesses, agencies, and organizations throughout the district, including the district's homeless liaison, Head Start facilities, Department of Family and Children Services, and private schools. Personnel will, also, publish an announcement of special education and related services in the legal organization.
2. For children birth through age three, the Pierce County Special Education Department personnel will notify a representative from Babies Can't Wait early intervention program.
3. When a child is between the ages of three and five and not yet eligible for state-funded kindergarten, the Pierce County Special Education Department personnel will contact the Head Start Program Director.
4. If a child is an enrolled student in the Pierce County Special Education Department, the teacher will initiate the Response to Intervention/Student Support Team processes with assistance from the Student Support Team Coordinator.
5. For highly mobile children, including migrant children, the Pierce County Special Education Department will contact the School Service Provider, a member of the district's Migrant Education staff.
6. If a child is detained or incarcerated in the city/county operated jail or correctional facility, the Pierce County Special Education Department personnel will contact a designated officer from the Pierce County Justice Center.
7. Children with disabilities parentally-placed in private or religious schools or home schooled are not entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE), but the district will provide services based on a proportionate share of federal funds. Annually, the Pierce County Special Education Department personnel will contact principals/headmasters of private schools and discuss available special education services. The two entities will sign a written agreement prior to the beginning of each school year. Subsequently, when the district receives notification of home school children, information concerning special education and related services will be forwarded to the parent.
8. In addition to the procedures listed above, GLRS and Child Serve personnel will provide further public awareness campaigns on an annual basis.
9. Prior to the beginning of school, the Pierce County Special Education Department will review student Individualized Education Plans and input the information into the Student Information System database.
10. Special education teachers will submit monthly data to the Pierce County Special Education Department. The documentation includes individual caseloads, reevaluation logs, and initial placement logs.
11. Annually, the Pierce County Special Education Department personnel will submit, via the Georgia Department of Education portal, accurate data concerning the eligibility of students between the ages of three and twenty-one for special education and related services. The Pierce County Special Education Department personnel will utilize the timeline, provided by the Georgia Department of Education Special Education Services and Supports, to present the requested data in a timely manner.

### Preschool Special Education

The Preschool Special Education program began as a result of public law 99-457, which states that all children identified with a disability or developmental delay are entitled to a free and appropriate public education beginning on their third birthday.

Pierce County offers a variety of services to children who are 3 years old until beginning kindergarten who have special education needs or significant developmental delays. Our program also seeks to help parents in meeting their child's needs.

Preschool Special Education provides:

- Services within the community
- Collaborative classes
- School-based Services
- Home-based Services
- Hospital/Homebound Services

Related services including occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech and language therapy are available to those who qualify.

## Interventions Prior to Referral

- Pierce County School System personnel will utilize a variety of in-school screenings to identify instructional interventions or strategies to assist with the academic or behavioral concerns, exhibited by students. The in-school screenings will not be utilized to determine eligibility for special education and/or related services. District staff will utilize the Response to Intervention/Student Support Team Manual to initiate the appropriate procedures before referring a student for a psychological evaluation.
- After completing the procedures for Tiers I - III of the Response to Intervention/Student Support Team process, the following documentation will be forwarded to the Pierce County Special Education Department:
  - Student's name,
  - Names of team members,
  - Meeting dates,
  - Initial referral to SST,
  - Identification of student learning and/or behavior problems,
  - Student Background Information
  - Any records and results of assessments (in-school screenings), completed within a 12-month period,
  - SST minutes,
  - Education plan and implementation results (SST strategies and interventions for Tiers I - III),
    - J. SST final recommendation
    - k. A Notice of Referral
- If immediate evaluation and/or placement are required due to a significant disability, a student may transition immediately to Tier IV of the RTI/SST process. The eligibility team will provide clear and concise evidence, supporting the need to bypass the RTI/SST process.
  - If a child is transitioning from BCW, an evaluation must be completed within 90 days prior to the child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday.
  - **Note: exceptions to the use of interventions may occur for some students who require immediate consideration of special education services.**

## Child Find Screenings

### **Overview of Child Find:**

Preschool Child Find is a federally mandated free resource offered to Pierce County residents ages 3 - 5. Preschool Special Education Child Find screenings offer families a service that can assist with identifying potential special education needs, provide educational opportunities with skills instruction, and early intervention education. Physicians, therapists, local preschool or daycare providers, or other entities can initiate a Child Find referral with parental permission. Parents may make a referral at any time. Appointments are scheduled once a month. Appointments are established beginning at 8:30 a.m. and are held at a designated area. Child Find meetings will take place prior to October 31<sup>st</sup> for all four-year olds.

### **When to Refer:**

Research demonstrates that early intervention in a child's life increases their opportunity for success. Any concern about a child's development is an adequate reason to make a referral to a Child Find Screening. Each child is unique and develops at an individual pace. However, there are milestones that we anticipate children will typically attain by a certain age.

If a child has difficulty around the age of three by demonstrating one or more of the following:

- Has difficulty expressing themselves effectively to be understood by those not in their immediate environment
- Has difficulty understanding language
- Demonstrates repetitive behavior
- Has a difficult time interacting with others
- Demonstrates excessive inappropriate behaviors
- Delayed in sitting, walking, crawling, talking

### **Day of Screening:**

Parents will arrive at their appointment time designated by the appointment letter sent via mail or provided via phone call.

**Parent will check in at the registration desk and must provide: child's birth certificate and parent picture identification, as well as information of any previous assistance (If an outside entity provided service this information will be helpful for the team to make recommendations).**

The following activities may be included as part of the screening process:

1. Vision and Hearing Screening - Children must receive a pass on both items to proceed with further screening items.
2. Formal and Informal Screening will be conducted in the areas of communication, self-help, social-emotional skills, cognition, and motor skills.
3. Speech and Language Screening - A speech therapist will observe children at play and administer a speech and language screener.
4. Social and Developmental History - This document is provided to parents and can be completed at the designated appointment date.
5. Observations of Child in Preschool/Daycare Program - Consent is obtained at screening; however, arrangements are made with parent if further information is needed.

All information is confidential and will be reviewed with parent at the post screening meeting.

The Preschool Special Education team will review screening information and make team recommendations. These may include, but are not limited to, no further intervention needed, skill intervention for designated time, or complete full evaluation.

### **Post-Screening Meeting (or Phone Conference):**

Preschool Special Education team members will gather at the appointment to share and discuss recommendations based upon screening information. If the team makes the recommendation of skill intervention, a designated time of collection will be provided and the skills to be worked on will be discussed with parental input. At the conclusion of the skill intervention trial, parents will meet with members of the Preschool Special Education team to review information collected and to discuss further direction. If the recommendation warrants a full evaluation, skill intervention may be introduced for the allotted time until eligibility is determined. For full evaluations, parents will be assigned an appointment at the post-screening meeting.

## Evaluation and Reevaluation

See State Rule: 160-4-7-.04

### **DEFINITION**

For purposes of the Pierce County Special Education Policies and Procedures, an evaluation is defined as a comprehensive set of diagnostic assessment tools, administered by a licensed psychologist or licensed speech pathologist, to assist in determining a student's eligibility for receiving special education services. A reevaluation is a comprehensive set of diagnostic assessment tools, which may be administered once every three years and not more than once a year, unless the parent and district personnel decide otherwise. A reevaluation must be administered by a licensed psychologist to determine changes in a student's academic achievement and functional performance. A speech reevaluation must be administered by a licensed speech pathologist.

### **COMPONENTS**

- *Initial evaluation referral process*
- *Timeframes for evaluations*
  - *60 calendar days*
- *Parental Consent*
- *Reevaluation consideration*
- *Comprehensive Evaluation*
  - *Variety of appropriate evaluation tools*
  - *Administered by trained and knowledgeable staff*
  - *Existing data reviewed*
  - *Identify additional data needed*
- *Determination of eligibility*
  - *Eligibility team*
  - *Documentation of evaluation results*
  - *Exclusionary factors*
  - *Determination of the disability and the need for special education or dismissal*

<b>Description</b>
District leaders / Principals in collaboration with School Administrators will ensure initial evaluations are completed within the 60 day timeline (using the data-driven problem solving process) by providing ongoing professional development on the: organization of paperwork, clear definitions of roles and responsibilities, processes, procedures and legal aspects of evaluations and reevaluation.
<b>Method to Monitor for Compliance</b>
Special Education Secretary ensures parent consent for evaluation is date stamped when received in Special Education Office to ensure 60-day timeline is established. Director of SST/RTI provides the Director of Special Education with a completed packet of information required for initial evaluation, including hearing and vision screening and ensure packet is date stamped and 60 day timeline is initiated. Director of Special Education reviews student information including RTI data, observation, work samples, and parent input. SST Coordinator keeps checklist log of each student in SST/RTI process. Administration reviews timesheet monthly. Special Education Secretary keeps an intake log of all students referred and keeps track of process date. Intake log is reviewed monthly by Director of Student Services.
<b>Monitoring Staff</b>
District Level – Director of Student Services, Due Process Compliance Coordinator, Special Education Secretary, District RTI/SST Coordinator, School Psychologist School Level – Principal, Assistant Principal, School SST Chairperson, SPED Coordinator

## Initial Evaluation Procedures

1. After a student has received interventions, and progress monitoring indicates a lack of adequate progress, a Special Education Referral may be initiated.
2. Documentation should be provided in the student's RTI / SST records of substantial evidence of the need for a referral. Research-based interventions in the areas of identified weaknesses should be documented (academic and / or behavioral). At a minimum, students who exhibit emotional / behavioral difficulties should have a Behavior Support Plan and / or referral to the school counselor for additional interventions. Students at Tier 3 must have a Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Intervention Plan in place PRIOR to referral for evaluation.
3. Prior to Special Education Referral, a Social and Developmental History should be completed by the parent/guardian.
4. If a student is being referred for a suspected disability associated with a medical condition (ADHD, diabetes, etc.), an Authorization to Release Medical Information form should be obtained PRIOR to eligibility being established as a medical release will be needed prior to an eligibility determination for Other Health Impaired (OHI).
5. Completed referrals will be sent to the Special Education Office. Teachers / parents will be contacted if additional rating scales / forms are need for evaluation purposes.
6. Completed referrals will be data/time stamped at the SPED Office on the Initial Referral Log. The Director of Special Education will monitor compliance of all initial referrals and notify the District SST Coordinator/School Administrator of issues such as hearing, vision, inability to obtain completed forms from teachers, and any other issues impeding the referral process.
7. Upon completion of the evaluation, the School SPED Coordinator along with the School Psychologist will schedule an eligibility meeting.
8. Upon determination of eligibility, Consent for Placement must be signed by the parent / guardian. Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team members may complete the IEP after eligibility is established but must do so within 30 days of eligibility.
9. Parents may request for an Independent Evaluation in writing.

## Timelines

- All initial evaluations must be completed **within 60 calendar** days of receipt of Parent Consent for Evaluation.
- Holiday periods and other circumstances when children are not in attendance for five consecutive school days shall not be counted toward the 60 day timeline, including the weekend days before and after such holiday periods. Consent received 30 days or more prior to the end of the school year must be completed within the 60 calendar day evaluation timeframe.
- If a student is determined eligible for special education services, the system has 30 days to develop the IEP

## Hearing / Vision

- Results of hearing and vision screening cannot be older than one calendar year when applied to an evaluation for special education services. An evaluation may not proceed until it is documented that the student has an acceptable level of vision and hearing. Hearing / vision should have been completed during Tier 2 of the RTI / SST process **with Parent Consent for Diagnostic Evaluation for SST** being signed by parent.
- If the event that a student does not pass the school system's hearing and / or vision screening, the student must be assessed through an appropriate physician.
- SST Coordinators (for initial evaluation) and / or special education teachers (for reevaluations) should notify the Special Education Director of difficulties obtaining medical clearance.

## Informed Parent Consent

Written parent consent must be obtained prior to an initial evaluation or reevaluation. Parent consent is obtained through the RTI / SST process within each school for initials. In the rare event the RTI / SST process is bypassed, parent consent may be obtained through the special education central office or each school's SST Coordinator for initial evaluations. **For students with obvious severe disabilities and / or in crisis for whom delay of referral would be detrimental to the student, the RTI / SST may bypass implementation of alternative strategies prior to referral. The reason for bypassing this process must be clearly documented.**

Detailed documentation of attempts to obtain parent consent must be kept (e.g. records of telephone calls / texts messages and results of those calls / messages, copies of correspondence and any responses received, detailed records of visits made). If the parents refuse to give consent, or fail to respond to a request to provide consent for an evaluation, the school system may, **but is not required to**, pursue the initial evaluation by using mediation and impartial due process hearing procedures. However, the school system may not use the consent override procedures for a student who is home-schooled or placed in a private school by the parents at their own expense.

## Reevaluations

A reevaluation of each child with a disability is conducted at least once every 3 years, unless the IEP committee agrees that a reevaluation is unnecessary.

## Redetermination of Eligibility Meeting

A redetermination meeting will be held in order for the IEP team to examine all student data (formative and summative) and determine if further evaluation is warranted. The meeting should be conducted prior to 120 days of expiration to ensure compliance.

- It is preferable for the case manager to begin gathering and reviewing the material listed below 12 months before eligibility expires and then conduct the reevaluation / redetermination meeting.
  - Hearing / Vision
  - Classroom observation

- Data from progress monitoring of IEP goals
- Work samples
- Updated medication / medical diagnosis
- State assessment data (EOGT, EOCT, etc.)
- District assessment data (Benchmark scores)
- Behavior rating scales, adaptive behavior scales, etc.... as needed
- Office referrals
- Grades
- Updates from outside counseling services
- The Redetermination meeting should include a discussion of current progress and data, and the IEP team determines if further evaluation is needed.
- Redetermination can be held at the annual IEP meeting, unless the date of eligibility expires prior to the annual review.
- The case manager is responsible for reviewing student eligibility to ensure that a student's eligibility does not expire. Case managers have access to Infinite Campus to review / update data. The student information should be checked upon receipt of caseload at the beginning of the school year.
- The Redetermination meeting should include a discussion of current progress and data, and the IEP team determines if further evaluation is needed.
- **If no additional data is needed** to determine continued eligibility, the committee proceeds with eligibility.
- This decision should be documented on the Redetermination form. Once decision is made and parents agree, **the Redetermination form with date must be attached to the most recent eligibility**. This becomes the new eligibility date. **Example: If the reevaluation determination committee met on 5/1/15 and determined no further information was needed to continue eligibility and services, 5/1/15 is the new eligibility date and the next eligibility is due before 5/1/18.**

### **If additional assessment is needed:**

- The IEP team determines reevaluation is needed and completes the redetermination form.
- The parent or teacher has the right to request a reevaluation for the determination of eligibility even if the committee had concluded that no additional data was needed.
- The parent must sign written consent for evaluation.
- The Case Manager completes the reevaluation packet and sends all required documents to the Special Education Director at a minimum of 6 months prior to the eligibility due date / expiration date. Upon completion of the reevaluation, an eligibility meeting will be scheduled.

### **Reevaluation Procedures / Process**

- The Special Education Teacher or Case Manager (most times this is the same person) shall complete:
  - Parental Consent for Evaluation (giving parent list of possible test to be administered)
  - Reevaluation Referral for Psychological Evaluation
  - Reevaluation Referral Checklist (attaching all required documents listed)

- The principal must review completed packet and sign the **Referral for Psychological Reevaluation** prior to submitting the packet to the Special Education Department.
  
- Upon receipt of the packet, the Due Process Compliance Coordinator and/or the Student Services Director will check contents for completeness and also sign the **Referral for Psychological Reevaluation**.
  
- In the case of incomplete information or discrepancies, the Student Services Director will collaborate with Principal and Special Education Teacher / Case manager of referring school to resolve issues.
  
- Referral for Psychological Reevaluation 'packet' will be forwarded to the School Psychologist who will conduct the comprehensive evaluation. In a comprehensive evaluation, the district will:
  - assess all areas related to any suspected disability, including vision and hearing and, if appropriate, health, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities;
  - use a variety of evaluation tools and strategies to gather relevant academic, functional, and developmental information about the child, including information provided by the parent;
  - not use any single procedure as the only criterion for determining whether a child is a child with a disability or for determining an appropriate educational
  - use assessment techniques that may assess intellectual and behavioral skills in addition to physical or developmental skills;
  - use evaluation tools and strategies to provide relevant information that will directly assist the eligibility team in determining the educational needs of the child;
  - use assessments and other evaluation materials to assess specific areas of educational need and not only those that are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient (IQ) score; and select assessment methods so that, when administered to a child with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, the results accurately reflect the child's aptitude or achievement level.
  - Information Sources: Evaluations may use but is not limited to the following:
    - Individually administered tests and tools
    - Academic achievement
    - Cognitive ability
    - Social/Emotional/Behavioral
    - Speech/Language
    - Parent/Teacher/Child Questionnaires
    - Social/Emotional/Behavioral
    - Adaptive behavior
    - Parent information and input
    - Teacher input (verbal or written descriptions/analyzed classroom work samples) School wide standardized testing results
    - Medical information, as appropriate
    - Classroom observations
    - Prior testing done in private settings
    - Prior testing done in other school settings, such as formative assessments from classroom progress monitoring

- Upon completion of the reevaluation, The Special Education Department will send a copy of the psychological to the respective school Special Education Coordinator.
- The special education teacher / case manager will set up an eligibility meeting to include: Prior Written Notice and Your Rights as Parents.
- The Special Education Teacher / Case Manager will invite the psychologist, a regular education teacher, a special education teacher, an LEA, and any other members important to the team. The special education teacher will write a *DRAFT* eligibility prior to the initial meeting.
- If the IEP team agrees that the student is eligible, a completed eligibility is required. An IEP should already be in place but amendments may take place after this new eligibility is established.
- If the student **does not qualify, an eligibility form is required with proper documentation as to the reason.** Services will be discontinued. The committee may (but is not required to) refer the student to the SST committee for continual monitoring and to assist in development of interventions that will promote success in the general education

*Note: If a student has been found ineligible to receive special education services due to discontinuation in that area of exceptionality, he / she cannot be found eligible for special education services through a new area of exceptionality without the proper documentation of implemented interventions (behavior and / or academic) for that area. The Special Education Director, School Psychologist, and / or SST committee must review the documentation to determine if it is sufficient for eligibility.*

## **Independent Evaluations – Request for an Independent Evaluation**

- A parent may request an independent educational evaluation (IEE) only when:
  - The parent has allowed the school system to conduct their own evaluation and when the parent disagrees with the results of a completed evaluation conducted by the school system. Parent must provide written consent to the Student Services Director.
- Pierce County School System must either pay for the independent evaluation or begin due process procedures to show that the system's evaluation is judged to be sufficient. The Special Education Director will set up a meeting with parent and other school system administrators to determine if the school system will consent to the IEE. Pierce County and the parent must agree on the independent evaluator.
- The qualifications of the independent evaluator must be the same as those required by Pierce County School System.
- The school system has the right to set a reasonable limit on the cost of the independent evaluation.
- The evaluation report becomes the legal and current evaluation for the student.
- Eligibility must be determined based on that report through an eligibility / reevaluation meeting with required IEP team participants.
- A parent is entitled to only one IEE at public expense each time the school system conducts an evaluation with which the parent disagrees.

### **When a parent obtains an IEE at personal expense:**

- The parent always has the right to obtain an outside IEE at their own expense, before or after the system's evaluation.
- Pierce County School System must consider the results of the parentally obtained evaluation.
- Eligibility may be determined on the basis of the IEE if the district and parent both agree to the results.
- The accepted IEE becomes part of the student's special education records and the special education teacher (with assistance from the school psychologist) completes an eligibility based on the results of the IEE. This then becomes the new eligibility for the student.

## Eligibility Determination and Categories of Eligibility

See State Rule: 160-4-7.05

### DEFINITION

A child or youth from 3 through 21 years of age is considered to have a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) if the child or youth meets the eligibility criteria in any of the following areas and needs special education and related services.

### COMPONENTS

*Definitions for areas of disability for children aged 3 to 21:*

- a) *Autism Spectrum disorder*
- b) *Deafblind*
- c) *Deaf/hard of hearing*
- d) *Emotional and behavioral disorder*
- e) *Intellectual disability (mild, moderate, severe, profound)*
- f) *Orthopedic impairment*
- g) *Other health impairment*
- h) *Significant developmental delay*
- i) *Specific learning disability*
- j) *Speech-language impairment*
- k) *Traumatic brain injury*
- l) *Visual impairment*

*Determination of eligibility by Eligibility Team (which consists of qualified professionals and parents)*

*Exclusionary factors for eligibility*

*Documentation of eligibility / ineligibility: variety of appropriate sources and well documented*

*Evaluation Report and Determination provided to parents*

<b>Description</b>
District leaders in collaboration with parents, School Administrators, Classroom Teachers, and School Psychologist will ensure evaluations are complete within the 60 day timeline through determination of eligibility criteria in any of the following areas and needs special education and related services.
<b>Method to Monitor for Compliance</b>
RTI / SST Coordinators at each school will monitor the students being referred to SST by collaborating with the referring teacher upon consideration of referral using the referral checklist. District leaders will monitor SST procedure compliance by conducting two random audits per school each year of randomly selected SST files. Director of Student Services will monitor success of the SST process by monitoring placement rate for initial referrals to special education, i.e., high percentage of referrals to special education being found eligible. Director of Student Services and School Psychologist will monitor evaluation reports.
<b>Monitoring Staff</b>
District Level – Director of Student Services, School Psychologist, Special Education Secretary, District RTI/SST Coordinator School Level – Principal, AP, School SST Chairperson, Special Education Coordinators, SPED Teachers

## Determination of Eligibility

### An initial eligibility / IEP placement meeting only occurs in 2 situations:

1. The student has never before been found to be eligible for special education services and has not had an IEP in the past or,
2. The student is a transfer student to Georgia and who may have had a prior eligibility and IEP (see transfer section)

### Scheduling of meeting:

1. The Special Education Teacher / case manager will schedule and coordinate IEP meetings for Initial Eligibility / IEP Placements. All required members (parent, Local Education Agency Representative (LEA), General Education Teacher, Psychologist) and additional personnel will be invited who can provide input for eligibility determination.
2. The Special Education Director or other LEA must be in attendance at all Eligibility / Placement / IEP meetings.
3. Parental Excusal Form must be completed if a required participant (LEA, Special Education Teacher, or General Education Teacher) is not in attendance or are unable to stay for the length of the meeting.
4. No individual may participate in the meeting unless they are listed on the Notice of Meeting Invitation or the parent has given their consent.

### Eligibility portion of meeting:

1. The parent will be provided with a signed copy of the evaluation report.
2. The parent and team members will be provided with a copy of the eligibility report to review during the meeting.
3. The School Psychologist reviews the results of the psychological evaluation.
4. Eligibility is determined by Eligibility Team Members, through review of all formal and informal sources of information.
5. Presence of a disability and need for services must be established; presence of a disability alone is insufficient for placement.
6. **Disability must adversely impact educational performance** (even with correction for sensory impairments).
7. Progress monitoring data is required for all areas except sensory impairments such as deaf or blind and, in some cases, Traumatic Brain Injury and Autism placements.
8. Consideration must be given to Exclusionary Factors such as lack of appropriate instruction, limited English Proficiency, atypical educational history, environmental or economic disadvantage, or cultural factors, attendance.
9. The Eligibility form must be signed by all participants / team members.
10. The Consent for Placement must be signed prior to services beginning.

## **Related services:**

1. Physical and Occupational therapies are related services.
2. Services require a prescription from a physician.
3. Pierce County will utilize the State of Georgia's Educationally Relevant Therapy Tool to determine the need for services.
4. Related services assessment information is needed for IEP development. This information must be entered into the appropriate areas on the eligibility form. However, this assessment information is not necessary for eligibility determination in one of the disability areas. Related service providers are responsible for providing this assessment information to the special education teacher prior to the IEP meeting. The special education teacher should invite / contact the service providers prior to IEP meetings.

## **IEP portion of meeting:**

Upon determination of eligibility, the IEP Committee may convene to develop the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). If the IEP Committee is not convened at this time, an IEP MUST be developed no later than 30 days from eligibility determination date.

- The LEA will state the purpose of the remainder of the meeting is to develop an IEP now that the student is eligible.
- The LEA will provide the parent with a brief description of the components and purpose of the IEP meeting. The Special Education Teacher will facilitate the development of the IEP to include:
  - Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)
  - Consideration of Special Factors,
  - Goals and Short term objectives (if GAA)
  - Student Supports including Supplementary Aids and Services
  - Instructional and Testing Accommodations
  - Special Education Services
  - All other applicable components of the IEP
- A copy of the draft IEP (if not finalized) may be provided to parent.
- A finalized IEP must be provided to the parent no later than 10 days of the meeting date.

## **Sample Eligibility Meeting Agenda**

1. Introduce Eligibility Team Members in attendance.
2. Provide and explain parental rights.
3. State the Purpose of the Meeting (i.e., determine eligibility for special education services).
4. Review rationale for referral:
  - a. Case history
  - b. Summary of interventions
  - c. RTI data
  - d. Benchmark assessments, and other district and state-wide test scores
5. Review other information required to determine eligibility

- 6. Review exclusionary factors:**
  - a. Attendance**
  - b. Vision / hearing**
  - c. Atypical educational history**
  - d. Cultural differences or economic disadvantage**
- 7. Summarize findings:**
  - a. Determine eligibility for services**
  - b. Consider areas for possible placement**
  - c. Provide explanation in summary for the reason the student is eligible for services via the areas determined by the eligibility report.**
- 8. All members sign the form:**
  - a. For SLD, members must indicate agreement or non-agreement**
  - b. For SLD, any member who disagrees with the decision of the team must provide an explanation in writing.**
- 9. Adjourn and dismiss, or team members may opt to move into IEP Meeting if student is eligible. (IEP meeting must be held within 30 days.)**

**CATEGORIES AND SUMMARIES OF EVALUATION INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR ELIGIBILITY**

<p><b><u>Autism</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Psychological Evaluation</li> <li>2. Educational Evaluation</li> <li>3. Communication Evaluation</li> <li>4. Behavior Evaluation</li> <li>5. Developmental History</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Deaf-Blind</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Audiological Evaluation</li> <li>2. Otological Evaluation</li> <li>3. Ophthalmological Evaluation</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Deaf/Hard of Hearing</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Audiological Evaluation</li> <li>2. Otological Evaluation</li> <li>3. Educational Evaluation</li> <li>4. Psychological Evaluation (optional)</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Emotional/Behavioral Disorder</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Documentation of interventions</li> <li>2. Psychological Evaluation</li> <li>3. Educational Evaluation</li> <li>4. Behavioral Observations</li> <li>5. Social History</li> <li>6. Documentation of duration, frequency, and intensity</li> <li>7. Exclusionary factors documented</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Intellectual Disability</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Psychological Evaluation</li> <li>2. Educational Evaluation</li> <li>3. Structured observation</li> <li>4. Adaptive Behavior Evaluation</li> <li>5. Relevant medical information</li> <li>6. Exclusionary factors documented</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Orthopedic Impairment</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Medical Evaluation</li> <li>2. Developmental/Educational Evaluation</li> <li>3. Psychological (if significant cognitive / academic deficits are present)</li> </ol>	<p><b><u>Other Health Impairment</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Medical Evaluation</li> <li>2. Developmental / Educational Evaluation</li> <li>3. Psychological (if significant cognitive / academic / attention deficits are present)</li> <li>4. Exclusionary factors documented</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Significant Developmental Delay</u></b> (ages 3-7 initial and 3-9 reevaluations)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developmental Evaluation (5 skill areas)</li> <li>2. Relevant medical information</li> <li>3. Exclusionary factors for kindergarten or older</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Specific Learning Disability</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Psychological Evaluation</li> <li>2. Comprehensive Educational Evaluation</li> <li>3. Documentation of supplementary instruction that lasts for 12 weeks with 4 data points.</li> <li>4. Classroom observation (in deficit area)</li> <li>5. Analyzed Samples of work (in deficit area)</li> <li>6. Relevant medical information</li> <li>7. Exclusionary factors documented</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Speech / Language Disorder</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Documentation of prior evidenced-based interventions</li> <li>2. Oral Peripheral Examination</li> <li>3. Articulation Evaluation</li> <li>4. Language Evaluation</li> <li>5. Voice Evaluation</li> <li>6. Fluency Evaluation</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Traumatic Brain Injury</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Summary of Pre-Injury functioning</li> <li>2. Medical Evaluation / verification of TBI</li> <li>3. Psychological Evaluation / Neuropsychological / Psychoeducational</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Visual Impairment</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Optometric or Ophthalmological Evaluation</li> <li>2. Educational Evaluation</li> </ol>
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## Private Schools

See State Rule: 160-4-7.13

### DEFINITION

A private school is a school or educational facility operated and supported by private individuals or a corporation rather than by a government or public agency. The following section on private schools includes students who are home-schooled.

### COMPONENTS

- *LEA privately placed or referred students*
- *Parental placement in private school and LEA offer of FAPE*
- *Provision of written notice by parent to place in private school*
- *Reimbursement and limitation on reimbursement for private school placement*
- *Home schooled students*
- *Child Find process and children in private schools*
- *Part B and Related Services for private school students*
- *Provision of IEPs and Service Plans to privately placed students*
- *Consultation with private schools for child count*
- *Private school representatives at IEPs*
- *Equitable services determination and limitations of service*
- *Materials provision; secular, neutral, non-ideological*
- *Location of services and transportation*
- *Provision of property, equipment and supplies to private school*

<b>Description</b>
Parentally-placed SWDs in private schools will have a service plan which indicates the special education services provided by Pierce County School System.
<b>Method to Monitor for Compliance</b>
Student Services Director will monitor services for privately placed students.
<b>Monitoring Staff</b>
District Level – Superintendent, Student Services Director, and Special Education Secretary

## Area of General Supervision II: Services and Supports

### Indicators:

**4a & 4b: Suspension and Expulsion**

**5: LRE**

### Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

See State Rule: 160-4-7-.07

#### **DEFINITION**

The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is a term used to ensure that all students have a right to an education under IDEA and are educated, to the maximum extent appropriate, with nondisabled peers. Removal of students with disabilities from the general education environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in a general education class with the use of supplementary aids and / or services cannot be satisfactorily attained.

#### **COMPONENTS**

- *LEA privately placed or referred students*
- *Parental placement in private school and LEA offer of FAPE*
- *Provision of written notice by parent to place in private school*
- *Reimbursement and limitations on reimbursement for private school placement*
- *Home schooled students*
- *Child Find process and children in private schools*
- *. Part B and Related Services for private school students*
- *Provision of IEPs and Service Plans to privately placed students*
- *Consultation with private schools for child count*
- *Private school representatives at IEPs*
- *Equitable services determination and limitations of service*
- *Materials provision: secular, neutral, non-ideological*
- *Location of services and transportation*
- *Provision of property, equipment and supplies to private schools*

<b>Description</b>
The Pierce County School System will ensure that parentally-placed SWDs in private schools will have a service plan which indicates the special education and related services provided by the Pierce County School System.
<b>Method to Monitor for Compliance</b>
Director of Student Services will monitor Part B and Related Services for privately placed students. School Leaders and SIS Coordinator will monitor the performance of LEA privately placed or referred students in the district with and without disabilities on state wide achievement tests. IEP teams will consider all placement options before finalizing students' IEPs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li> General Education Setting with no support</li><li> General Education Setting with support</li><li> Collaborative Model</li><li> Co-teaching Model</li><li> Resource</li><li> Self-Contained</li></ul>
<b>Monitoring Staff</b>
District Level – Director of Student Services, Special Education Secretary, SIS Coordinator School Level – Principal, AP, Special Education Coordinator

***In order to guide an IEP committee through this LRE process the six-step sequence is presented.***

The IEP committee members:

1. Document the student’s currently level of performance.
2. Write goals from the information gathered, addressing the student’s learning needs.
3. Determine which goals / objectives can be taught in general education settings considering:
  - a. Age-appropriate and content appropriate settings available.
  - b. Modifications to activities, materials, instructions and / or environments necessary.
  - c. Personnel support for the student, teacher, and / or class.
4. For those goals / objectives which cannot be met in a general education setting, determine which special education the goal / objective(s) will be taught.
5. Determine settings or activities to provide additional opportunities for interaction with nondisabled peers.
6. Determine a method to evaluate the appropriateness of the LRE decision through ongoing assessment of student learning.

Source: Hughes, Alberto, Waugh, & Wilson: the Center for Collaborative Education at Georgia State University

**Personnel Supports**

PERSONNEL SUPPORT	DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE
GENERAL EDUCATION	Students with disabilities are served in the general education class with no personnel support.
CONSULTATION	Students with disabilities receive at least one segment per month of direct service from the special education teacher.
SUPPORTIVE INSTRUCTION	Students with disabilities receive service from personnel other than a certified teacher in the general education classroom (i.e., a paraprofessional, interpreter, or job coach).
COLLABORATION	A special education teacher works with identified students with disabilities and the general education teacher within the general education classroom (less than full segment daily).
CO-TEACHING	The special education teacher provides service in the general education classroom by sharing teaching responsibility with the general education teacher (full segment every day).
ALTERNATIVE PLACEMENT	The special education teacher provides instruction to students with disabilities in a separate classroom, special schools, home environment, hospitals, or institutions.

Source: Georgia Department of Education pg 95 of Special Education Rules Implementation Manual I

## Discipline

See State Rule: 160-4-7-.10

### DEFINITION

Discipline is the practice of training people to obey rules or codes of behavior, using punishment to correct infractions.

### COMPONENTS

- *Relationship of general code of conduct to IEP*
- *Interim alternative settings and 10-day rule*
- *Manifestation determination*
- *Functional behavior assessment*
- *Behavior intervention plan*
- *Special Circumstances: weapons, illegal drugs, injury*
- *Provision of notification of change of placement*
- *Appeal Process*
- *Placement during appeal*
- *Protections for children not yet eligible*
- *Referral to law enforcement and judicial authorities*
- *Change of placement due to disciplinary removal*

<b>Description</b>
The Pierce County School System code of student conduct shall apply to all children unless a child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) specifically provides otherwise. The Pierce County School System shall ensure that the parents and the child with a disability receive notice of the rules and regulations applicable to children with disabilities with respect to child management, discipline and suspension/expulsion upon the child's entry into a special education program, at the annual IEP review, and via the school handbook.
<b>Method to Monitor for compliance</b>
Administrators will review discipline reports to determine the effectiveness of rules and regulations for SWD. Administrators will compile discipline reports regularly. Director of Student Services will monitor inappropriate student behavior and provide feedback to stakeholders. Director of Student Services / SIS Coordinator/Special Education Secretary will track and log data on discipline spreadsheet monthly.
<b>Monitoring Staff</b>
District Level – Director of Student Services, Special Education Secretary, District RTI/SST Coordinator School Level – Principals, AP, School SST Chairperson, Special Education Coordinator

### Authority of School Personnel

The Pierce County School System personnel may consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether a change in placement, consistent with the other requirements of the discipline rule, is appropriate for a child with a disability who violates a code of student conduct.

Pierce County School personnel may remove a child with a disability who violates a code of student conduct from his or her current placement to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting, another setting or suspension, for not more than 10 consecutive school days (to the extent those alternatives are applied to children without disabilities), and for additional removals of not more than 10 school days (to include those of above) in that same school year for separate incidents of misconduct as long as the removals do not constitute a change of placement under the discipline rule.

If a child with a disability is removed from his or her current placement for 10 school days in the same school year, during any subsequent days of removal the Pierce County School System will provide services to the extent required under the discipline rule. Parents must be notified of discipline infraction that will result in a removal from the current placement for more than 10 school days.

It is considered by the Pierce County School System to be best practice to notify parents of any discipline infraction that results in a removal. This includes but is not limited to In School Suspension and Out of School Suspension. School administrators or their designee will monitor the number of removals for students with disabilities. This person will notify the Director of Student Services when students reach the seventh day of removal or the third office discipline referral. The Director of Student Services will also access discipline records through Infinite Campus on an as needed.

\*\*An IEP meeting should be held after the third office referral or fifth day of removal whichever comes first to discuss the behavior with the parent as well as update or complete a Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Intervention Plan for the student. In the event that disciplinary changes in placement would exceed 10 school days, if the behavior that gave rise to the violation of the school code is determined not to be a manifestation of the child's disability, see manifestation section of this manual.

\*Note taken from Special Education Manual: If a child has an IEP in place or has been referred for testing to determine if the student qualifies for special education services, the student has added protections from suspension or expulsion from school.

## Individualized Education Program (IEP)

See State Rule: 160-4-7-.06

### Definition

Annual review means an evaluation, conducted at least annually by the committee on special education, of the status of each student with a disability and each student thought to have a disability who resides within the school district for the purpose of recommending the continuation, modification or termination of the provision of special education programs and services for the student to the board of education.

### IEP – Correct Paperwork Organization:

- Student Data Cover Sheet
- Amendment (if applicable)
- Due Process Checklist
- Parent Notification of IEP
- Attendance Form /Sign-In Sheet
- Parental Consent for Placement (copy)
- Current IEP
- Transition Plan (PCMS and PCHS only)
- Behavior Intervention Plan/ Functional Behavior Assessment (if applicable)
- IEP Meeting Notes
- old IEP goals reviewed
- old Transition Plan goals reviewed (PCMS and PCHS only)
- ESY Eligibility
- Assistive Technology Consideration

### COMPONENTS

- Present level of performance
- Assessments and identified needs (academic, functional, developmental)
- Effect of disability
- Parental Concerns
- Consideration of Special Factors
- Measurable Annual Goals
- Benchmarks / short-term objectives for students on alternative assessment
- Criteria for measurement of goals / objectives
- Progress reporting and schedule
- Plan for services (special education, related services, modifications / accommodations, positive behavioral supports) with frequency, location, and duration of services
- Consideration of assistive technology
- Explanation for exclusion of participation with non-disabled peers
- Testing accommodations or modifications
- Consideration of ESY

#### Transition Services

- Appropriate post-secondary goals
- Transition services required to meet goals
- Student involvement: preference and interests
- Representative of participating agency

#### Transfer of Rights

#### Excusal of IEP Team Member

#### Transition for children birth through 2 – part C

Parent participation in IEP: notification and invitation

IEP... conducted within 30 days of determination, current within year, and accessed by all service providers Inter and Intra – state transfer of students with IEPs

FERPA and transmittal of records

Review and Revision of the IEP

<b>Description</b>
The Pierce County Schools will implement procedures and practices to ensure that ALL students with disabilities receive an effective special education program that results in progress toward IEP annual goals and in the general education.
<b>Method to Monitor for Compliance</b>
School SPED Coordinator will ensure IEPs are written to include components of progress monitoring. School SPED Coordinator will review all components of IEPs for compliance. Case managers will schedule annual reviews at least one day prior to the last meeting date. Case managers will develop IEPs and ensure that no gap in services occurs. School SPED Coordinator will review and approve timelines for IEPs. Administrators or instructional coaches will provide feedback to co-teachers in inclusive settings through the TKES Walkthrough Format to assist teachers in adjusting instruction. Case Managers are responsible for ensuring that each student on their caseload has an IEP that incorporates progress monitoring in areas impacted by their disability and for each annual goal. School SPED Coordinator will ensure students with disabilities participate in state and district testing. Case managers will ensure accommodations will be provided for classroom testing and state and district testing that allow students to demonstrate their level of proficiency in the general curriculum as specified on the IEP.
<b>Monitoring Staff</b>
District Level – Student Services Director, Special Education Secretary School Level – Principal, AP, Special Education Coordinators, Special Education Teachers

## Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS)

See State Rule: 160-4-7-.15

### Definition

The Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS) is a service available within the continuum of supports for LEAs to consider when determining the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities, ages 5-21. GNETS services are an option in the continuum of supports that prevents children from requiring residential or more restrictive placement. Specifically, GNETS provides comprehensive educational and therapeutic support services to students who exhibit intense social, emotional and/or behavioral challenges with a severity, frequency or duration such that the provision of education and related services in the general education environment has not enabled them to benefit educationally based on the IEP.

### Consideration for GNETS Services (Harrell Learning Center)

Consideration for GNETS services is determined by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team using the criteria set forth in SBOE Rule 160-4-7-.06.

IEP teams considering recommendation of GNETS services will follow the notice requirements of SBOE Rule 160-4-7-.06. The IEP meeting will include a GNETS director or his/her designee.

An individual student is considered for GNETS services only if his or her IEP team recommends GNETS services based on the existence of all of the following, which will be documented in the student's education record:

Documentation that indicates evidence of annual IEP reviews, progress monitoring data aligned with IEP goals, documentation indicating prior services were delivered in a lesser restrictive environment and the student's inability to receive FAPE in that environment.

A Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and/or Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) administered within the past year.

Documentation that a comprehensive re-evaluation has been completed within the last 3 years.

### Continuum of GNETS Service Delivery and Environments

- (a) The IEP team must determine that GNETS services are necessary for students to receive FAPE. Removal from the general education setting will occur only when the nature or severity of students' social, emotional and/or behavioral challenges are such that education in a general education setting with the use of supplementary services and intensive individualized interventions cannot be achieved.
- (b) The IEP team will consider the various setting in which GNETS services may be delivered and determine whether the individual student is likely to receive FAPE in each environment, beginning with the least restrictive setting.

### LEA Duties and Responsibilities

The Pierce County School District shall:

1. Ensure that FAPE is delivered to students recommended for GNETS services in the least restrictive environment (LRE).
2. Convene IEP team meetings as required by State Board of Education Rule 160-4-7-.06.
3. Conduct FBAs/BIPs for any student considered for GNETS services in accordance with (3)(c)(2) of this rule. 5
4. Collaborate with the GNETS to determine opportunities for students to have access to general education activities.
5. Provide transportation to and from a GNETS, as required, including transportation to and from home/school for students receiving GNETS services for part of the school day and for students participating in extracurricular activities.
6. Maintain and report student record data in accordance with the State Board of Education Rule 160-5-1-.07 and GaDOE guidance.

7. Provide student outcome assessments and other relevant data to GNETS director or designee.
8. Monitor student IEP goals annually to determine students' progress and access to services in a lesser restrictive environment.
9. Provide ongoing professional learning opportunities and best practices for teachers to support students who exhibit social, emotional and/or behavioral challenges.
10. Allocate supports and resources, which may include in-kind services to GNETS to facilitate flexible models of service delivery and best practices for equitable educational support as appropriate.
11. To the maximum extent possible, collaborate with community service providers to deliver mental health services and/or family support in students' Zoned schools.
12. Collaborate with GNETS to examine student records and discuss the coordination of service provisions for students being considered for GNETS in accordance with 34 CFR §300.501(2)(3).
13. Provide GNETS staff access to longitudinal data for all students receiving GNETS services to ensure teachers can access records for students included on their rosters.
14. Submit student schedules to the GaDOE with the GNETS code.
15. Monitor facilities for safety and accessibility for students served by GNETS and report identified concerns to all key stakeholders such as fiscal agents, GNETS directors and any other appropriate parties.

## Personnel, Facilities, and Caseloads

**See State Rule: 160-4-7-.14**

### **DEFINITION**

Personnel are staff members employed by the Pierce County Board of Education. Facilities are designated locations for providing job-related services. Caseloads are the number of students assigned to a special education staff member who is responsible for the development, implementation, review, and revision of IEPs.

### **COMPONENTS**

- Maintenance of credentials for professional employees
- Classroom size and appropriateness
- Maximum class size and caseload by eligibility category

<b>Description</b>
The Pierce County Board of Education shall provide a classroom of suitable size in a distraction-free area, as required by the type of program or services to be established, with appropriate furniture, materials, supplies, and equipment to meet the needs of the class or individual children to be served and maintenance of credentials for professional employees.
<b>Method to Monitor for Compliance</b>
The Pierce County School System will ensure recruiting, hiring, training, and retaining an adequate supply of highly qualified (certified or licensed) personnel, including special education, related services (which are contracted out), and leadership personnel, to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The District will ensure facility plans are reviewed and approved by the Facilities Department of Georgia Department of Education. Caseloads will reflect maximum class sizes and caseloads for personnel providing services for children 3 – 21.
<b>Monitoring Staff</b>
District Level – Student Services Director, Special Education Secretary, District RTI/SST Coordinator School Level – Principal, AP, Special Education Coordinators

### **Technical Assistance & Monitoring Process**

The Special Education Department conducts monitoring visits to each school consistently throughout the year. On-site monitoring is provided monthly or as often as needed based on individual school needs. Each campus is assigned a Special Education Coordinator. The Student Services Director and Special Education Coordinators are responsible for providing direct support with the overall policies and procedures for compliance.