



Special Education Programs & Resources Guide for Families

School Year 2015-2016



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Letter from the Deputy Chief

Dear DCPS Families,

We value your role in your child's education and know you share the same goal as DCPS—to prepare students with disabilities for success in college, career, and life. In order to achieve this goal, we must work closely together. This guide is an overview of special education programs in DCPS and we see it as the first of many steps in building our partnership with you.

DCPS continues to be committed to offering excellent special education services, and we have high expectations for ourselves and for your children. Over the past five years, we have worked to develop programs to support students with disabilities in our district both inside and outside of the general education setting. In that time, DCPS has focused on building models for inclusion to support more students in general education. We have also launched over 200 special education program classrooms for students with more complex learning, communication, and behavioral needs. At the same time, we have invested in our staff to be great teachers—they have learned de-escalation skills, use literacy interventions, adapt instruction to the Common Core State Standards, and much more. Our students are already making progress as a result, and I look forward to the great things they will do this year.

I hope that this guide helps you learn more about our programs and I encourage you to reach out to us directly with questions and comments. Contact information for each of our programs and supports is included at the back of this guide.

We look forward to a productive and successful year with you and your child!

Sincerely,



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Introduction

One of the goals of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) is to be the district of choice for students with disabilities. We believe that all students, regardless of background or circumstance, can achieve at the highest levels.

Parents, families and community members play an essential role in the education of their children, especially when a child has a disability and needs special services. You are an expert on your child and his or her most important advocate. This guide is meant to give you a brief overview of the programs and services we offer to our students with disabilities. We look forward to working together to ensure that all of our students receive a high-quality education.

What is special education?

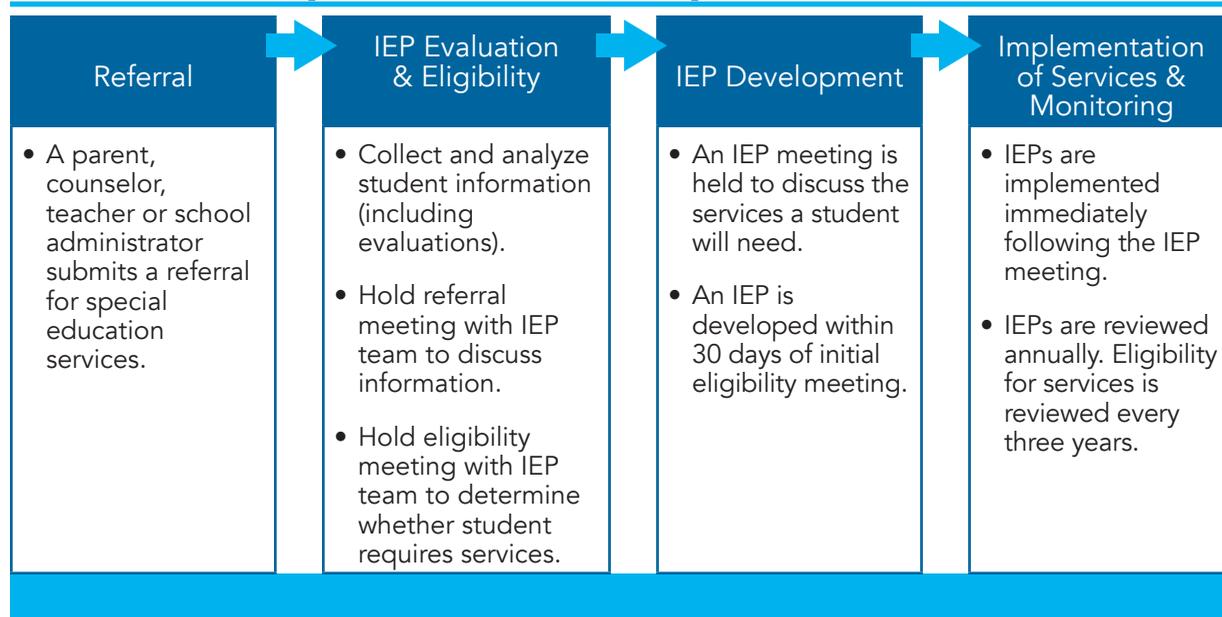
According to the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 2004**, special education is the specially designed instruction and related services required to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. Under this important federal law, DCPS must provide a **free appropriate public education (FAPE)** to every student. IDEA also mandates that students learn in the **least restrictive environment (LRE)** possible. This means that children with disabilities are taught alongside their peers without disabilities to the greatest extent possible and are removed from these settings only when the nature of their disability prevents them from learning with their peers without disabilities.

Why would my child need special education services?

When students have the opportunity to be involved and make progress in the same curriculum as their peers without disabilities, we say they have **access** to the curriculum. However, sometimes a student's disability can prevent him or her from accessing the curriculum. When this happens, teaching methods, materials, classroom settings and/or assignments must be modified to meet the student's needs. These modifications and accommodations give students the opportunity to access their education.



What is the special education process?



The special education process starts once a teacher, parent, psychologist, other school staff member or third party (such as a day care center or physician) submits a referral for a student. After the referral is reviewed, a team meets to discuss the referral, collect (or recommend more) evaluations and determine whether the student is eligible for special education services. This team is called the **IEP (individualized education program)** team and should include general education teachers, special education teachers, school administrators, other key members of the school, related service providers, the student (if appropriate) and you.

Once a student with a disability is found eligible for special education services, the IEP team discusses a plan of action and creates an IEP for the student. The IEP is a document that outlines the educational needs of the student and the instruction and services required to meet those needs. The IEP team determines the special education services a student needs and the appropriate setting in which these services should be delivered.

As the guardian of your child, you are a very important member of the IEP team. Accordingly, the Special Education Student Rights Act of 2014 requires your child's school to send you any relevant documents that will be discussed at an IEP or eligibility meeting within 5 days of the meeting date. This is to ensure you have time to review and prepare for the meeting.

Under the same law, you may expect that a copy of the IEP will be sent to you within 5 days after the meeting has taken place.

DCPS makes every effort to provide special education services in each student's attending or neighborhood school if the appropriate services are available. When this is not possible, DCPS assigns a student to a districtwide classroom at another school that has space, is as close as possible to the student's home and can provide the student's IEP services.

The Special Education Students Rights Act of 2014 also allows parents or their designees to visit their child's current or proposed classroom. If you would like to appoint a designee to observe your child, the school will provide you with an Observation Designee Form to do so.

Where are these services provided?

DCPS provides a continuum of services for students ages three through 22 with disabilities who have been found eligible to receive special education services. There are different settings along the continuum where these services can be provided, and students learn in the least restrictive environment.

IEP teams determine the appropriate level of services a student needs to access the curriculum. Most DCPS students can be served in the general education (regular) classroom, in a Learning Lab or in a full-time classroom. Separate school and home and hospital instruction are considered the most restrictive environments and are for students with the highest level of need.



“Inside of general education” means that the specialized instruction and related services for students with disabilities will be served while they are with their peers without disabilities in the general classroom. DCPS believes that all students will benefit from including students with disabilities in a general education setting to the greatest extent possible.

Sometimes, though, a student needs more support than can be provided in the general education setting. **“Outside of general education”** refers to all specialized instruction and services that are provided to a class or grouping made up entirely of students with disabilities. Students with less than 20 hours of specialized instruction outside of general education in their IEPs typically receive services in a Learning Lab, also referred to as a resource room or pull-out services.

DCPS’s full-time, districtwide classrooms provide specialized supports to students with 20 or more hours of specialized instruction outside of general education in their IEP. Our full-time classrooms are designed to give more support to students with disabilities who have a high level of need.

Students’ IEPs may have instruction hours provided only inside of general education, only outside of general education, or both inside and outside of general education.

How does inclusion work in DCPS?

Students with disabilities spend as much time with their peers without disabilities as possible (as decided by the IEP team). Our goal is to help all students develop the skills they need to eventually learn in a general education classroom with their peers without disabilities. It is important to note that inclusion is not a type of classroom or a place but rather the philosophy of including students with disabilities in general education settings. The goal of inclusion is to provide students with high-quality instruction that is aligned to grade-level expectations and gives them the opportunity to succeed in all areas. One important way inclusion happens is when a student’s special education needs are met in the general education classroom.

Special Education Programs

Behavior & Education Support (BES) Program

Serving: Students with emotional disabilities and students with other disabilities who require intensive behavioral supports

Grades: Grade 1 through grade 12

Contact: osi.behavior@dc.gov

BES program classrooms are full-time classrooms for students who have been identified with an emotional disability or who have challenging behaviors that interfere with learning. Each classroom provides a safe and structured learning environment supported by trained staff who focus on individual student goals.

Eligibility

The BES program serves students in 1st through 12th grades who have behavior intervention plans (BIPs) and have not responded to interventions in the general education setting. Students can enroll in these classrooms only if the IEP team believes the full-time BES program services are necessary.

Students in BES program classrooms have most of their academic instruction in the full-time setting; however, students can begin to transition to a general education setting if the IEP team determines that they are ready.

Instructional Model

BES program classrooms are highly structured and supportive settings. The curriculum aligns to the Common Core State Standards, as well as the DCPS Scope and Sequence. Reading interventions include System 44, Read 180 and Reading Wonders as well as other programs at the school are available to BES students. A blended instructional model is used in some middle and high school BES programs. Blended instruction includes online and in-class instruction, which allows students to earn course credits for graduation.

Classroom Support

Every BES program has three trained staff members: a certified special education teacher, an instructional paraprofessional and a behavior technician. Staff members in every class are trained in Safety Care (behavior management program), de-escalation techniques and reading interventions. The BES specialists also visit classrooms regularly to provide individualized training and support to classroom staff. Specially trained and certified related service providers support the physical and emotional needs of students in accordance with their IEP.

Communication & Education Support (CES) Program

Serving: Students with autism spectrum and related disorders

Grades: PK3 through grade 12

Contact: osi.autism@dc.gov

CES program classrooms are full-time classrooms for students who have been identified with autism spectrum disorder or other learning needs. There are also classrooms that are designated to support students with high functioning autism (HFA). Both CES programs have an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) foundation and use research-based practices to provide students with highly structured environments. Teachers and staff in these full-time classrooms support the academic, behavioral and social-emotional needs of students to help them develop independent life skills.

Eligibility

CES programs serve students in PK3 through 12th grade who have an autism spectrum disorder and/or require support in the following areas: communication, social-emotional, adaptive behavior and academics. Students can enroll in these classrooms only if the IEP team decides that they need full-time CES program services. Students in CES program classrooms typically receive instruction in the full-time classroom; however, students can begin to transition to a general education setting if the IEP team determines that they are ready.

Students with HFA who meet specific criteria may be eligible for our CES-HFA program. In this program the students are generally on or above grade level, do not have significant language or cognitive delays, but have difficulty accessing the general education setting.

Instructional Model

CES classrooms are highly structured and supportive. The staff uses ABA techniques such as prompting and fading and reinforcement to provide the best quality instruction and behavior intervention. Reading and math programs include Edmark, Failure Free Reading and STAR Autism. The CES program also offers Attainment Core Content Curriculum which aligns instruction to the Common Core State Standards.

Instruction in the CES-HFA program is aligned to the Common Core State Standards and the DCPS Scope and Sequence with a special focus on a social skills curriculum.

Classroom Support

Each CES classroom is staffed with a certified special education teacher and instructional paraprofessionals who are trained in ABA. The CES specialists provide individualized training and support to classroom staff. CES specialists are experts in the field of ABA research and several are board-certified behavior analysts. Specially trained and certified related service providers support the physical and emotional needs of students in accordance with their IEP.

Early Learning Support (ELS) Program

Serving: Students with developmental delays

Grades: PK3 through grade 2

Contact: osi.sls@dc.gov

The ELS program offers full-time, early intervention for students. Each classroom uses research-based interventions and structured lessons to prepare students for a less restrictive environment.

Eligibility

The ELS program serves students in PK3 through 2nd grade who have a developmental delay or other delays in cognition, communication, social/emotional, and/or motor and adaptive skills. Students with autism typically are not served in these classrooms. Many students in this program are identified through Early Stages. IEP teams decide whether a student needs the full-time ELS support.

Instructional Model

ELS classrooms are highly structured and supportive. The academic curriculum aligns to the Common Core State Standards and the DCPS Scope and Sequence. The ELS program uses targeted reading interventions to improve reading, spelling, comprehension and critical thinking. The ELS program also uses Handwriting Without Tears and STAR Autism. Teachers use a center-based model that focuses on individual and small-group learning.

Classroom Support

Every ELS program is staffed with a certified special education teacher and an instructional paraprofessional. The ELS specialists provide individualized training and support to classroom staff. Specially trained and certified related service providers support the physical and emotional needs of students in accordance with their IEP.



Independence & Learning Support (ILS) Program

Serving: Students with intellectual disabilities and adaptive functioning needs

Grades: Grade 3 through grade 12

Contact: osi.lowincidence@dc.gov

ILS program classrooms are full-time classrooms for students who have been identified as having a cognitive or intellectual disability. Each program teaches literacy and life skills to prepare students for employment and long-term independence. Community business partnerships and transition planning are key pieces of the ILS program.

Eligibility

ILS programs serve students with delays in measured intelligence and in adaptive and academic functioning or students who have an intellectual disability. Students can enroll in these classrooms only if the IEP team determines the need for full-time ILS program services. Students with the highest level of need may be candidates for ILS classrooms in a separate, specialized school.

Instructional Model

ILS programs are highly structured and supportive. Academic instruction is aligned to the Common Core State Standards and the DCPS Scope and Sequence, with a special focus on daily living activities that promote independence. Reading programs such as Edmark, Failure Free Reading and Handwriting Without Tears are used in the ILS programs.

High school students in the full-time ILS program work toward a certificate of IEP completion rather than a high school diploma. They have access to transition services such as career education and vocational trainings. Many students in the ILS program, but not all, take the alternate state standardized assessment.

Classroom Support

ILS programs are staffed with certified special education teachers and instructional paraprofessionals. Staff members receive training and support in the areas of effective instruction, specific reading interventions, behavior management and data collection. The ILS specialists provide individualized training and support to classroom staff. Specially trained and certified related service providers support the physical and emotional needs of students in accordance with their IEP.

Medical & Education Support (MES) Program

Serving: Students with complex medical needs

Grades: PK3 through grade 2

Contact: osi.mes@dc.gov

MES program classrooms are full-time classrooms for students who have been identified with complex medical needs and intellectual or cognitive delays. Each classroom provides a safe and structured learning environment with an emphasis on sensory experiences and related service integration.

Eligibility

The MES program serves students in PK3 through 2nd grade who are diagnosed with chronic and complex medical conditions and cognitive delays. Students in this program typically experience functional limitations and high health care use. While these students typically spend most of their time in the MES classroom, they may spend a part of their day with their peers without disabilities.

Instructional Model

Classrooms in the MES program are designed to create a space for individual student learning. Instruction is aligned to the Common Core State Standards, the DCPS Scope and Sequence, and individual student IEP goals. Students engage in literacy and numeracy instruction, sensory exploration, and specialized art and music.

Classroom Support

Every MES class is staffed with a certified special education teacher and a paraprofessional who are trained to meet the unique needs of students. A nurse is also dedicated to the needs of students. Specially trained and certified related service providers support students in accordance with their IEP.



Sensory Support Programs

Serving: Students with hearing or visual impairment

Grades: PK3 through grade 12

Contact: osi.lowincidence@dc.gov

The Sensory Support programs serve students who are deaf/hard of hearing or who are blind/visually impaired. These programs aim to help students develop the skills they need to learn with their peers without disabilities and to live independently.

Eligibility

Students in the Sensory Support programs have a diagnosis that includes a sensory impairment or require communication and sensory support to access their school environment. Typically, students in these programs have average to above average cognitive abilities. However, some schools have classrooms created to serve students with sensory impairments and intellectual or cognitive delays.

Instructional Model

Academic instruction in the Sensory Support programs is aligned to the Common Core State Standards and the DCPS Scope and Sequence. Classroom staff provides instruction in American Sign Language and other services to students who are deaf/hard of hearing. For students who have visual impairments, teachers provide braille instruction as well as orientation and mobility training that helps students navigate their school and community. Sensory Support classrooms also help students develop communication and daily living skills that provide them the opportunity to succeed inside and outside the classroom.

Students typically spend most of their school day in the general education setting and receive state-of-the-art technological support (such as assistive listening devices) or other support to help them access the curriculum. The Sensory Support programs also offer auditory/verbal-oral training, support for residual hearing, cochlear implant support and sound amplification.

Classroom Support

Each classroom for students who are deaf/hard of hearing is staffed with a teacher of the deaf, and each vision classroom is staffed with a teacher of the visually impaired. Sensory Support classrooms also have instructional paraprofessionals who provide additional support. Specially trained and certified related service providers support students in accordance with their IEP.

Specific Learning Support (SLS) Program

Serving: Students with learning disabilities or challenges

Grades: Grade 3 through grade 12

Contact: osi.sls@dc.gov

The SLS program is for students who have been identified with a specific learning disability or cognitive impairment. Each classroom provides a safe and structured learning environment with an emphasis on individualized instruction.

Eligibility

The SLS program serves students in 3rd through 12th grades who are identified as having a specific learning disability or complex learning needs and have not responded to interventions in the general education setting. While these students typically spend most of their time in the SLS classroom, they can begin to transition to a general education setting when the IEP team determine that they are ready.

Instructional Model

Instruction is aligned to the Common Core State Standards, the DCPS Scope and Sequence, and students' IEP goals. Students benefit from reading and math programs such as SpellRead, System 44, Equals Math and Read 180, as well as other interventions available at the school.

Secondary students may use the blended instruction model, which combines online and in-class instruction. Blended instruction offers students the chance to earn credits toward graduation as well.

Classroom Support

Every SLS class is staffed with a certified special education teacher and a paraprofessional who are trained to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities and complex learning styles. The SLS specialists provide individualized training and support to classroom staff. Specially trained and certified related service providers support the physical and emotional needs of students in accordance with their IEP.



Special Education Resources

Assistive Technology (AT)

Serving: All students with disabilities who have AT outlined in their IEP

Grades: PK3 through grade 12

Contact: osi.at@dc.gov

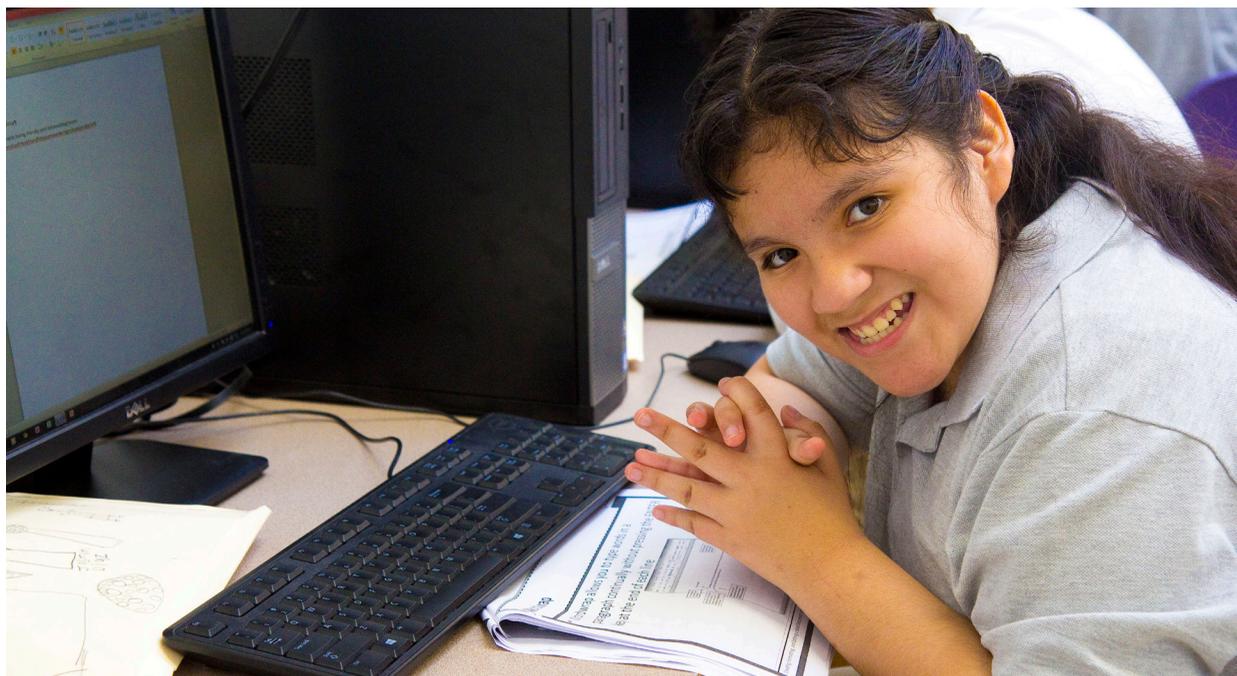
AT is a general term for all technologies that help a student with a disability access the school curriculum or setting. AT devices and services are provided to students who require them to access the curriculum, determined by the IEP team. AT comes in all shapes and sizes and may range from low-tech solutions, like pencil grips and slant boards, to high-tech devices, like laptops and software.

Categories of AT

There are three categories of AT: AT for access, AT for communication and AT for learning. AT for access supports students with physical and sensory needs. Examples of AT for access include mobility and seating solutions, adaptive switches, and screen magnifiers. AT for communication, also known as augmentative and alternative communication, helps students communicate with one another and participate in classes. Examples of AT for communication include communication applications and software, as well as devices with picture symbols. AT for learning aids students with additional learning needs. Examples of AT for learning include personal computers, audio books, and speech-to-text or text-to-speech software.

Access to AT

The IEP or 504 teams determine whether a student needs an AT device or AT services at his or her IEP or 504 meeting.



Early Stages

Serving: Children ages 3 through 5

Grades: PK3, PK4 and kindergarten

Contact: referral@earlystagesdc.org or info@earlystagesdc.org

According to IDEA, a school district must identify, locate and evaluate all 3- to 5-year-old children in the school district who may have a disability. This process is known as Child Find. Early Stages works with children in DCPS; children in dependent charters, private or religious schools, or child care centers; and children who are not yet enrolled in school. In addition, Early Stages manages Part C Transition, the process that determines whether children receiving early intervention services are also eligible for special education services in school.

Early Stages has two evaluation sites:

- Walker-Jones Education Campus, 1125 New Jersey Avenue, NW
- Department of Employment Services, 4058 Minnesota Avenue, NE.

Main Activities

Early Stages offers developmental screenings, manages referrals, conducts evaluations, holds eligibility meetings, develop IEPs and identifies locations for eligible children to receive their services. Each student referred for a full evaluation is assigned an evaluation team. This team is made up of a family care coordinator, who supports the family through the process, and an evaluation coordinator, who organizes the evaluations and the development of an IEP. Together with other specialists, this team completes an evaluation and provides parents with a better understanding of their child's needs. Together with the parent, the team determines whether the child is eligible for special education and related services. If so, the team develops an IEP.

Service Delivery

All services are provided at DCPS schools by DCPS staff. Children who need specialized instruction are offered a seat either at their neighborhood school or through a lottery placement. If the neighborhood school is unavailable or does not have a program that meets the child needs, then a seat will be offered at the closest school that can meet his or her needs. Children who need only related services are not usually offered a seat in a full-time classroom. Instead, they are offered services at their neighborhood school or the school closest to their child care center or private school.

Outreach

The Early Stages team works with organizations in the District and manages the referral processes for child care centers, medical providers and other professionals who work with children. They also offer parent workshops and support screenings and referrals for individual families. If you would like more information, please visit www.earlystagesdc.org.

Referral to Early Stages

Anyone can make a referral to Early Stages. Referrals can be made by phone: 202-698-8037; fax: 202-654-6079; e-mail: referral@earlystagesdc.org; online form: <http://earlystagesdc.org/for-professionals/referrals>; or in person at either site.

Extended School Year (ESY)

Serving: All students with disabilities who have ESY outlined in their IEP

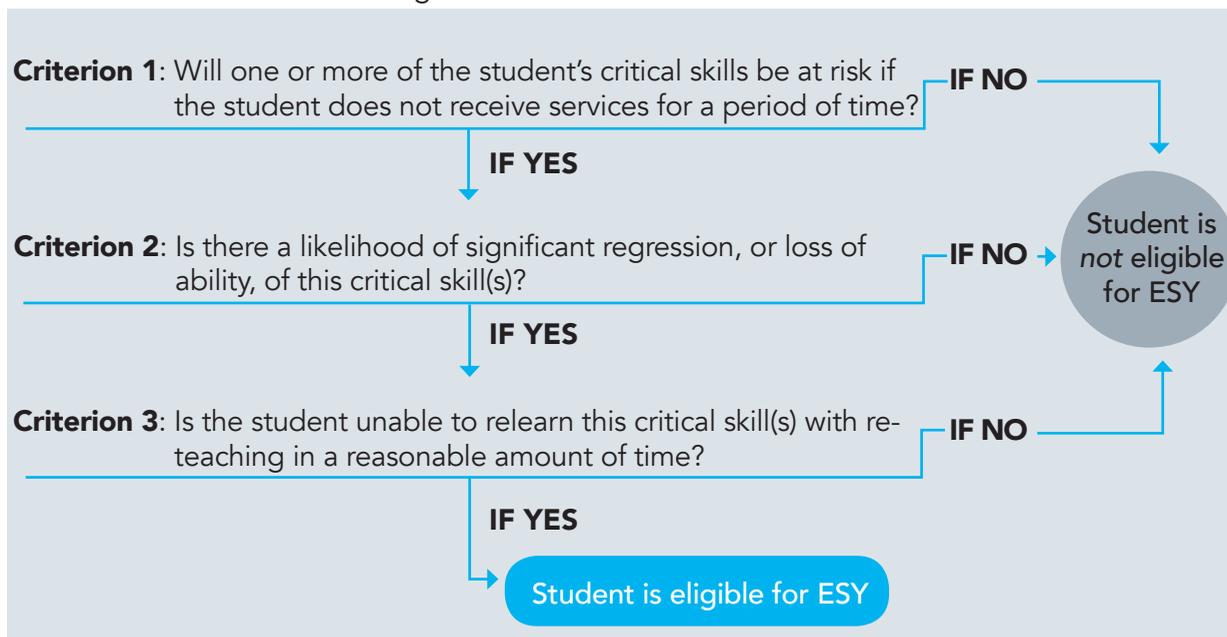
Grades: PK3 through grade 12

Contact: osi.esy@dc.gov

ESY refers to special education and/or related services provided to a student with a disability beyond the normal school year. DCPS offers a summer program to help students retain skills that are essential to their progress so they are ready to begin school in the fall. ESY summer sites are located at various schools each year.

Eligibility

IEP teams consider a student's eligibility for ESY each year. To be considered eligible for ESY, a student must meet the following three criteria:



Critical skills can be academic skills, such as reading or math, or nonacademic skills, such as social, behavioral or functional skills.

Instructional Model

Instruction is aligned to the students' critical skill needs and IEP goals as well as the Common Core State Standards.

Classroom Support

ESY is staffed with certified special education teachers and paraprofessionals on an as-needed basis. Staff provides instruction to support the critical skills in each student's IEP. Trained special education leadership staff members such as Inclusive Programming specialists also work to support the summer program. Specially trained and certified related service providers support the physical and emotional needs of students in accordance with their IEP.

Home and Hospital Instruction Program (HHIP)

Serving: Students who are unable to attend school due to medical conditions

Grades: PK3 through grade 12

Contact: hip.dcps@dc.gov

HHIP serves students in PK3 through 12th grade who have medical or behavioral health conditions that keep them at home or a hospital and prevent them from attending school.

Eligibility and Referral Process

To be eligible for HHIP, students must:

- Be residents or wards of the District of Columbia;
- Be registered in a DCPS school, have an IEP at a DCPS local education agency charter school, or have an IEP at a nonpublic school being monitored by DCPS;
- Expect to miss at least two weeks of school or have a medical condition that causes them to miss many days of school over a long period of time; and
- Have a physician's verification signed by their treating physician or psychiatrist.

Referral for HHIP must be initiated by the neighborhood school. For students with IEPs, the IEP team must determine that HHIP services are needed.

Instructional Model

HHIP offers a curriculum that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Evidence-based curricula and interventions are available to students. A HHIP coordinator provides orientation support to students, collaborates with the local school teachers to ensure that students enroll in appropriate courses, monitors student progress, and provides feedback to teachers and parents.

- Special Education: HHIP special education teachers provide instruction to both elementary and secondary students who need special education services. Instruction is individualized according to the goals and objectives outlined in the student's IEP.
- Specially trained and certified related service providers support the physical and emotional needs of students in accordance with their IEP or 504 Plan.

Transition Back to School

HHIP coordinators, instructors and medical staff work together with parents/guardians and the school to coordinate the return of the student to school-based instruction when HHIP services are no longer required.

Inclusion Models

Co-Teaching

Serving: Students with specialized instruction outlined in their IEP designated as “outside of general education”

Contact: osi.sit@dc.gov

Co-teaching occurs when two or more adults share the responsibility for teaching some or all of the students in a classroom. This practice provides all students with an opportunity to learn from two educators in an integrated approach to the content. For students with IEPs, co-teaching may provide the least restrictive environment to receive specialized instruction. By providing students with and without disabilities access to the curriculum in the same classroom, co-teaching can set the stage for inclusion. DCPS supports co-teaching at all DCPS schools in the district.

Instructional Model

There are many different models of co-teaching. Some models that DCPS supports include but are not limited to:

- **Lead and Support:** Teacher A is the primary planner, shares the plan and delivers the lesson; Teacher B supports instruction.
- **Station Teaching:** Teachers A and B divide students into instructional groups, and students rotate through different stations.
- **Alternative Teaching:** Teachers A and B plan together. Teacher A is responsible for instruction, and Teacher B is responsible for teaching certain skills when necessary. A larger group completes the planned lesson while a small group either completes an alternative lesson or the same lesson taught at a different level or for a different purpose.

The curriculum is aligned to the Common Core State Standards as well as the DCPS Scope and Sequence. Instruction is also aligned to IEP goals and scaffolded to the appropriate level.

Classroom Support

Co-teachers share instruction and are both actively engaged throughout instruction time. The certified teachers prepare together to develop lesson plans. Inclusion specialists work directly with schools to provide professional development and additional support to co-teachers.



Early Childhood Inclusion

Serving: [Students with disabilities served in the general education setting](#)

Grades: PK3–PK4

Contact: dcps.earlychildhood@dc.gov

At the early childhood level, DCPS serves many students with disabilities in the general education classroom. These general education classrooms use a number of research-based curricula including Tools of the Mind, Creative Curriculum, Montessori and the Reggio Emilia approach. Teachers are provided with supports and resources to meet the needs of all children in the classroom. Some classes are designed specifically to serve both students with disabilities and those without in the same space. These classes use the Tools of the Mind curriculum and have additional resources to support all children.

Instructional Model

The Tools of the Mind curriculum allows teachers to work at each student's individual level to help him or her prepare for kindergarten. Students in the classroom also have the advantage of more opportunities to develop social-emotional skills as they interact and learn with children who have different abilities than they do. At the PK3/PK4 level, students with disabilities benefit greatly from peer modeling. Students without disabilities also benefit as they provide support and coaching to their classmates. All students in this setting will be better problem solvers and more accepting of differences.

Classroom Support

Classrooms with Tools of the Mind are staffed with a teacher who is certified in both early childhood education and special education and two trained classroom instructional paraprofessionals. Students receive the services (all academic, personal and related services) outlined in their IEPs while in a general education classroom.



Learning Labs

Formerly known as Resource Rooms

Serving: Students with fewer than 20 hours of specialized instruction outlined in their IEP designated as “outside of general education”

Contact: osi.sit@dc.gov

A Learning Lab is a classroom that is separate from the general education classroom where students with disabilities are given direct, specialized instruction and academic assistance. Sometimes this form of support is also referred to as a resource room or pull-out services. Students in this setting spend part of their time in the Learning Lab and part of their time in the general education classroom with modifications and/or accommodations.

Eligibility

DCPS students with fewer than 20 hours per week of specialized instruction outside of general education may receive some instruction in a Learning Lab. IEP teams decide whether the student requires instruction in a Learning Lab. Students with more than 20 hours of specialized instruction outside of general education in their IEP are eligible for a full-time program.

Instructional Model

Learning Lab teachers provide whole-group, small-group and individual instruction and serve the accommodations and modifications included in students’ IEPs. All instruction is aligned to the Common Core State Standards and the DCPS Scope and Sequence. Targeted math and literacy interventions that are implemented in Learning Labs are Lexia, SpellRead, Equals Math, Just Words, Foundations, System 44/Read 180 and BURST.

Classroom Support

Teachers in Learning Labs design all instruction to meet the specific needs of their students. The Learning Lab teacher works closely with the student’s general education teacher, other staff and the parents to ensure that the appropriate services are provided. The Learning Lab teacher aligns instruction to the IEP goals and is a part of the IEP team.

All Learning Labs receive regular support from the inclusion specialists who provide individualized training and support such as:

- Classroom management strategies;
- Aligning instruction to the Common Core State Standards;
- Tracking student progress and using these data to adjust teaching methods; and
- Providing accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom.

Specially trained and certified related service providers support the physical and emotional needs of students in accordance with their IEPs.

Medicaid

Serving: **Students receiving special education services who are eligible for Medicaid**

Contact: osi.medicaid@dc.gov

Federal law allows DCPS to bill Medicaid for special education services provided to students who are eligible for Medicaid. Funds from Medicaid can be used to buy equipment and supplies for students, to hire and train staff, and to enhance Special Education programs.

Process of Consent

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requires school districts to get consent from parents before billing Medicaid. This consent lets DCPS share the student's educational information necessary for billing Medicaid. Without a parent's consent form signed, DCPS cannot bill for the Special Education services provided. You can speak to your student's special education teacher to get this form completed and signed.

Impact of Consent

The District will not use Medicaid if that use would: (1) Decrease the available lifetime coverage or any other insured benefit; (2) Result in any cost to your family; or (3) Increase premiums or lead to the discontinuation of benefits of insurance.

If you decide not to consent, your child's ability to receive special education services will not be impacted. You are not required to provide your consent, and your refusal to do so will not prevent your child from receiving special education services at the expense of the district.

If your child no longer receives Medicaid, their IEP services will not be affected. Your child will continue to receive all services listed on their IEP.

Types of Services Covered

- Audiology Services/Assessment
- Behavioral Support Services
- Nutrition
- Occupational Therapy Services/Assessment
- Orientation and Mobility Services/Assessment
- Personal Care Aide/Services
- Physical Therapy Services/Assessment
- Psychological Evaluation
- Skilled Nursing Services
- Speech Language Pathology Services/Assessment

Related Services

Serving: All students with disabilities who have related services outlined in their IEP

Grades: PK3 through grade 12

Contact: dcps.relatedservices@dc.gov

Audiology

An educational audiologist focuses on the hearing, listening, and auditory processing challenges that may affect a student's academic, communication, and/or social skills. Audiologists support students by evaluating students' hearing and auditory processing, and selecting and fitting appropriate hearing assistance technology. Audiologists teach students, their parents, and school staff the care and use of hearing devices. They also provide information on hearing loss and prevention, and help develop strategies to improve students' communication.

Mental Health and Behavioral Support Services

The Mental Health and Behavioral Support Services team consists of DCPS social workers who work with students on issues they face at school, at home, and in the community that affect their ability to participate in and benefit from their education. These services can include group or individual counseling; home visits; and social, emotional and behavioral assessments. School social workers work with teachers to analyze student behavior and functioning over time to develop strategies that help maximize learning in the classroom. These social workers also connect students and families with community resources to maximize the impact of in-school behavioral support services. Social workers are part of the crisis response team, which supports students and school staff when a crisis occurs.

Physical Supports: Occupational and Physical Therapy

Occupational therapists work with students and teachers to improve students' ability to perform day-to-day tasks, such as reaching and grasping, so they can better hold books and classroom materials. Occupational therapy services also help address self-help skills, adaptive behavior and play, and other sensory and motor skills. Physical therapists help students with challenges related to movement, such as climbing stairs or transitioning from class to class. After diagnosing these challenges, physical therapists provide support and assistive technology, such as walkers, to help students travel around the school.

Psychology

The psychology team supports students and educators by giving psychological and developmental tests, analyzing information about a child's behavior and cognitive functioning, and interpreting these results with school staff and parents. DCPS psychologists work with parents, teachers and other IEP team members to ensure that test results and other information are used to determine the appropriate services and develop goals. School psychologists also help school staff and parents develop learning and behavior strategies.

Speech-Language Pathology

The speech-language pathology team identifies and supports children with specific disorders and delays related to oral language and communication. The team provides intervention to help students overcome the impact of these challenges on their academic success. Speech-Language pathologists use current intervention techniques and strategies to help students become more independent. Concerns about feeding and swallowing are also addressed in speech and language services. Speech-language pathologists also work closely with teachers and parents to build speech-language skills and help students apply those skills to all learning opportunities by reinforcing strategies in the classroom and at home.

Transportation

Transportation is a related service under IDEA, and your child's eligibility is determined by the IEP team based on criteria provided by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). Transportation is provided by the OSSE Division of Transportation (DOT).

If you have questions about your child's eligibility for transportation, please contact your child's school. If your child is eligible for transportation and you have questions about the bus, routing or scheduling, please call the OSSE DOT Parent Resource Center at 202-576-5000.



River Terrace Education Campus (RTEC)

Serving: Students with intellectual delays and complex medical needs

Grades: Grade 3 through grade 12

River Terrace Education Campus, opening in the fall of the 2015-2016 school year, is a state of the art school designed for students who need high levels of support. RTEC was designed to be accessible for all students and has spaces for students to express themselves and engage. Each classroom provides a safe and structured learning environment with an emphasis on sensory experiences and instruction.

Eligibility

The facilities and resources at River Terrace are specially designed for students with both intellectual disabilities and complex medical needs. IEP teams decide whether a student needs a separate school educational setting. DCPS determines if classrooms at RTEC are the appropriate location for services for students.

Instructional Model

All lesson-planning and teaching is designed to meet each student's IEP goals. DCPS also offers Attainment Elementary and Secondary Solutions, which are research-based, Common Core aligned curricula created specifically for students with high levels of need. Students will also be able to access many of the math and reading interventions that have been used successfully in special education classrooms across the district including: Edmark, Failure Free Reading, ST Math and First in Math.

Classrooms in RTEC have also been designed to have various types of technology to help students learn and succeed. Some examples of these technologies are computers, iPad, interactive white boards, and enhanced sound and lighting systems. By using these technologies along with any assistive technology assigned, students are able to better access the curriculum and instruction.

Classroom Support

Each class in RTEC is staffed with a certified special education teacher and a paraprofessional who are trained to meet the unique needs of students. Nursing support is also provided as needed to the school and students. Specially trained and certified related services providers support students in accordance with their IEP. Staff at RTEC are also available to help students develop independent living and career skills in order to prepare them for the transition to post-secondary life.

Section 504 Program

Serving: All students with disabilities with a 504 Plan

Grades: PK3 through grade 12

Contact: 504@dc.gov

The Section 504 program is named for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a federal law that requires public schools to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities so that these students can access the school's general education curriculum and learning opportunities.

Unlike special education, Section 504 does not prescribe specialized instruction for eligible students. Instead, the Section 504 program ensures that eligible students with disabilities receive accommodations and/or services they need to access the general education curriculum and other opportunities for learning at their DCPS schools.

Eligibility

- A student is eligible under Section 504 if he or she has a (1) physical or mental impairment that (2) substantially limits (3) a major life activity. A student must meet all three criteria to be eligible.
- Eligibility determinations are made by the 504 team at your student's school.

Process for Section 504

- Parents/guardians are invited to complete a Section 504 Referral Form if they believe that their child has a physical or mental impairment that could make their child eligible for Section 504. Referral forms are available at your student's school.
- Once the referral form has been received by the school, the 504 team will ask the parent/guardian to provide any medical documentation or additional information and invite the parent/guardian to attend a 504 eligibility meeting. At the eligibility meeting, the team will review all available information and determine whether the student is eligible.
- If the student is determined to be eligible, the 504 team, which includes the parent/guardian, will then write a 504 Plan for the student, describing the specific accommodations or services that the student needs to access the general education curriculum at the school.
- The 504 team will meet annually to review the student's 504 Plan and determine whether any changes are needed. The 504 team will also review the student's eligibility for Section 504 every three years.

For more information

Please contact the 504 coordinator or principal at your student's school for more information. You may read more about the law online at the U.S. Department of Education's website.

Please note that charter, private and religious schools have separate programs to meet their obligations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If your student attends a charter, private or religious school, please contact that school directly for information.

Transition Programs

Competitive Employment Opportunities (CEO) Program

Serving: Students 16–22 years old with disabilities pursuing a high school diploma
Contact: osi.transition@dc.gov or <http://dcpsceo.com>

The CEO program provides high school age students with disabilities the chance to connect with professional mentors who work in a range of occupations. CEO mentors help guide students through the career exploration process. Students work with mentors, attend paid weekly professional development classes and complete career-focused projects. When students finish the program, mentors assist participants in applying for paid summer internships at their organizations.

Eligibility Guidelines

Students should:

- Be in high school with a current 504 Plan or IEP
- Be enrolled in DCPS and are on track to graduate with a diploma

Students are recommended to the program by school staff during the first semester of school. Selected students are then interviewed at their school near the end of the fall semester. Selections are made roughly three weeks after the interview process. Interested parents should contact program staff directly or speak to their student's special education teacher.



Project SEARCH

Serving: Students 18–21 years old pursuing a certificate of IEP completion

Contact: osi.transition@dc.gov

Project SEARCH is a school-to-work transition program that takes place in an office setting where students learn real-life skills, receive job training and participate in employment readiness activities. The goal of the program is to help students with intellectual disabilities find employment in their field of interest. Project SEARCH is located at the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Eligibility Guidelines

Students should:

- Be identified as having an intellectual or other developmental disability;
- Be 18–21 years old and receive special education services;
- Be on a certificate track (non-diploma) and have a good attendance record;
- Be entering their last year of high school and expect to graduate after completing the program
- Have a desire to work in the community during and at the end of the program and have a desire to work in an office setting;
- Have appropriate hygiene, social and communication skills;
- Be able to follow instructions and abide by the code of conduct;
- Be able to use public transportation independently, including MetroAccess (travel training is available through the program); and
- Be able to pass a drug screening and criminal background check.

Student Selection

School-based staff are responsible for recommending students to Project SEARCH. Recommendations are made during the fall and winter of the school year, and students are selected in early spring. All accepted students must attend a two-week summer orientation. Accepted students are also expected to visit worksites, complete all necessary paper work, and participate in work experience activities prior to the end of the year.

Workforce Development Center

Serving: Students 17–21 years of age with Developmental Disabilities pursuing a certificate of IEP completion

Contact: osi.transition@dc.gov

The Workforce Development Center (WDC) is a combined education and work experience program for students with disabilities who are in their last year of high school. The one-year program prepares students, who receive special education support through DCPS, for employment in the community. Students receive training in the areas of Horticulture, Health Sciences/Administrative Support, and Hospitality. Students also learn independent living and career skills through the WDC curricula.

Eligibility Guidelines

To be eligible, students must be:

- 7-21 years old and have been identified with an intellectual or other developmental disability.
- Entering their last year of high school and expect to graduate after finishing this program.
- On a certificate track (non-diploma) and have a good attendance record.
- Have participated in a community-based work experience and transition courses at the student's home school.
- Have a transition plan that shows the student requires work and independent living skills instruction.
- Be able to complete the workplace tasks with support and accommodations.
- Have a desire to work in the community during and at the end of the program.
- Have good hygiene, social and communication skills.
- Able to utilize public transportation independently, including Metro Access (travel training is available through the program).

Workforce Development Center Locations

The Workforce Development Center is located at River Terrace Special Education Campus. Students may participate in internships with community partners across the District of Columbia.

Student Selection

School-based teachers and staff are responsible for recommending students to the Workforce Development Center during the fall semester of school. Recommendations are made via e-mail to osi.transition@dc.gov. Selected students will move on to the application and interview process at the beginning of the second semester. Accepted students are expected to attend orientation and complete all onboarding paperwork.

Academic Interventions & Programs

- **BURST:** BURST uses districtwide assessments to identify areas of need in reading and groups students appropriately. Instruction is tailored depending on the area of need to help students master phonics, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary and oral language.
- **Common Core State Standards:** These standards lay out what students should know and be able to do in kindergarten through 12th grade.
- **DCPS Scope and Sequence:** DCPS Scope and Sequence standardizes instruction throughout the district (in different grade levels and subject areas) by providing clear guidance on what teachers should teach and when they should teach it.
- **Edmark:** This program is for students who need an alternative approach to phonics instruction. It follows a series of carefully sequenced and repetitive lessons that teaches sight-words and content-specific words up to a 3rd grade level.
- **Equals Math:** Designed for students with disabilities, this math program teaches various levels of math skills such as pre-readiness, fundamental and higher order math skills. Each lesson allows students of all levels to access mathematical concepts.
- **Failure Free Reading:** Failure Free Reading is a non-phonetic highly structured language development program that directly teaches reading comprehension, vocabulary and fluency. The content is designed for older students' interests and aligned to their instructional reading levels.
- **Foundations:** Foundations lessons focus on carefully sequenced skills that include print knowledge; alphabet, phonological and phonemic awareness; decoding; vocabulary; fluency; and spelling. Critical thinking, speaking and listening skills are practiced during storytime activities.



- **Handwriting Without Tears:** This program is used to enhance fine-motor development. The program contains elements of multisensory activities that help students develop handwriting and letter formation skills.
- **Just Words:** Just Words is a multisensory decoding and spelling program for students in 4–12 grade.
- **Lexia:** This literacy intervention creates an individualized learning path for each student and adapts instruction according to his or her responses. Although the primary focus of this software is developing students’ phonological awareness, all areas of reading are addressed.
- **Lindamood-Bell:** This reading program is made up of two sections: Seeing Stars and Visualizing and Verbalizing. The Seeing Stars section develops symbol imagery and the ability to visualize the sounds and letters in words. The Visualizing and Verbalizing section develops word imagery for oral and written language.
- **Reading Wonders:** Reading Wonders provides support for building a strong reading foundation directly aligned to the Common Core State Standards. The program uses reading and writing workshops and resources covering a wide range of reading levels to address all student needs. Reading Wonders also uses technology through multimedia activities and interactive games.
- **SpellRead:** This program provides multisensory instruction for phonics involving the manipulation syllables and practice of letters and their corresponding sounds; these foundations are then used in reading and writing activities.
- **STAR Autism:** This program provides literacy teaching materials that follow ABA methods. The program also includes speech therapy instruction that develops oral language and teaches pre-requisite skills for reading.
- **System 44/Read 180:** Read 180 Next Generation is a program that helps students improve in all areas of literacy (reading comprehension, fluency and written expression). The System 44 Next Generation program helps students master the foundational reading skills (phonics, comprehension and writing). Both programs are computer based and aligned to the Common Core State Standards.



Division of Specialized Instruction Contact Information

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Early Learning Support Program
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Independence & Learning Support Program
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Medical & Education Support Program
osi.mes@dc.gov

Sensory Support Program
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Specific Learning Support Program
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Assistive Technology
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Early Childhood Inclusion
dcps.earlychildhood@dc.gov

Early Stages
info@earlystagesdc.gov

Extended School Year
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Home and Hospital Instruction Program
hip.dcps@dc.gov

Inclusion Models
osi.sit@dc.gov

Related Services
dcps.relatedservices@dc.gov

Section 504
504@dc.gov

Transition Programs
osi.transition@dc.gov

OSSE Department of Transportation Parent Resource Center
202-576-5000





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