

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Who can I talk to regarding special education in my child's school?

Within the school, parents can talk to their child's teacher or ask to speak with the special education coordinator or principal.

### What is an IEP?

An IEP is an Individualized Education Program written for a student who has a qualifying disability based on an evaluation. The IEP is based on the individual student's needs and describes the special help the student will receive in school.

### What is a special education placement?

A "placement" refers to the type and intensity of services needed as outlined in a child's IEP. Special education services can often be delivered in the child's existing class or school. Qualification for special education services does not necessarily mean a change in school or even a change in class.

### What is response to intervention (RTI)?

RTI is a problem solving approach schools often use to identify and support students with learning and behavior needs. Both the special education and the RTI processes begin with a review of existing information. However, the use of RTI strategies cannot be used to deny or delay an evaluation for special education.



District of Columbia  
Office of the State Superintendent of Education



District of Columbia  
Office of the State Superintendent  
of Education (OSSE)  
Division of Systems and Supports, K-12  
1050 First Street, NE, Fifth Floor  
Washington, DC 20002

[osse.dc.gov](https://osse.dc.gov)

(202) 727-6436

.....

For More Information:  
**Ms. Adrienne Rodriguez**  
Education Program Specialist

(202) 478-5947



**SPECIAL EDUCATION**  
Parent Information Brochure





## YOU ARE YOUR CHILD'S BEST ADVOCATE.

### Knowing Your Rights

Schools share your goal for success, but sometimes challenges arise. As a parent, you have certain rights under the law, known as procedural safeguards. These rights are designed to ensure that parents are fully informed and can be partners in making decisions. For example, you have the right to:

- Receive notice about steps your child's school is taking related to services, and request a meeting to discuss your child's IEP at any time
- Observe your child in the classroom
- Receive a copy of any document regarding your child that will be discussed at an IEP meeting before the meeting
- Receive a copy of the IEP after the IEP meeting
- Refuse the delivery of services and obtain external evaluations if you disagree with results
- Bring individuals who understand your child's strengths and needs to meetings
- Seek assistance in resolving disagreements through mediation or through more formal procedures such as OSSE's State Complaint Office or Office of Dispute Resolution

Additional information is outlined in the Parental Rights and Procedural Safeguards document available through your child's school or online at: <http://bit.ly/2FsdY7O>

## THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE

In the District of Columbia, schools have 120 days from the date of referral to eligibility determination. Below are key process steps:

**Referral** – A verbal or written request is made. The school documents the referral in its system and lets you know in writing about the referral and what steps it is taking.

**Evaluation** – The school brings together a team to review existing information and decide if additional information is needed to determine if your child has a qualifying disability.

**Eligibility** – A team of professionals will meet with you to discuss evaluation results to determine if your child has a qualifying disability and requires special education services.

**Individualized Education Program** – If your child is found eligible for special education, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be developed that will include specific goals and objectives to address your child's strengths and needs.



## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SUSPECT MY CHILD HAS A DISABILITY?

As a parent, you are uniquely qualified to know your child's learning strengths and challenges. If you suspect that your child has a disability, speak to your child's teacher about your concerns. Please note that DC law requires your school to act on verbal requests for an evaluation within three business days. Children with disabilities who are not eligible for special education may qualify for accommodations in the general classroom under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. More information on the 504 evaluation process is available at your school or online at: <http://bit.ly/2mqWOj4>

If your child is not yet enrolled in school, and is over 2 years 8 months old, contact the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) Early Stages at (202) 698-8037.

If you have concerns about an infant or toddler, contact OSSE's Strong Start DC Early Intervention Program at (202) 727-3665.