

# The Special Education Evaluation Process

Winter 2022 Webinar Series

**Accessing Special Education: Evaluation & Eligibility Basics**



February 22, 2022



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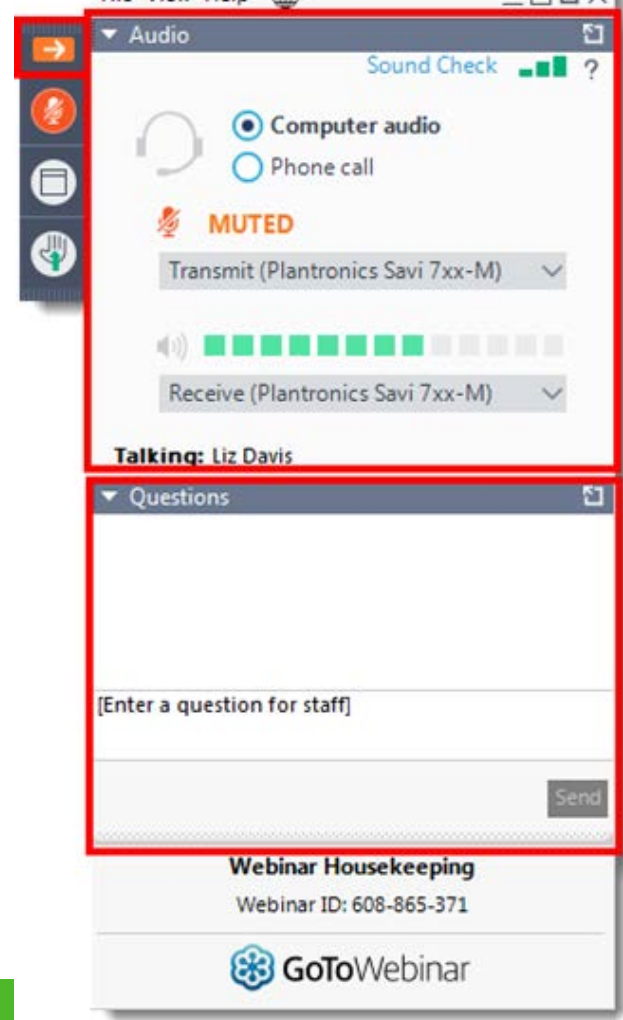


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# Housekeeping

- Use **Questions** pod to pose questions and comment; others will not see your questions/comments.
- Download handouts from HANDOUTS pod.
- All recordings, slides and handouts will be on FFF website under RESOURCES: WEBINARS by Thursday.
- Email [info@formedfamiliesforward.org](mailto:info@formedfamiliesforward.org) if you need certificate of attendance



# Formed Families Forward - who we are...

- A family-led resource center in Northern Virginia supporting foster, adoptive and kinship families who are raising children, youth & young adults with special needs, and professionals who work with our families.
- We offer free training, consultations to families, events, resources, and systems navigation. Also - peer support groups; webinars; virtual trainings; Directory; videos and other resources.
- Family partner to Va Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS; a VDOE project)

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# Accessing Special Education Series

February 22- The Special Education Evaluation Process

March 1- Reevaluations: Tips for Continuing Special Education Eligibility

March 8- Special Education for Formed Families: Making It Work!

March 15- Connecting to Special Education Services for Military Families Formed Through Adoption, Kinship Care and Foster Care



**ACCESSING  
SPECIAL  
EDUCATION:  
EVALUATION &  
ELIGIBILITY  
BASICS**

**WEBINAR SERIES**

# POLL

What's your role(s):

- Adoptive parent
- Kinship caregiver
- Foster or resource parent
- Professional
- Birth parent

Chat in any additional roles (in Q & A box)

# Our objective is to answer these questions:

- What is special education?
- Who “gets” special education?
- What is involved in an evaluation for special education?
- What is the timeline?
- Should I be concerned with a special education label?



# What is Special Education?

A program of specialized educational services provided to students with disabilities



## Individuals with Disabilities Education Act



- ★ IDEA or I.D.E.A.
- ★ Federal legislation
- ★ Guarantees special education to eligible children with disabilities

# IDEA Legislation Guarantees:



- ★ Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
- ★ Specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with disabilities
- ★ Placement in the least restrictive environment
- ★ Parent\* participation in educational planning

“Parent” is an inclusive term

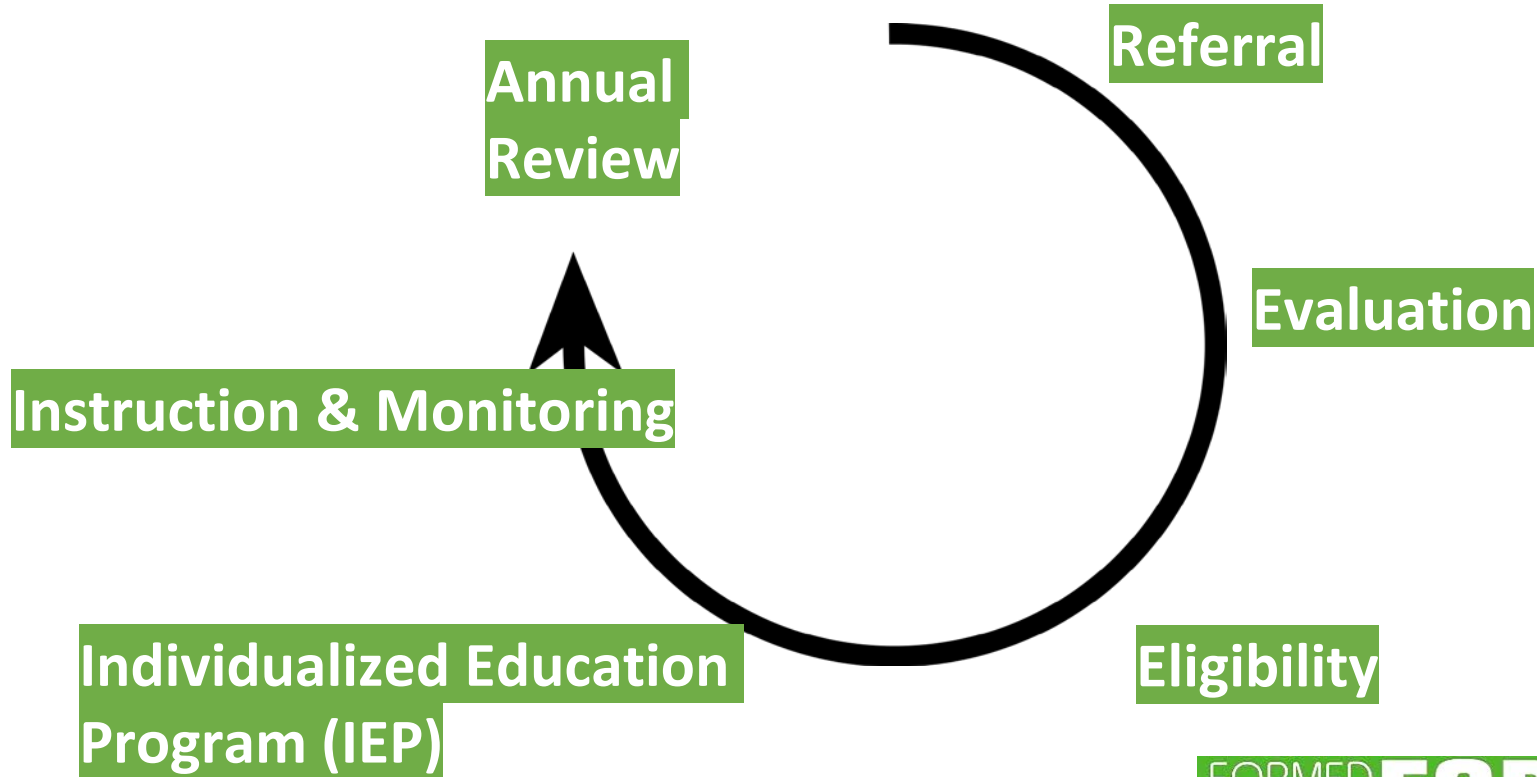


# Who gets Special Education Services?

- ★ Qualify through an evaluation and eligibility process
- ★ Must meet criteria for one of the Federal Disability Categories
- ★ Must demonstrate a need for special education & related services

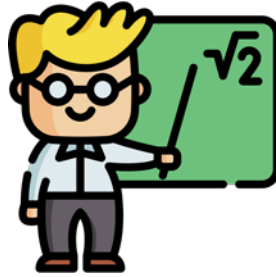
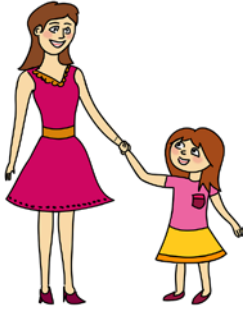


# Special Education Cycle



# Referral

Who can make a referral?



How do I make a referral?



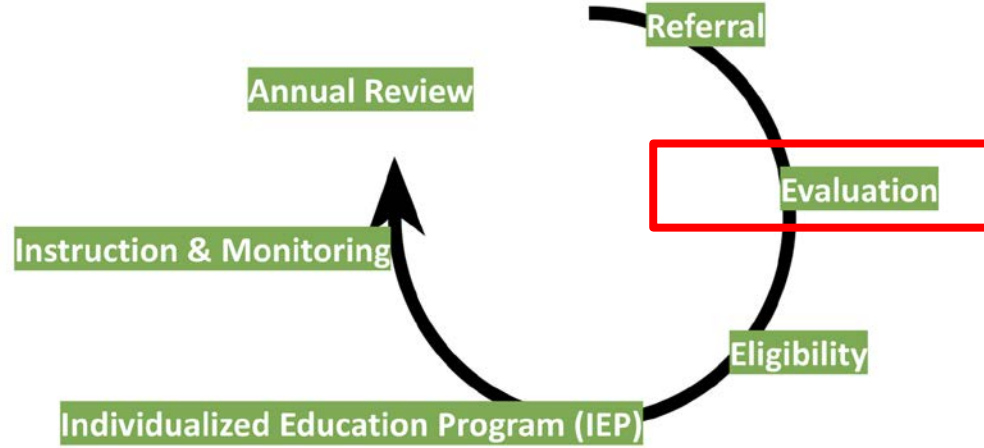
# Then what?

Within 3 business days...

1. Deny the request → Provide information on appeal
2. Honor the request → Initiate evaluation immediately
3. Send request to school team



# What is involved in an Evaluation?



- Information is used to determine eligibility
- There is no cost to the family
- Parents are team members
- Evaluations complete and decisions made within 65 days of referral
- Written report available 2 days in advance of meeting

# Areas of Suspected Disability

- Health, vision, hearing\*, social emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, motor abilities, adaptive behaviors.
  - May include: educational, medical , sociocultural, psychological, or developmental assessments.
- \* Hearing must be screened of each child suspected of disability during initial determination of eligibility.

# What is a Sociocultural Assessment?

- Written report from a qualified school social worker
- Describes family history, structure and dynamics
- Developmental and health history
- Social/adaptive behavior in the home, school, and community

# Sharing Information in a Sociocultural Assessment

- Consent is needed for the assessment.
- The information in the assessment is private and will not be shared with other students or parents.
- It provides caregivers with opportunity for the school to understand the child's struggles and strengths at home or in the community.
- In conjunction with other assessments, it may provide evidence of the need for special education services.



# Areas of Evaluation



- **Educational Assessment**

- Determines achievement in reading, writing, and math
- Completed by a special educator
- Includes:
  - Individually administered, standardized tests of reading, writing, & math (ie. Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement)
  - Classroom based assessments
  - School/system wide measures (i.e., SOLs, PALS)

# Areas of Evaluation



- **Psychological Assessment**

- Determines general ability and specific strengths and weaknesses
- Completed by a school psychologist
- Includes:
  - Individually administered, standardized test of intelligence
  - Tests of processing skills
  - Rating Scales of social-emotional, behavioral and/or adaptive functioning
  - Observations
  - Interviews

# More Areas of Evaluation

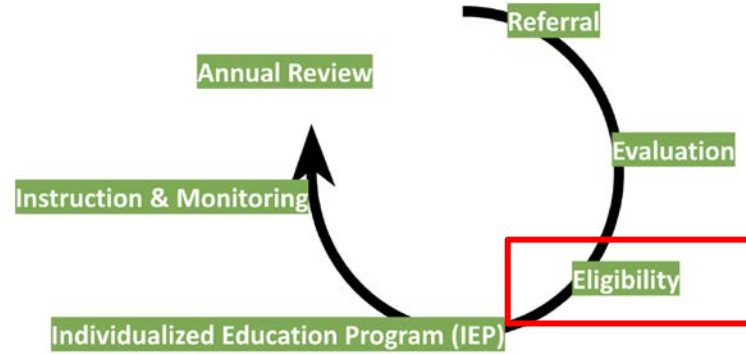
- **Speech/Language** Assessment
- **Vision Screening**
- **Medical Report** completed by a licensed physician to rule out and/or identify any medical problems related to the suspected disability.
- **Occupational Therapy** Assessment
- **Physical Therapy** Assessment
- **Functional Vision** Assessment
- **Observation** (consent required for initial evaluations only)

# Independent Educational Evaluation

- If parents disagree with a test given during their child's evaluation process, they have the right to request an **independent educational evaluation (IEE)** conducted by a qualified person who does not work for the school.
- Parents may request that the school pay for the IEE. However, the school may ask for a due process hearing to show that its initial evaluation is appropriate.
- Even if it is decided that the school does not have to pay for it, parents have the right to an IEE.
- If parents pay for the IEE, they determine whether or not to share the information in the IEE with the school.

# Eligibility

- Child must be identified under one or more categories to receive special education and related services under IDEA
- Definitions of **each category** are available in regulations: *8VAC20-81-80. Eligibility (J) through (W)*



# Disability Categories Under IDEA

Children with:

- Autism
- Deafness
- Deaf-blindness
- Developmental delay \*
- Emotional disability
- Hearing impairment, including deafness
- Intellectual disability
- Multiple disability
- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment, including ADHD
- Specific learning disability
- Speech or language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual impairment, including blindness



\* Use of DD for children age 3 through 9 is at discretion of state and local school systems.

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
BASIS FOR ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

Name:		School:
ID#:	DOB:	Date of Eligibility:

OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRMENT

**DEFINITION**

Other health impairment means having limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that (i) is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and, (ii) adversely affects a child's educational performance.

**CRITERIA**

A child with an other health impairment who requires special education and related services will meet ALL of the following criteria. In interpreting evaluation data, the committee must document and carefully consider information from a variety of sources. For each criterion indicate **Yes** or **No** and provide additional information as appropriate.

Yes  No

**1. Impairment**

The student has limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli that results in limited alertness due to a documented chronic or acute health problem.

Specify chronic or acute health condition and reference documentation:

There is documentation of an Other Health Impairment. The effect of the Other Health Impairment limits are identified and impacts the students in the area of (check all that apply):

- Strength
- Vitality
- Alertness (including heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment)

Yes  No

**2. Educational Impact**

The disability adversely affects the child's educational performance. Document the areas where the disability and not other factors negatively impacts a child's academic and/or functional performance as compared to average same-aged students.

Describe the impacted academic/functional performance:

Yes  No

**3. Observation**

The committee considered the relevant behavior noted during the classroom observation and the relationship of that behavior to the child's academic functioning. Note relevant behavior, if any:

Yes  No

**4. Medical Findings**

The committee considered educationally relevant medical findings if any. Note educationally relevant medical findings, if any:

Yes  No

**5. Exclusionary Factors**

**A.** Lack of appropriate instruction in reading including the essential components of reading instruction (phonemic awareness; phonics; vocabulary development; reading fluency, including oral reading skills; and reading comprehension strategies) has been ruled out as the determinant factor in the eligibility decision.

Yes  No

**B.** Lack of appropriate instruction in math has been ruled out as the determinant factor in the eligibility decision.

Yes  No

**C.** Limited English proficiency has been ruled out as the determinant factor in the eligibility decision.

# Sample Eligibility Worksheet

Yes  No

**Need for Special Education**

Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child that result from their disability and to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards that apply to all children within APS. Specify/Describe:

**ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION**

The disability criteria for **other health impairment** have been met and the child needs special education and related services.

The disability criteria for **other health impairment** have NOT been met.

# Should I be concerned with the label?

**Special education labels are a means to meeting the purpose of ensuring educational success.**

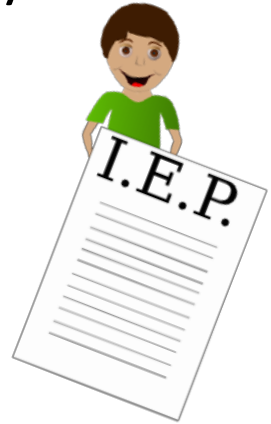
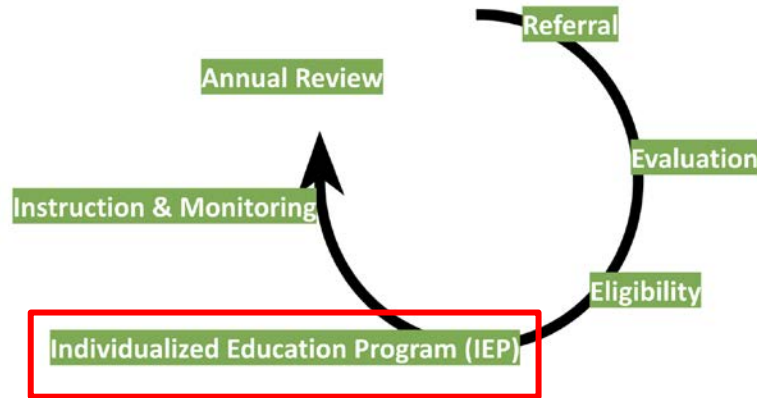
- Provides specially designed instruction in line with the student's unique needs
- Reduces barriers to learning (accommodations, supplementary aids & services, adaptive devices)
- Allows child to meet full potential (achieve goals, pursue degrees, attain careers)





# Next Step

- For students who qualify for special education services, the next step is to develop an **Individualized Education Program or IEP**.
- The IEP must be presented within 30 days of the eligibility meeting.



# What if I disagree with the decision?

## Options for Dispute Resolution:

- Informal resolution
- Complaint to State VDOE
- Mediation (no cost to family)
- Due Process Hearing



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**PLEASE COMPLETE EVALUATION** right after we end.

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