

Getting Ready for the Ride: Special Education Hacks for the Year Ahead

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Kelly Henderson, PhD, Executive Director

Renee Myers, NCSP, Content Specialist



www.FormedFamiliesForward.org

FORMED FAMILIES **FORWARD**

PRE-TEST

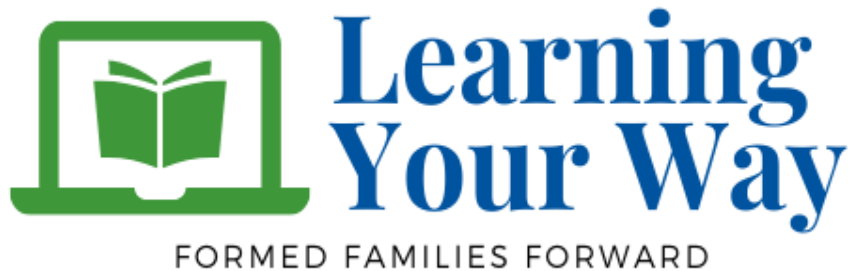
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Formed Families Forward - who we are...

- A family-led resource center in Northern Virginia supporting foster, adoptive and kinship families who are raising children, youth & young adults with specialized 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; Resource Directory; videos and other resources.
- Family partner to Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS; a VDOE project)
- Email Sperry.Perry@formedfamiliesforward.org if you need a **certificate of attendance**.

Renee.Myers@formedfamiliesforward.org

Kelly.Henderson@formedfamiliesforward.org



- ★ Free online, self-paced learning
- ★ Earn certificates of completion
- ★ 8 courses to choose from



- Special Education 101
- Constructive Communication & Collaboration
- Trauma 101
- Special Education Dispute Resolution
- Kinship Care
- Other Health Impairment
- Positive Parenting
- FBAs and BIPs

Open now!

<https://bit.ly/LYWfall26>

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Support Groups

For foster, adoptive, and kinship parents and caregivers

- Virtual on first Sunday evenings

- In-person on third Wednesday evenings

- Register at

<https://bit.ly/FFTgroupFFF>

Formed Families Together

Peer Support
Groups



INTERESTED IN JOINING?
REGISTER AT
[HTTPS://BIT.LY/FFTGROUPS](https://bit.ly/FFTgroups)
OR LEARN MORE AT
[FORMEDFAMILIESFORWARD.ORG](https://formedfamiliesforward.org)

We provide a safe space for foster & adoptive parents & kinship caregivers to share their experiences, concerns, frustrations, & resources!

**VIRTUAL GROUP
MEETS VIA ZOOM
1ST SUNDAYS
FROM 7:30 TO 9 PM**

**IN-PERSON GROUP MEETS
3RD WEDNESDAYS IN
FAIRFAX CITY,
FROM 7 - 8:30 PM**

Formed Families Together support groups are led by trained peer leaders with personal & professional experience.

Hosted By

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POLL

Who are you? Choose all that apply.

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

Chat in any additional roles



We will answer these questions:

1. What is special education?
2. Who “gets” special education?
3. How do you make a referral for special education?
4. What is involved in an evaluation for special education?
5. How long does it take?
6. Should I be concerned with a special education label?
7. When does reevaluation happen?



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
- ★ A student's category should NOT determine services or access to programs

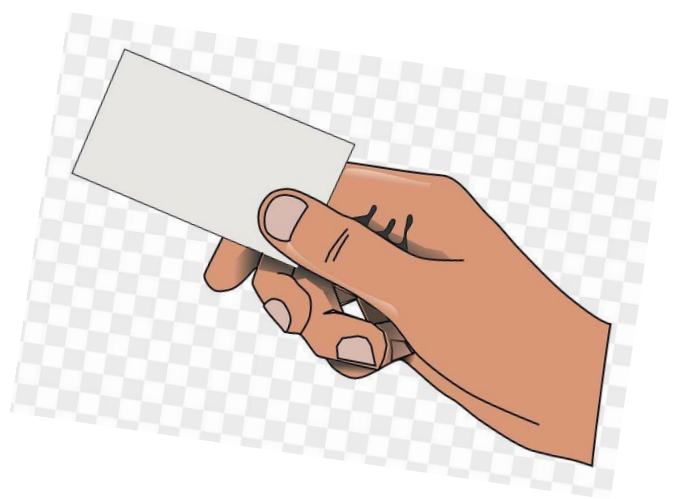
Special Education Cycle



POLL

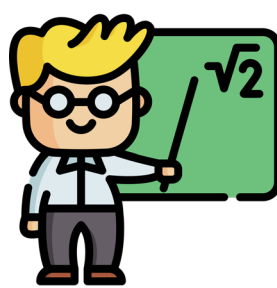
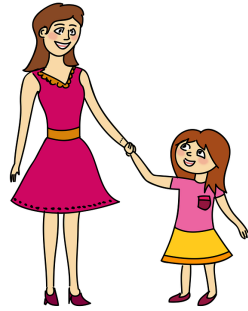
What is your experience with Special Education referrals?

- I have made a referral
- Someone else made a referral for my child
- I have never made a referral, but I am considering making one
- I am not considering a referral at this time



Referral

Who can make a referral?



How do I make a referral?



*A doctor note or prescription does not automatically qualify a student for special education services

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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



The School Team



Reviews:

- Teacher reports & observations
- Classroom assignments
- Local & state assessment results
- Information from family

Made up of:

- Regular & special educators
- School psychologist & social worker
- Related service providers
- Administrator
- FAMILY

Evaluation

- The process of collecting information about the student's needs through a series of individual tests, observations, and talks with the student, the family, and others
- Used to determine whether a student has a disability as well as the nature and extent of special education and related services the student needs



Important Things to Know About the Evaluation



- There is no cost to the family
- Parents/caregivers are team members
- Parents/caregivers must give content for initial evaluation
- Evaluations complete & decisions made within 65 days of referral
- Written report available 2 days before meeting



Evaluate All Areas of Suspected Disability

- Health
- Vision
- Hearing (*Hearing must be screened during an initial evaluation.)
- Social emotional status
- General intelligence
- Academic performance
- Communicative status
- Motor abilities
- Adaptive behaviors



Areas of Evaluation:

The Sociocultural Assessment

- Written report from a school social worker
- Describes family history, structure and dynamics
- Includes developmental and health history
- Reports on social/adaptive behavior in the home, school, and community



Sharing Information in a Sociocultural Assessment

- Consent is needed for the assessment
- Information collected is private
- Gives insight into 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



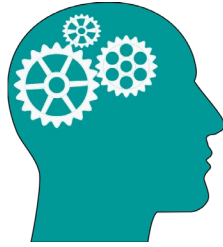
Areas of Evaluation:

The Educational Assessment



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

Areas of Evaluation



The Psychological Assessment

- Determines general ability and specific strengths & 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)



Trauma Informed Assessment

- Family input to evaluation process
- Preparing the student for assessments
- Best practices during the assessment
 - Calm, positive experience
 - Sense of safety is a priority
- Best practices post-evaluation
 - Results clearly communicated
 - Consider effect of trauma on results



Independent Educational Evaluation

- Parents/caregivers have the right to request an **independent educational evaluation (IEE)** .
- Families may request that the school pay for the IEE. However, the school may ask for a due process hearing.
- Even if it is decided that the school does not have to pay for IEE, the family has the right to an IEE.
- If families pay, they decide whether to share.



Eligibility

- Must occur within 65 business days
- Copies of evaluation report available at least 2 days in advance
- Group works toward consensus - not a majority vote
- Child must be identified under one or more categories to receive special education and related services under IDEA



Who?

Group = same individuals as an IEP team and other qualified professionals, as appropriate



NOT One and Done



“Once all evaluation data is gathered, teams should not simply present data and results, but strive to **combine and integrate** data from **various sources** as they examine student performance, responsiveness related to core instruction and intervention, and dynamic assessment conducted during the evaluation process.”

-VDOE Supplemental Guidance for Evaluation and Eligibility in Special Education (2021)

Criteria for Eligibility

The group must find that the child meets the Virginia criteria for a specific disability area and documents:

- the presence of an **impairment**,
- **adverse impact** on educational performance,
- the **need for specially designed instruction** (SDI) &
- any specific criteria from Virginia regulations.



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

Definitions of **each category** are available in regulations: 8VAC20-81-80. *Eligibility (J) through (W)*

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

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)



POLL

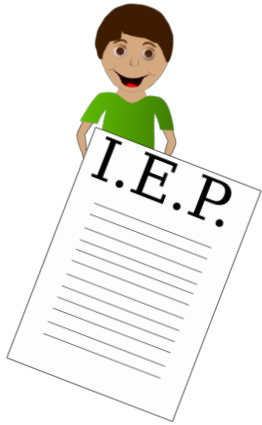
What concerns do you have about a special education label?

- It will have a negative impact on my child's self-worth.
- It will stigmatize my child and lead to social isolation or bullying.
- It will lead to lower expectations for my child.
- It will restrict access to mainstream activities and opportunities.
- It will affect my child's behavior and they will begin to behave in ways that "fit" the label.
- Other (type in the chat)



The IEP

- 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.



When does reevaluation occur?

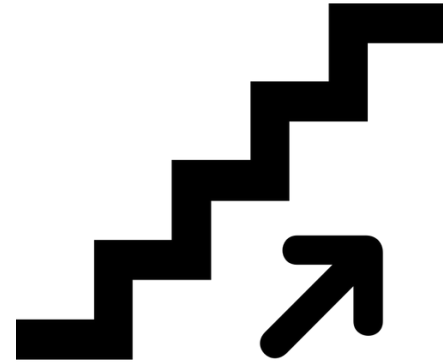
- If school determines that the child's educational or related services needs, including improved academic achievement and functional performance, warrants a reevaluation;
- If the child's **parent(s) or teacher requests a reevaluation**; or
 - *School provides Prior Written Notice if does not agree
- At least **once every three years**, unless the parent and school agree that a reevaluation is unnecessary.
- School shall not conduct a reevaluation **more than once a year** unless the family and school agree otherwise.

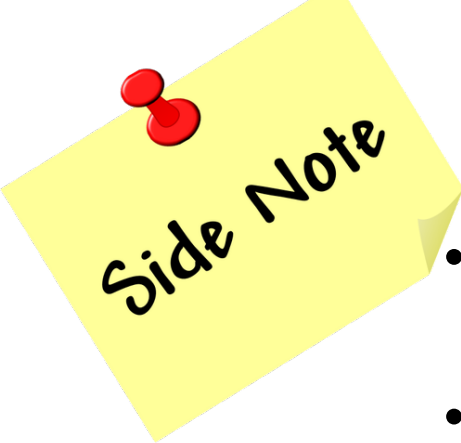


4 Main Steps of Reevaluation

Does this child continue to be an eligible “Child with a Disability”?

- 1) Review of existing evaluation data
- 2) Determine what additional data, if any, are needed
- 3) Collect data
- 4) Team determines continued or new eligibility





Side Note

Review of Data without a Meeting

- The group completing the review **may conduct its review without a meeting.**
- School must give notice to ensure that family has the opportunity to participate in the review.
- If there is a meeting, the school must give notice of the meeting early enough to ensure that the family will have an opportunity to participate.

Consent for Reevaluation

- Informed parental consent required
- If reasonable attempt made, school can without consent
 - Notice to the parent(s) in writing (or by phone or in person with proper documentation)
- If family refuses consent, school may use due process or mediation procedures - *or* - the school may decline to pursue the reevaluation



Consent Not Required for...



- Review of **existing data** as part of an evaluation or reevaluation;
- Teacher's or related service provider's **observations** or ongoing classroom evaluations; or
- Administering a test or other evaluation that is administered to **all children** that does not require consent

Reevaluation Report(s)

- Available **at least two business days** before meeting
- A **written copy** of the final evaluation report should be available at the eligibility group meeting or immediately following meeting, but no later than 10 days after meeting
- Provided at **no cost**
- If child **moves** from one district to another, assessments shall be coordinated



Reevaluation Considerations

- **3 years is a minimal**; families can request an evaluation sooner than the “triennial”.
- Use **independent educational evaluation (IEE)** conducted by a qualified person who does not work for the school, as needed for unique circumstances.
- For older youth, carefully consider timing for last school-completed evaluation.

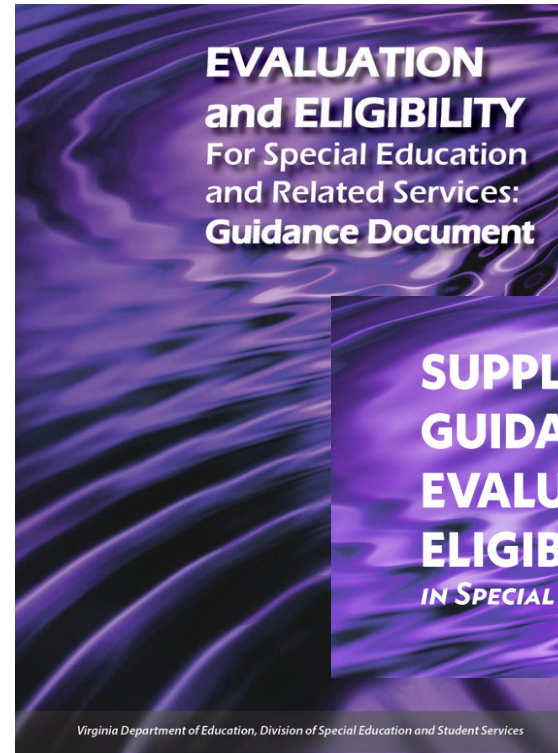


Resources from VDOE

Virginia Department
of Education's

VIDEO GUIDE TO THE

Special Education Evaluation Process for Families



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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



POST-TEST

Formed Families Forward – Stay in Touch!

PLEASE COMPLETE the EVALUATION.

Check out our website and follow us on socials!

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<https://www.facebook.com/FormedFamiliesForward>

<https://www.instagram.com/formedfamiliesforward/>

