

### **Early Childhood Special Education**

Early childhood special education services for children, **three through five** years of age and their families, are provided through local school districts and special education cooperatives.

Professionals with training and expertise in special education services implement the federal **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B**, by supporting the educational needs of young children and families. Early childhood special education professionals and related services personnel provide **specialized educational services** to children with disabilities in a variety of settings: early childhood special education classrooms, preschools, child care centers, Preschool for All programs, Head Start programs and other early childhood settings to meet the developmental **learning needs** of these children. In addition, families and early childhood providers may request information about appropriate expectations for children's development.

### **Referral and Communication Process**

The first step in determining if a child needs special education services to meet developmental learning needs is for the parent to request an evaluation. If the physician or the parent is concerned about a child but is not certain that an evaluation is indicated, it is always worth a phone call to the local school district's early childhood special education personnel to seek information and guidance (see school district listings).

When a physician has concerns about a child's development that he or she believes may benefit from specialized educational services, the physician should encourage the parent to contact the child's local school district to request an evaluation. **If a physician has significant concerns and is not certain that a parent will make a request for evaluation, the physician should contact the child's local school district for information and guidance.** The following is a diagram of the Eligibility Process for Early Childhood Special Education Services.

## Eligibility Step by Step

### Step 1: Request for Evaluation

A request for an evaluation is made by the parent to determine the child's eligibility for special education. It is best practice to make the request in writing. A phone call may not be sufficient to guarantee consideration of an evaluation



**14 School Days**

### Step 2: Decision to Proceed

At this stage the school district meets with the parent to determine whether evaluation should proceed. If yes, the district needs to determine what domains will be evaluated and will request the parent's consent to do the evaluation



**Timeline begins when parent signs consent**

### Step 3: Consent to Evaluate

The evaluation cannot proceed until the parent has provided informed written consent for the district to begin the evaluation. Timelines for completing the evaluation do not start until consent has been given by the parent.



### Step 4: Evaluation

During a period of up to 60 school days, district personnel can take steps needed to complete evaluation. If any part of the evaluation is written in final form, it may be shared with the parent.

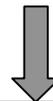


60 school days  
Step 5 **must** occur  
by the 60<sup>th</sup> day



### Step 5: Eligibility Conference and IEP

By the end of the 60<sup>th</sup> day, the evaluation team must meet with the parent to decide if the child is eligible for special education. If yes, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) team must then meet with the parent to develop the IEP for the student.



**Initial Placement does not occur until the parent signs consent**

### Step 6: Consent for Placement

Before special education services begin, the parent must provide written informed consent to allow the district to proceed with placement, Placement may begin no sooner than 10 days after the parent consents unless the parent gives permission for it to start sooner.