Frequently Asked Questions and Responses

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How is an evaluation for special education services obtained?
Evaluation requests must be in writing, signed, and dated. The request must be given to the school case manager or principal. For students who do not attend a CPS or charter school, the request must be given to the principal of the student's attendance area school. The principal must sign the request to verify that the School-Based Problem Solving (SBPS) process was involved with the student prior to the request, or to explain why the process was not appropriate for the student. The SBPS is not appropriate for students aged 2.6 - 5 years who have been in an Early Intervention program or screened by one of the CPS' Child Find Teams or for students with an obvious disability, such as a student with a physical impairment.

What is the School-Based Problem Solving process?
School-Based Problem Solving (SBPS) describes the intervention process that is a required component of the Corey H. Settlement Agreement (1997). This agreement requires that the Chicago Public Schools implement a school-based intervention process. The SBPS process is not a single event, but a process that is built into the educational program in the Chicago Public Schools. It is designed as a general education process, but information collected through SBPS may be used in conducting a full and individual evaluation. Classroom supports include activities that are conducted in the classroom by staff working in the problem-solving delivery system. These activities:
- assess student performance using classroom-based materials;
- establish and deliver the intervention in the classroom;
- translate effective teaching strategies into the regular instruction program;
- consult to guide the "fine tuning" of classroom strategies; and
- involve teachers, parents, and key personnel in collaborative decision making.

What is the School-Based Problem Solving (SBPS) Intervention Plan?
The SBPS Intervention Plan is an intervention plan that includes baseline data, states goals, and identifies strategies to achieve the goals. It also shows the frequency of interventions, who will provide the interventions, and how often progress will be reviewed. After the SBPS Intervention Plan has been implemented, usually 10
weeks, the student’s teacher, the key personnel, and the student’s parents must determine whether or not the intervention has been successful and what the next step should be for the student. The graphed data from the student's progress chart is used to help make the decision.

**Who may request an evaluation?**
The following persons may request a full and individual evaluation: school personnel, parent(s) of the student, the student, an employee of Illinois State Board of Education or other State agency.

**What happens if it is decided that an evaluation is not needed?**
If it is determined that a full and individual evaluation is not needed, the case manager will provide the parent and the requester (if not the parent) written notice of the decision. The notice will include the date of the referral, the reasons for the referral, and why it was determined that the evaluation was not appropriate. A copy of the notice will be placed in the student's temporary record.

**Can a parent obtain an evaluation on his or her own?**
As a procedural safeguard, parents have the right to obtain an independent evaluation at CPS expense if they disagree with the evaluation findings and request it in writing. However CPS may request a due process hearing to object paying for the evaluation if it believes that the CPS evaluation was appropriate. Parents may also submit private evaluations they have gotten at their own expense for consideration during the full and individual evaluation or Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. The IEP Team members will review the results of the private evaluation and determine if they agree with the results. If there is agreement, the team may limit its assessments as appropriate. Assessment reports must clearly identify the full and independent evaluation components that the independent evaluation satisfies.

**What is the timeline for determining eligibility for special education services?**
Within 60 school days of the date of written consent to conduct the full and individual evaluation, the IEP Team will meet to determine the student's eligibility for special education. When there are less than 60 school days left in the school year, the eligibility determination and the IEP (if relevant) will be completed prior to the first day of the fall semester.

**What is an IEP conference**
The IEP conference is the meeting where the IEP Team discusses and makes decisions about specialized instruction and related services for students. The IEP conference is facilitated by the case manager.

**What is the purpose of the IEP conference?**
An Individualized Education Program (IEP) conference may be convened for a number of reasons, which include:
- Initial Eligibility
- 3-Year Reevaluation
- Annual Review
- Special Evaluation
- Revision to the IEP
- Termination of Special Education Services
- Transition Planning
- Manifestation Determination Review
Who must attend the IEP conference?
A group of professionals and the student's parents serve on the IEP Team and make decisions about the student's educational program. The members of the IEP Team will vary depending upon the nature of the child's present problems and other relevant factors.

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), the following are required IEP Team participants:

- One or both of the student's parents;
- At least one regular education teacher of the student if the student is or may be included in the regular education class for all or part of the day;
- At least one special education teacher. If the child is receiving only speech and language services, the speech pathologist shall fulfill this role;
- An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of the evaluation results (a person may assume this role in addition to another role at the conference);
- One representative of CPS (District Representative) who is qualified to supervise the provision of special education services, is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum and available resources, and is authorized to commit resources. This is usually the case manager. If a representative from the Office of Specialized Services attends the meeting, that person acts as the district representative;
- The student, if the purpose of the conference is to plan transition services (usually age 14 and above), the student if age 18 or older, or if the parent chooses to have the child participate at any age; and
- At the discretion of the parent or CPS personnel, other individuals having significant information regarding the child (e.g., child welfare specialist if the student is a ward of the state, etc.)

The IEP Team may also include:

- A qualified bilingual specialist or bilingual teacher, if the presence of a bilingual person is needed to assist the other participants in understanding the child's language and cultural factors as they relate to the child's instructional needs;
- A person knowledgeable about positive behavior strategies, if the child's behavior impedes his/her learning or the learning of others; and
- An interpreter for individuals who are deaf or a translator for those who have limited English proficiency.

What is an IEP?
The Individualized Education Program (IEP) document is a written record that reflects the discussion and decisions of the IEP Team. The IEP lists the special education and related services needed to ensure that the student receives a free appropriate public education, including any extended school year services. The IEP document includes goals for the student and identifies the services required to allow students to meet those goals. It also commits CPS resources that are necessary to meet the student's individualized education needs.

How often is the IEP written?
The IEP must be reviewed at least annually to determine the student's progress toward reaching the established goals.

Can students with disabilities attend summer school?
All students with disabilities must be considered for Extended School Year (ESY) services on an annual basis. The decision regarding whether or not a student will receive ESY services is documented. ESY is a continuation of special education and related services for students with disabilities beyond the traditional 10-month school year. For most schools, this would include the months of July and August. Schools that are on an approved year-round schedule, however, may consider other periods for ESY, as appropriate.
When is it required that students with disabilities must attend summer school?
An extended school year may be necessary when a student is likely to experience a decline in areas of learning that are crucial to his or her reaching self-sufficiency and independence during extended breaks. If the loss is expected to be so severe that the student would not be able to regain the losses in a reasonable period of time, or would not be able to reach the planned educational goals, then the extended school year should be provided.

Are children with disabilities required to take tests?
All students with disabilities must participate in local/state assessment or in an alternate assessment if non-disabled students at the same age or grade are tested. The IEP Team considers whether the student requires accommodations or modification in order to participate in the assessment and then identifies the necessary accommodations/modifications.
Accommodations used in testing situations generally are the same as those given during instruction and on teacher-designed tests. If an accommodation is not part of the student's normal classroom instruction and assessment, it should not be used for the first time when the student participates in local or statewide assessments. Not all classroom testing accommodations are allowed during standardized testing, such as the use of a calculator during a math computation test.

What if extra time is needed on tests?
If the IEP team determines that extra time is appropriate during testing situations, the IEP should reflect the exact amount of extra time to be given in testing situations.

Do parents have to pay for special education services?
All services on a student's IEP are provided at no cost to the parents.