

Notice of Special Education Services and Programs — Child Find —

Each school district, along with other public agencies in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, must establish and implement procedures to identify, locate and evaluate all children who need special education programs and services because of the child's disability. This notice is to help find these children, to offer assistance to parents, and to describe the parents' rights with regard to confidentiality of information that will be obtained during this process.

The content of this notice has been written in English. If a person does not understand any of this notice, he or she should contact the school district (see Special Education Contact) and request an explanation.

Identification Activity

Child find refers to activities undertaken by public education agencies to identify, locate, and evaluate children residing in the State, including children attending private schools, who are suspected of having disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disability, and determine the child's need for special education and related services. The purpose is to locate these children so that a free appropriate public education (FAPE) can be made available. The types of disabilities that, if found, may cause a child to need services are: autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment due to chronic or acute health problems, specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury and visual impairment including blindness. In the case of a child that is of preschool age, developmental delay.

Each school district is required to annually provide notice describing the *identification* activities and the procedures followed to ensure confidentiality of *personally identifiable information*. (See Family Education and Privacy Act Letter sent home to parents regarding confidentiality of student records.) This notice is intended to meet this requirement.

Identification activities are performed to find a child who is suspected as having a disability that would interfere with his or her learning unless special education programs and services are made available. These activities are sometimes called *screening* activities. The activities include: review of group data, conducting hearing and vision screening, assessment of student's academic functioning, observation of the student displaying difficulty in behavior, and determining the student's response to attempted remediation. Input from parents is also an information source for *identification*. After a child is identified as a suspected *child with a disability*, he or she is evaluated, but is not evaluated before parents give permission for their child to be evaluated. Regardless of screening activities, parents who think their child is a child with a disability may request, at any time, that an evaluation be conducted to determine if the child is eligible to receive special education services.

A parent may file a written complaint alleging that the rights described in this notice were not provided to the following:

Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Special Education Division of Compliance 333
Market Street Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

The Department of Education will investigate the matter; issue a report of findings and necessary corrective action within 60 days. The Department will take necessary action to ensure compliance is achieved.

If you wish to learn more, have questions, or believe your child may need to be identified, please contact:

Jill Shoemith
Director, Evergreen Community Charter School
PO Box 523
Mountainhome, PA 18342
(570) 595-6355
evergrn@ptd.net

Services for Protected Handicapped Students

Students who are not eligible to receive special education programs and services may qualify as protected handicapped students and therefore be protected by other federal and state laws intended to prevent discrimination. The school district must ensure that protected handicapped students have equal opportunity to participate in the school program and extracurricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate for each individual student. In compliance with state and federal law, the school district will provide to each protected handicapped student without discrimination or cost to the student or family, those related aids, services or accommodations which are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extracurricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's abilities. In order to qualify as a protected handicapped student, the child must be of school age with a physical or mental disability which substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program.

These services and protections for "protected handicapped students" may be distinct from those applicable to exceptional or thought-to-be exceptional students. The school district or the parent may initiate an evaluation if they believe a student is a protected handicapped student. For further information on the evaluation procedures and provision of services to protected handicapped students, parents should contact the Special Education Contact in the accompanying listing.

Special Education Contact

Mrs. Betsy Gustafson
Director of Special Education
Pocono Mountain School District
570-839-7121 Extension 10180
mgustafs@pmsd.org