
HOW TO REQUEST A SPECIAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT FOR YOUR CHILD

Often parents have concerns about their child's functioning in school, and feel confused about where to start.

The first step is to talk with your child's teacher, school counselor, nurse, principal, etc. All schools have a process for reviewing concerns about specific children, often with titles such as "Student Study Team" (SST) or "Child Success Team" (CST). Ask if an SST or CST review is appropriate. If you continue to have concerns, the SST/CST may initiate a referral for a special education assessment.

However, you may request a special education assessment at any time. The request needs to be put in writing and given to either your school principal or special education department at your district. The request needs to note the areas of concern that you have.

The language does not have to be "fancy." You can note that you are concerned about "reading," or "language," or "behavior," for example. If you have any diagnoses or records from outside sources such as a doctor, therapist, psychologist, social worker, or other school, be sure you mention them in the letter.

A Team Lead will be assigned to respond to your request - usually a school psychologist, special education teacher or program specialist. That person will review your child's school records for his/her academic, health and discipline history. The Team Lead will speak with your child's teacher and contact you. Be sure you describe your concerns in detail. If there are any changes in your family's situation, (i.e., illness, medications, divorce, or death) which may be affecting your child, be sure to discuss them at this time.

If the district decides to proceed with an assessment, you will receive an Assessment Plan within 15 days of your request, which shows all the areas in which your child will be assessed. Be sure to review the Assessment Plan carefully. If you feel that there are any areas left out, call the Team Lead at the number noted on the form and discuss your concerns. Once you sign the Assessment Plan, arrange to send copies of any reports that you have to the Team Lead. The Team will consider these as another source for their assessment.

If the district decides not to proceed with assessment, you will receive written notice with a reason for the decision and the factors that were considered. You will also be given a copy of your rights and procedural safeguards.

If the district agrees to initiate assessment, it has 60 calendar days to complete all assessments and to hold an IEP meeting. You should expect to have copies of all reports in a language that is understandable to you, and to have qualified professionals present to explain everything.

With family and educators working together, a plan can be developed that will address your child's needs.

