

Communication to School - from Family

A parent/caregiver can use this tool to describe specific concerns about their child's educational needs to the school. Recommended steps are:

- 1) Complete and send this communication tool to the teacher *and* school principal and ask for a meeting to discuss your concerns. If the school's response didn't fully address your concerns, go to step 2.
- 2) Write a formal Focus of Concern (FOC) letter asking that your child be evaluated. Send it to the School District Special Education Director, with a copy to both the teacher and principal. An example letter is posted on the Taking Action website at this link: <https://whatcomtakingaction.org/2015/11/05/sample-evaluation-letter/>. Include a copy of your original communication tool along with your FOC letter, and check the yellow NOTE box at the bottom of this page.

Please see the next page for information and resources. Special Ed Directors at all school districts are listed [here](#) and in the last two handouts (School Services for Children Over/Under 5) at bottom of the next page.

Date: _____	
Dear: _____	
My child's name is: _____	Birthdate: _____
My child is in Mr./Ms. _____'s class, in the _____ grade at _____	
My child's primary doctor is: _____	
My child has been evaluated by: _____	
My child has been diagnosed with _____ <input type="checkbox"/> and <input type="checkbox"/> or there are concerns in the areas marked below, which could affect his/her education:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Gross Motor <input type="checkbox"/> Fine Motor <input type="checkbox"/> Problem Solving <input type="checkbox"/> Daily Living Skills
<input type="checkbox"/> Vision <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing <input type="checkbox"/> Behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Social <input type="checkbox"/> Memory <input type="checkbox"/> Stamina <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep	
<input type="checkbox"/> Focus/Attention <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Disorder <input type="checkbox"/> Planning/Organization	
Behaviors seen at home: <input type="checkbox"/> has trouble staying focused on homework <input type="checkbox"/> acts overwhelmed by the assignments <input type="checkbox"/> acts anxious about going to school <input type="checkbox"/> says has no friends at school <input type="checkbox"/> has trouble sleeping <input type="checkbox"/> gets upset easily <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____	
Please see the following information, attached: <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation/ report <input type="checkbox"/> Social Communication Observation Tool <input type="checkbox"/> _____	
Please contact me at _____ to schedule a meeting to discuss my concerns and to talk about how to help my child at school.	
Thank you,	
Name: _____	Relationship to child: _____
Contact Information: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> I am now making a formal request that my child be made a Focus of Concern and be evaluated, since I don't feel my concerns above have been fully addressed. Please see the attached FOC letter. DATE: _____	

A particular diagnosis does not automatically mean a child is eligible for Special Education Services. Please see below for detailed information.

Education Services

There are several public education programs that children and youth with special needs may qualify for. These are federally mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Eligibility for Special Education Services Under IDEA*

Students determined eligible for special education services must meet **all three** of the following criteria:

- The student must have a disability or disabilities.
- The student's disability/disabilities adversely affect educational performance.
- The student's unique needs cannot be addressed through education in general education classes alone - with or without individual accommodations and requires specially designed instruction (SDI).

Eligibility is based on a comprehensive initial evaluation which includes all of the existing data gathered about the student through the referral process and any additional assessments needed to determine whether a student is eligible for special education. The initial evaluation report is used to determine what special education and related services the student needs. *Excerpted from: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Families/Eligibility.aspx> Visit link for more information.

Making a Referral for Special Education*

What to Do If You Think A Student Needs Special Education Services

- Who can make a referral for special education?
- Does the request need to be in writing?
- What information should be in the written request?
- Who do I submit the referral to?
- What happens after I submit my referral?
- Timelines for Evaluation
- Is the school district required to have a referral meeting?
- How will the district make a decision about evaluating my student?
- What happens if a school district decides not to evaluate my student?

*For details about referring a child for Special Education evaluation by making him/her a Focus of Concern, and answers to the questions above, visit this link <http://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Families/Referral.aspx>

Individualized Education Program (IEP)*

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written statement for a student eligible for special education that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with state and federal laws. The IEP guides your student's learning while in special education. It describes the amount of time that your student will spend receiving special education, any related services your student will receive, and the academic/behavioral goals and expectations for the year.

*Excerpted from: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Families/IEP.aspx> Visit link for more information.

504 Plan for K-12 Students*

Section 504 provides services and accommodations if a child has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. The definition of disability under Section 504 is much broader than under the IDEA, so many students who are not eligible for an IEP may be eligible for extra support under Section 504.

*Excerpted from: <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/504-plans.html?view=ptr&WT.ac=p-ptr> Visit link for more information.

School Advocacy and Other Information

School Advocacy Terms to Know: <https://whatcomtakingaction.org/2016/05/27/school-advocacy-terms-to-know/>

School Advocacy Resources: <https://whatcomtakingaction.org/2013/09/07/school-advocacy-resources/>

School Services for Children Over 5: <https://whatcomtakingaction.org/2015/11/12/school-services-for-children-over-five/>

School Services for Children Under 5: <https://whatcomtakingaction.org/2015/11/05/school-services-for-children-under-five/>