

## How do I determine if my child is eligible for special education?

All children should have the support and care that they need to thrive at home and in school. If ever you, or your child, need additional support, contact your child's school's teacher, counselor, or principal. [Here](#) are some recommendations for talking to your child's teacher about a concern and some [common school terms](#) to know.

If your child's disability is adversely affecting their educational performance and general education classes are not meeting their needs, they may be eligible for [special education](#) services through the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#) and [Section 504](#) of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

**If your child is young (ages 0-3):** [Early Intervention services](#) are available to many children who have a slight delay and all children that have a disability. There are no waitlists for Early Intervention and most families referred qualified for services. Call [SEAS](#) at 360-715-7485 to schedule an evaluation. Here is some information on [accessing services for your child under 5](#).

**If your child is school age (ages 3-21):** Students with disabilities who are determined eligible for Special Education and related services are entitled to a [Free Appropriate Public Education \(FAPE\)](#). An [Individualized Education Program \(IEP\)](#) specified the specific supports and supports for eligible children.

### Evaluation for Special Education

First, to conduct a [Special Education evaluation](#), someone makes a referral for the child to be evaluated. This referral puts into motion a series of events the district must meet in response to the request.

#### Who can request an evaluation?

Under Washington law, the following people or entities can refer a student for evaluation:

- Anyone who meets the definition of parent
- School district
- Other persons knowledgeable about the child
- Another public agency

#### Timeline for Referral and Evaluation



### The School District Evaluation

The district may evaluate a child in the following areas: health (physical & mental), communication: speech & language, social & emotional health, general intelligence, academic performance, motor abilities, vision, hearing.

A comprehensive initial evaluation determines [eligibility](#). The [Special Education evaluation](#) has two purposes: 1) to determine eligibility for services, and 2) to identify the needs and strengths of the student to inform the IEP. Review the consent form thoroughly to ensure that your child gets an evaluation in all areas you think they need additional support.

# How Do I Request a School Evaluation?

## Contact your school



Contact your school to discuss concerns that you have and suggestions for improving your child's education. School staff will inform you of the opportunities and process for accessing services.

## Do It in Writing



A referral must be in writing. It can be handwritten and straightforward or via email. Make sure to date it and keep a copy for your records. There are some great resources available to help. Here is an example of a [letter](#) and some tips. Whatcom Taking Action has a [communication tool](#) that can be helpful to send with your letter.

## Don't Worry About It Being Perfect



Nothing will happen until a referral is made, and the date that the district receives the referral triggers the timelines within which the district must act. The [social communication tools](#) can be helpful to describe what support is needed.

## Be Specific & Use Examples



Districts are required to test in all areas related to a student's suspected disability. Make sure you describe all areas of concern. Include your observations to explain why you think your child may have a disability. If you have them, provide documentation such as letters from doctors or mental health providers.

## Who to Send your Referrals to?

Send your written referral both to a school staff member involved in Special Education *and* to your school district's Special Education director at the administrative office. Search a directory for [staff at your school district](#) and your [district's Special Education director](#).

## Other Support Services Available

If your child is not eligible for Special Education service, other services and options are still available.

**504 Plan:** [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 and may provide your child with accommodations and support.

**School Services:** Your school counselor can help you identify resources and supports that will support your child. Many schools have peer supports, mentors, lunch groups, and family resource coordinators that can connect you and your child to services and supports.

**Community Services:** There are many [community services](#) that can help youth and children build skills, connect, and have fun.

**Medical/Therapy Services:** A therapist can support your child in building skills in areas they are struggling. For a list of [therapists](#), visit [Whatcom Taking Action](#), a referral from your primary care is often needed, and contact the [children's mental health referral line](#) for counseling support.

**Parent support:** There are many different ways to connect with other families and get the support you need. Visit Whatcom Taking Action for a [list of places](#) and opportunities. Also, [OSPI has a Special Education Parent Liaison](#) and [The Arc of Whatcom County](#) has staff that can answer any questions at 360-715-0170.