

**UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
SPECIAL EDUCATION & CHILD FIND**

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Union School District provides a full continuum of special education services for exceptional children from pre-school through age 21. These services would include: autism support, support for developmental delays, emotional support, learning support, hearing support, multi-handicap support, gifted support, life skills support, vision support, speech and language support and physical support. The district realizes its responsibility to provide each exceptional child with a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to meet his/her unique learning needs in the least restrictive environment possible.

IDEA/CHILD FIND

Local school districts and the Riverview Intermediate Unit have developed policies in accord with federal and state regulations and guidelines to insure the provision of a free appropriate public education to all school aged children, including those with disabilities.

Each school district provides appropriate special education programs and related services, and early intervention programs that are: a. Provided at no cost to parents b. Provided under the authority of a school entity, directly, by referral or by contract c. Individualized to meet the educational or early intervention needs of the child d. Reasonably calculated to yield meaningful educational or early education benefits and progress e. Designed to conform to an Individual Education Program (IEP) Special education is designed to meet the needs of each student with a disability, including “specifically designed instruction” conducted in the classroom, home community settings, hospitals, institutions or other settings.

Instruction also is provided in skill areas, such as physical education, speech and vocational education. Early Intervention programs are “appropriate programs of educational development, specially designed to meet the needs of eligible young children and address the strengths and needs of the family.” Programs are provided to children with needs in any of the following developmental areas: physical, sensory, cognitive, language and speech, social/emotional, fine/gross motor and self-help. Related services available to students include transportation, developmental and other supportive services that help a student benefit from special education.

Examples include: speech pathology and audio logy, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, social work services, school health services, early identification and assessment, medical services for diagnosis or evaluation, parent counseling and education, rehabilitation counseling services and assistive technology services.

Children Served in Special Education Programs Special education services are available to children who;

1. Have one or more of the following physical or mental disabilities:

- a. autism
- b. emotional disturbance
- c. deafness
- d. deaf-blindness
- e. hearing impairment
- f. specific learning disability
- g. mental retardation
- h. multiple disabilities
- i. other health impairment
- j. orthopedic impairment
- k. speech/language impairment
- l. visual impairment
- m. traumatic brain injury; and

2. Have been determined in a multidisciplinary evaluation to need special education.

Early intervention services are available to children who are at least three years of age, but less than the age for beginning school, and who have a 25% delay in one or more of the following physical or mental disabilities:

- a. autism/pervasive developmental disorder
- b. serious emotional disturbance
- c. neurological impairment
- d. deafness/hearing impairment
- e. specific learning disability
- f. mental retardation

- g. multiple disabilities
- h. other health impairments
- i. physical disability
- j. speech/language impairment
- k. blindness/visual impairment
- l. traumatic brain injury

Referral of Children for Screening and Evaluation

Local school districts and the Riverview Intermediate Unit have procedures to identify children needing special education. Those procedures are “screening” and “evaluation”.

If a disability is suspected, teachers, other personnel or parents may refer a child for screening or evaluation. Parents suspecting that a child may have a disability and need special education or early intervention services can request a screening or an evaluation by contacting the special education office or building principal in their local school district.

Screening of Children Screening of children, “using immediately available data sources such as health records, cumulative records, enrollment records and report cards, “is conducted for hearing, vision, motor skills and speech and language. Screening may lead to intervention by the Child Study Team (CST), made up of the building principal, regular classroom teacher, support teacher and others as appropriate.

The team will communicate with the parents about the child’s needs and the instructional support services that will meet those needs.

Evaluation of Children

Before evaluation, parents are told the following information:

- a. Who referred the child for evaluation
- b. Why the child was referred
- c. How to review the child’s school records
- d. What procedures and types of evaluation will be used
- e. The schedule for the evaluation process
- f. The rights of the parent regarding consent for evaluation Evaluations are conducted by a group of qualified professionals to determine such things as the child’s learning ability, behavior patterns, physical abilities and communication skills.

The team is made up of the parents, a teacher, school administrator and school psychologist. The team may include a special education teacher, supervisor, speech therapist, counselor and other staff as necessary. Methods used in the evaluation include observation, review of records and group and individual testing. Information is gathered from school personnel, child study team, medical personnel and parents. Results of the evaluation are reviewed by the team to determine if special education services are needed. If special education placement is recommended, parents are part of the team that determine the disability and develops and Individual Education Program (IEP) for the child. No evaluation may be conducted without the written parental permission. Parents who do not consent to an evaluation may be asked to attend a conference with the teacher, principal, psychologist and possibly other special education staff.

Student Records and Confidentiality

The Riverview Intermediate Unit and school districts are required by law to keep records of all students receiving special education and early intervention services. These records also include all school-age persons in detention homes, state schools and hospitals and Private Residential Rehabilitative Institutions. Included in these records are: a. birth date, address, telephone number and other general information b. achievement test results c. psychological test results d. teacher progress reports e. comprehensive evaluation reports; and f. routine medical records

As a child is reevaluated every three years, information is added to his or her file. The Riverview Intermediate Unit and school districts have developed policies to ensure that all records are confidential. Only identified school personnel are permitted to see the child’s file. One exception allows the disclosure of special education records without consent to official of another school in which a student is enrolled or intends to enroll. Anyone else must have written approval of the parent to see the file or to receive copies of information in the file. Parents can review the child’s file and challenge the validity of any record or report, or challenge the maintenance of information on file. Records are reviewed periodically by school personnel, and any no longer needed to plan the child’s education program are destroyed. However, parents are notified first and permitted to review or copy this information. Federal regulations give both natural parents access to their child’s education records unless there is a court order, state statute or legally binding document prohibiting access.

Confidentiality of Special Education Student Information

Detailed printed information about special education services and programs and school district policies (#113) is available from all schools upon request. Anyone interested should contact the principal of the child's school, special education office or the school district superintendent's office. Information and communications are in English, but will be provided in the native language or other mode of communication used by the parents, if appropriate.

Discipline of Exceptional Students

Discipline of exceptional students in the Union School District follows existing district policy except where Pennsylvania Special Education Standards and Regulations concerning corporal punishment use of aversive, suspension/expulsion, etc. are in question. In those situations, the Union School District follows procedures outlined in Section 342.36 and Chapter 14.35 of the State Regulations and Standards.

A district Behavior Management Policy that emphasizes positive techniques and parent involvement has been developed and may be accessed upon request. Section 504 Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, some school age children with disabilities who do not meet the eligibility criteria for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act might nevertheless be eligible for special protections and for adaptations in and modifications to their school program or the physical environment of school buildings, grounds, vehicles, and equipment, when such adaptations or modifications are required to enable the student to access or participate meaningfully in academic or nonacademic programming or extracurricular activities.

Children are entitled to such protections, adaptations, and modifications if they have a physical or mental disability that substantially limits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program or facilities, whether academic or non-academic in nature. Parents are entitled to a written plan describing the adaptations and modifications that the public school is proposing to implement for their child. This written plan is called a "service agreement" or "accommodation plan." It is based on a pre-placement evaluation that the public school must conduct free of charge to determine whether a child has a disability and, if so, the educational needs of the child.

Parents of children with disabilities and who are thought to have disabilities are entitled to receive written notice prior to implementation of any proposed evaluation, program, or placement, or prior to any change thereto. Parents who have reason to believe that their school-age child might have a disability have the right to request a pre-placement evaluation of their child at any time, even if their child is not currently attending public school.

Parents who have complaints concerning the evaluation, identification, program, placement, or provision of services to a student, or any change thereto, may request an informal conference with the public school and, if that conference fails to resolve the dispute, a due process hearing. The hearing must be held before an impartial hearing officer at a time and location convenient to the parents. Parents have the right to request a free written or electronic transcript or recording of the proceedings, to present evidence and witnesses disclosed to the public school, to confront evidence and testimony presented by the public school, to review their child's complete educational record on request before the hearing, to receive a written decision from the hearing officer, and to be represented by counsel of their choice. An appeal may be taken from the decision of the hearing officer to a court of competent jurisdiction.

Special Education Services

Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, some school age children with disabilities who do not meet the eligibility criteria for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act might nevertheless be eligible for special protections and for adaptations in and modifications to their school program or the physical environment of school buildings, grounds, vehicles, and equipment, when such adaptations or modifications are required to enable the student to access or participate meaningfully in academic or nonacademic programming or extracurricular activities. Children are entitled to such protections, adaptations, and modifications if they have a physical or mental disability that substantially limits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program or facilities, whether academic or non-academic in nature. Parents are entitled to a written plan describing the adaptations and modifications that the public school is proposing to implement for their child. This written plan is called a "service agreement" or "accommodation plan." It is based on a pre-placement evaluation that the public school must conduct free of charge to determine whether a child has a disability and, if so, the educational needs of the child. Parents of children with disabilities and who are thought to have disabilities are entitled to receive written notice prior to implementation of any proposed evaluation, program, or placement, or prior to any change thereto. Parents who have reason to believe that their school-age child might have a disability have the right to request a pre-placement evaluation of their child at any time, even if their child is not currently attending public school. Parents who have complaints concerning the evaluation, identification, program, placement, or provision of services to a student, or any change thereto, may request an informal conference with the public school and, if that conference fails to resolve the dispute, a due process hearing. The hearing must be held before an impartial hearing officer at a time and location convenient to the parents. Parents have the right to request a free written or electronic transcript or recording of the proceedings, to present evidence and witnesses disclosed to the public school, to confront evidence and testimony presented by the public school, to review their child's complete educational record on request before the hearing, to receive a written decision from the hearing officer, and to be represented by counsel of their choice. An appeal may be taken from the decision of the hearing officer to a court of competent jurisdiction.

Gifted Education

In accordance with the Board's philosophy to develop the special abilities of each student, the district shall provide gifted education services and programs designed to meet the individual educational needs of identified students. The district shall develop and implement a gifted education plan every six (6) years, as required by law and regulations. Prior to approval by the Board, the gifted education plan shall be made available for public inspection and comment in the district's administrative offices and the nearest public library for a minimum of twenty-eight (28) days. The Board may enter into a cooperative agreement with other educational institutions to provide gifted education services and programs. The Board directs that the district's gifted education program shall provide the following: 1. System to locate and identify all students within the district who are thought to be gifted and in need of specially designed instruction. 2. Screening and evaluation process that meets state requirements, to determine students' educational needs. 3. Procedures to determine whether a student is mentally gifted. 4. Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP) developed, and subsequently modified, for each student based on his/her unique needs and the written report of the Gifted Multidisciplinary Team (GMDT). 5. Safeguards for the due process rights of gifted students. 6. Notification to teachers of their responsibilities to each of their identified gifted students, as provided in the student's Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP). The district shall provide all required notices and information to parents/guardians of gifted students, document all consents and responses of parents/guardians, and adhere to all established timelines. The district shall make the Permission to Evaluate Form readily available to parents/guardians. If an oral request is made to an administrator or professional employee, s/he shall provide the form to the parents/guardians within ten (10) calendar days of the oral request.