

Student Support DECISION TREE

When a parent or teacher expresses concern about a student's health condition, learning or other challenges, the school will begin a process to determine the type of support and/or services that will meet the child's needs. Use the questions below to help guide you through that process.

Diagnosed Health Condition:

Are special services, monitoring, or action steps required for health and well-being?

Yes →

Individual Health Plan (IHP)



Diagnosis or Academic, Developmental, Behavioral or Functional Challenge(s):

Does it have a negative impact on educational performance?

Yes

No

Begin Research-based Interventions with MTSS * or PEP **

Are accommodations needed for the student to access, participate or gain benefit from the program?

Is the problem resolved?

Yes →

Section 504 Accommodation Plan

Yes

No ... (or some improvement noted, but ongoing support is needed to maintain adequate performance level)



Referral for Special Education Evaluation ***

Does the student require specially designed instruction or related services?

No: If student is not eligible for special education, consider a 504 Plan:

Yes: Go to next question...

Does the student meet criteria for one or more categories of special education eligibility?

No: Offer remediation and support through general education

Yes:

Student IS eligible for Special Education

- Create Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Provide special education services and supports***



* MTSS: Multi-tiered System of Support

** Personal Education Plan

*** Parent Consent is required

Note: MTSS progress monitoring data can be a primary factor for determining eligibility for special education, but some additional assessments may be needed for a comprehensive initial evaluation. However, the MTSS process cannot be used to delay a special education evaluation.

NOTE: A student with an IEP or 504 Plan can also have an IHP if needed.

GLOSSARY

Individual Health Plan (IHP)

Developed to protect the health and access to education of children with significant health conditions such as Diabetes, Asthma, Seizure Disorder, severe allergies, etc. IHPs contain information about the child's health condition; staff roles and responsibilities; environmental controls; use of medication; response to emergency situations, etc. The IHP is usually written with input from the school nurse, other school staff, parent(s), the child's health care provider(s) and the student, as appropriate.

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

A framework for improving the academic or behavioral performance of struggling students. MTSS systematically monitors the student's response to research-based interventions that may become more intensive if necessary. Information (data) about the student's progress is used to make educational decisions.

Personal Education Plan (PEP)

A tool sometimes used to document the extra efforts to support students who are at risk of not meeting grade-level academic standards. Such efforts might include targeted instruction, Title 1 activities, tutoring and interventions that may be part of the MTSS problem-solving process.

Section 504 Accommodation Plan

Describes the adjustments or accommodations that a student with a disability needs in order to have an equal opportunity to access, participate in, or benefit from all parts of the public school program. If a student qualifies for special education services, needed accommodations will be documented in an IEP rather than a 504 plan.

Referral

A written request to have a student formally considered for either special education services or a Section 504 Accommodation Plan. Either a parent or school staff member can make a referral. For special education, schools have no more than 90 days to complete an initial evaluation, determine if the student needs specially designed instruction, create an IEP and begin providing services to those who qualify.

Eligibility Categories

The rules that schools must follow for special education are different than the ones that private clinicians like doctors, therapists and psychologists use to make a diagnosis. In order to receive special education services a child must meet the eligibility requirements for one or more of the following disability categories:

Autism Spectrum Disorder, Blindness, Deafness, Deaf-Blindness, Developmental Delay, Hearing Impairment, Intellectual Disability, Multiple Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Serious Emotional Disability, Speech or Language Impairment, Specific Learning Disability, Traumatic Brain Injury or Visual Impairment.

Evaluation and Eligibility Determination

A process of gathering information to determine if a student qualifies for special education services. Different types of information and testing is required for each of the disability categories. There are also specific functional or performance requirements that must be met for a child to be eligible for special education.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

A written document that describes the unique educational and functional needs of an eligible child with a disability. The IEP sets goals for student progress and describes the type & amount of special education services the student will receive. The IEP also lists accommodations, modifications, assistive technology, and other supports the student needs to receive a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

Please note that parents are required members of any group that makes decisions about special education evaluation, eligibility or the content of the IEP!

Detailed information about special education regulations can be found in Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities: <https://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/policies/nc-policies-governing-services-for-children-with-disabilities/policies-children-disabilities.pdf>

For more information, contact:

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