



## NCPS Child Find/Initial ECSE Eligibility Guide

### **Special Education Services:**

Northampton provides education services at no cost as part of the continuum of Special Education Programs for children with identified disabilities from ages two through twenty one. Early Childhood Special Education services address the needs of preschoolers ages 2-5 who are experiencing significant delays in development.

Delays in development may occur in the following areas:

- Adaptive
- Speech/language (communication)
- Motor and Physical
- Social or Emotional
- Cognitive

Hearing, Vision and / or Health

To learn whether or not a child is eligible for these services. It may be necessary to complete a comprehensive developmental screening and/ or evaluation. The impact of the suspected delays on the child's ability to perform activities typical for their age group will be considered.

### **Special Education Process:**

The process for determining if a child has a disability and requires special education begins at the neighborhood school. If a child is receiving early intervention services, that program will make the referral to the parent (with permission). If you suspect a child has a disability and the child is not receiving early intervention services, contact the neighborhood school to make a referral.

At the time of referral, parents will be asked to provide the following documentation as part of the enrollment process. Although not required before evaluations can be completed, the information is required before special education services can be provided.

Enrollment requirements are the same for all students in Northampton County Public Schools.

What information should parents bring to registration?

- Parent's photo ID
- Child's certified original birth certificate
- Proof of residency by proving one of these documents:
  - Lease for at least one year or deed of residence in Northampton County
  - Contract or lease free of contingencies to occupy a Northampton County residence within two months of the date of enrollment

- Resident manager's letter on company letterhead stating that residence is a corporate residence in Northampton County
- Weekly receipts for temporary residence in hotel or motel for up to 60 days (requires renewal or evidence of more permanent residency within 60 days of enrollment)
- If you plan to submit a "lives with" form, the person you live with must come with you to registration and provide a lease, deed or one of the other proofs of residency. Also, you must provide two supporting documents showing your name and correct address.

Once the referral has been made by the early intervention program, the Administrator of Special Education (ASE) will review the information included in the referral. Referral from early intervention generally includes a cover letter with recommendations about type of evaluation may be appropriate, a copy of the Individualized Family Services Plan and Developmental Sociocultural Form (completed by the parent).

If a team meeting is needed, it will be scheduled by the ASE and will include the parent and school staff. Early intervention staff will be invited as the referral source. The meeting will be held at the neighborhood school to review the information and determine the next step in the process.

This meeting will last approximately half an hour. An interpreter of the parent's native language will participate if requested. The purpose of the meeting is to determine if evaluation is warranted and to determine which evaluation components are required. Parent permission for evaluation is requested at this meeting the ASE, may elect to accept the referral as submitted and proceed with the evaluation upon obtainment of parental consent. Parents must sign permission for any evaluations to take place.

If no further action is required, the special education process stops here. In the event Northampton County Public Schools elects not to proceed with the evaluation a Prior Written Notice will be sent to the parent and Referral source within ten business days.

### **Evaluations:**

Several different evaluations may be requested to gather additional information about a child's developmental functioning. For children referred for a comprehensive or "full" evaluation, the Early Childhood Central Evaluation Team (ECSE Team) will coordinate and complete the special education process. The ECSE Team is comprised of a Special Education Teacher, Speech Pathologist, and School Psychologist and Administrator of Special Education (ASE). Related services personnel (such as Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, etc.) may join the team if those specific evaluations are required.

The ECSE Team ASE will schedule the evaluations and eligibility meetings with the parent. Evaluations may be completed in the child's natural environment, generally the home, with the parent participating. Evaluations may also be scheduled at a school or other setting.

### **Description of Specific Areas of Evaluation:**

Developmental:

The developmental evaluation is completed by a special education teacher. Areas of evaluation will be completed based on suspected weaknesses identified in the referral process. The evaluation may assess personal-social, adaptive, motor, communication or cognitive skills. Information is gathered through

direct assessment, observation and parent interview. Observations of social responsiveness to evaluators and parent, how the child plays with objects and toys, use of language, attention and level of participation will also be included.

#### Sociological:

Qualified staff members will interview the parent. Parents will also be asked about birth, medical and developmental history, family information and concerns of the parent. This assessment will measure communication, daily living, socialization and motor skills of the child based on parent report.

#### Psychological:

A psychological evaluation may be requested to determine specific strengths and weaknesses in social, emotional and intellectual ability areas. This component is not typically recommended until the child is aged three or above. Checklists to be completed by parents may be requested as part of this evaluation. If applicable, be sure to return them promptly so the information can be considered in the eligibility process.

#### Speech/Language

The speech/language evaluation is completed by a speech/language Pathologist. The evaluation may be completed by the ECSE Team Speech Pathologist as part of a FULL evaluation or by the Speech/language Pathologist at the neighborhood school. Receptive language assessment measures what a child understands about the sounds, words and gestures he/she observed and hears from others. Expressive language assessment observes and measures the verbal and nonverbal skills a child uses to make their thoughts, wants and needs known to others. This component may include use of a standardized assessment tool, parent interview, observations and interactions with the child.

#### Medical:

Medical Release of Information form is needed to determine if medical conditions or diagnosis may be impacting a child's development. Parents are responsible for signing this form and returning it the Office of Special Programs with Northampton County Public Schools.

#### Occupational Therapy:

An occupational therapy evaluation or observation may be recommended to gain information about a child's fine motor manipulation skills, sensory processing or motor planning. The evaluation or observation would focus on the child's ability to access activities in a natural environment or participate in self-care tasks required in that setting. A child must be found eligible for special education before the need for occupational therapy can be determined in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting.

#### Physical Therapy:

A physical therapy evaluation or observation may be recommended to learn how a child can move about in a natural environment. The Physical Therapist may consider head control, sitting balance, crawling and walking. A child must be found eligible for special education before the need for physical therapy can be determined in an IEP meeting.

#### Functional Vision:

A child with a documented vision impairment that is not corrected by glasses may require an evaluation by a teacher for the Vision Impaired. How well a child uses his/her vision functionally within a natural environment would be assessed.

Hearing:

A hearing screening is required for all children in any initial special education process.

A child with a documented hearing impairment may require an observation from Teacher of the Hearing Impaired. This observation would be address how well a child uses his/her hearing to function in a natural environment.

### **Eligibility Determination:**

Once all evaluations have been completed, medical records recorded and the hearing/vision screening has been completed, an Eligibility Meeting is held to determine if a child has an educational disability and is in need of special education services. The Eligibility Team includes: the Parent, Administrator of Special Education (ASE), and School Personnel from disciplines who completed the evaluations and a Special Education Teacher (full evaluations).

At least one school representative must have either evaluated or observed the child.

Parents may request copies of the evaluation reports two days prior to the Eligibility Meeting. Reports will be faxed to the neighborhood school if requested or will be available for pick up at the Central Office.

Parents may invite a person with knowledge or special expertise regarding their child. Please notify the ASE of any quests that will be attending prior to the meeting.

It is not necessary or encouraged that the child attend the Eligibility Meeting.

The Eligibility Team will consider which disability or disabilities are suspected at the meeting. Appropriate checklists will be completed to help determine if the child meets eligibility criteria.

No decisions are made at the Eligibility Meeting about services the child will receive. An Individualized Education Program will be scheduled within 30 calendar days of the eligibility meeting to determine goals and services.

### **Individualized Education Program (IEP):**

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written plan designed to meet the child's unique needs and must be in effect before special education and related services are provided. The meeting will take place within 30 calendrre days of the date Eligibility was determined.

The IEP Team for each child includes the parent, Administrator of Special Education or Designee and other persons at the parent or school discretion.

The IEP will include:

- A Cover Page noting demographic data (such as parents, address, date of birth) and special education data (such as date child was found eligible and identified disability).

- Measurable Annual Goals and Objectives or Benchmarks if required. How progress is monitored and reported is also included in this section.
- Statement of the child's Summary of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance, Description of Disability, Parent Input and Concerns, Summary of Performance, Description of Disability, Parent Input and Concerns, Summary of Test History, and Strengths of Student.
- Any Supplemental Aids and Services or Extended School year services the student may require.
- Services including location, duration and projected dates for starting and ending.
- Whether or not District-wide assessments will be conducted at the child's grade-level.
- Description of Least Restrictive Environment including how a child will participate with children without disabilities.

Although not a part of the IEP, Parents are asked to complete a Medicaid or FAMIS form giving Northampton County Public Schools the right to process claims for reimbursement.

If parents have questions about the special education process or services they can contact The Special Programs Department at: Phone: 757-678-5151 x2015