



Bellevue Public Schools Special Education

# Parent Guidebook

## To Special Education Services

Dear Parent:

If you are reading this “Parent Guidebook to Special Education,” you probably have some concerns about how your child is doing in school. You may be wondering if your child has a disability and needs special education, or, you already know that he or she needs special education and you want to know more about the special education process. The purpose of this guidebook is to explain the special education process so that, if your son or daughter does receive special education services, you can work effectively with the school as a member of your child’s special education team.

Special education is meant to meet the unique needs of a child that result from a disability, and to assure that students with disabilities receive all needed aids and services. Special education laws and regulations are meant to protect a student with disabilities and ensure that he or she gets the services and assistance that may be necessary to make effective progress. The laws and regulations are also very complex. This guidebook is designed to help you understand the key concepts of the law and how to be an effective participant in the special education process.

Research, history, and experience tell us that when parents are actively involved in their child’s education, the child does better in school. We hope this guidebook will help you become an informed member of your child’s special education team so that your child has the best possible opportunity to learn and enjoy school.

Please direct questions about the guidebook to the Bellevue Public Schools’ Office of Special Education (402) 293-4000. Or find more information on the district’s website at: [www.bellevuepublicschools.org](http://www.bellevuepublicschools.org)

Sincerely,

Dr. Matthew Fenster  
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## What is Special Education?

Special Education is specially designed instruction and related services that meet the unique needs of an eligible student with a disability or a specific service need that is necessary to allow the student with a disability to access the general curriculum. The purpose of special education is to allow the student to successfully develop his or her individual educational potential. Special education is provided by the school district at no cost to parents.

In Nebraska, the special education system is based on the federal special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), in combination with the state's special education law **Nebraska Department of Education Rule 51 & 52**. These laws protect students with disabilities who are eligible for special education and guarantee them an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), for ages birth to three, or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), for ages 3-21, designed to meet their unique needs.

## Birth to Age 3 Referrals: Getting the Process Started

The Nebraska Early Development Network (EDN) serves children from birth to age three and their families. A child is eligible for services if he or she is not developing typically, or has been diagnosed with a health condition that will affect his or her development.

After receiving the family's permission, a referral may be made by anyone concerned about the child's development (e.g. a family member, child care provider, physician, social worker, or other service provider). The referral information will go to a Services Coordinator who will contact the family within seven days to determine if they are interested in Early Development Network services. See page 21 for the Referral Process Ages Birth to 3 Chart.

Call (402) 293-4941 to make a referral.

## Initial Evaluation

With the family's permission, the Services Coordinator will arrange for an evaluation to determine the unique needs of the child and his or her eligibility. The evaluation is completed with a multidisciplinary evaluation team which includes the child's parents. Together, the team is responsible for the analysis, assessment and documentation of developmental abilities and needs of the child and family. The Services Coordinator can link the family with community resources before the evaluation if needed.

# Nebraska Special Education Verification Guidelines

When making a determination of eligibility, the school district determines that the infant or toddler is experiencing a developmental delay as described in Nebraska Rule 52, or any of the other disabilities described in Nebraska Rule 51.

## After the Evaluation

If the evaluation team suspects the child will most likely meet the verification criteria and qualify for Early Intervention (EI) services, the Services Coordinator will inform the family. The team will then conduct a family and child assessment using the Routines Based Interview (RBI) to identify the family's concerns and priorities.

If the child qualifies for EI services, the Services Coordinator will identify, with the family, others who can participate on a team to help the family develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), which sets goals for the child and family and identifies activities and services needed to achieve those goals. The IFSP will be completed within 45 days, so the family can access Early Development Network services as quickly as possible.

## Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

### Your Child's IFSP Team

Your child's **Primary Service Provider (PSP)** is responsible for delivering the services to your family and collaborating with other team members to answer your questions. The **Services Coordinator** is responsible for maintaining monthly contacts with you. The Services Coordinator and the PSP work together to meet your family's needs. If your child attends a community preschool or childcare, the PSP will collaborate with these programs as needed.

Parents spend a great deal of time with their child(ren). They can provide a significant amount of information that can help the multi-disciplinary team get to know the child better. Parents' concerns and priorities will be documented through the RBI, to develop appropriate goals for the child's IFSP. Parents will be active participants in the MDT and IFSP meetings. The home visitor or PSP will support parents to be their child's first and best teacher. Students on an IFSP will be served in their natural environment. A child's natural environment may be his/her home, childcare, or preschool.

Services Coordination is an entitlement program provided to families of children from

birth to three years of age who make referrals to the Early Childhood Special Education Program. A Services Coordinator, the central point of contact, is assigned to each family at no cost. Families of children with disabilities have found, at times, it difficult to locate services and coordinate with the providers involved. Services Coordination is designed to provide families with educational, community, formal and informal support. If a child qualifies for services, Services Coordination is not optional. It is required that Services Coordination maintains a minimum of one monthly contact with a family, however this may be more depending on the needs of the family.

Here are a few items that a services coordinator can do to assist a family:

- Developing the IFSP
- Identify family needs, strengths, priorities with the family/child assessment
- Advocate for the family to ensure the IFSP process is driven by family needs
- Identifying gaps in services and communication
- Facilitate and support the parents in developing advocacy skills
- Locate services to meet developmental, educational, financial, healthcare, childcare, respite care, and other needs
- Inform families about community services and activities

## **Service Delivery**

The Primary Service Provider (PSP) and the coaching model are ways of offering services to the child and family in a family-friendly manner. The PSP model is based on the belief that parents and caregivers are the child's best teachers. Parents/caregivers are involved as members of the child's educational team, and parents' concerns and priorities are considered when planning services. The State of Nebraska has implemented this model because research has shown it to be effective.

Important components of the PSP Model:

- Professionals from a variety of educational specialties are assigned to the educational team, based on a child's unique needs.
- One professional from the child's team is selected to be the Primary Service Provider (PSP) and will be the main contact for the family.
- The PSP will have regular visits with the family to offer suggestions, answer questions, and share information that may be relevant to the child's needs. The frequency of the visits is determined based on the needs of the child and family.
- The PSP will coach the parent/caregiver on strategies that can help enhance the child's development, and make the most of the learning opportunities that occur in the course of the child's normal family life.
- All team members remain available to support the PSP and family. Team meetings are held, where the PSP updates team members on the child's progress. Team members can suggest additional strategies for the PSP to address the family's questions and concerns. If necessary, team members can participate in co-visits with the PSP and family.

The PSP model is beneficial for families in a number of ways. The child and caregivers establish a relationship with the provider. With the combined knowledge and resources of these individuals, students will be assured greater support and subsequent success. Parents/guardians must be invited to attend IFSP meetings, but cannot be required to do so.

Other school staff and related service providers also may attend the IFSP meetings. Parents may bring anyone they wish to the meetings. As a courtesy, it is suggested that the school district be informed if you plan to bring additional guests or advocates to the meeting. In such cases, the school district will ask that you sign a ***Consent to Release Records*** form to allow private educational information to be shared.

Through the ***Notice of MDT /IFSP Meeting***, the school district will inform you of the date, time and location of the meeting, along with the names of those who will attend. It is possible that all people who are invited to the meeting may not attend. The district can invite only persons with direct educational involvement with the student. The IFSP process should be a collaborative process among parents, school staff members, and other professionals who are involved with your child.

## **Contents of the IFSP/IEP and IFSP/IEP Meeting**

The IFSP documents and meeting follow a particular format. You will follow through the document as the IFSP meeting progresses. Certain items that must be included on the IFSP document and will be discussed at the meeting include:

### **Present Levels of Performance**

During your child's annual or six month review, the IFSP team, with your assistance, will update your child's present levels of performance. The team will document within the IFSP, skills that your child is able to do in the following categories: vision, hearing, fine motor, gross motor, communication, adaptive, health, cognitive/thinking, and social/behavior.

### **Goals/Outcomes**

Your child's IFSP may contain both child and family goals. The goals will be written using family friendly language and based off of your concerns and priorities identified with the family/child assessment. Goals are written for a year and will be reviewed at the 6 month review.

### **Measuring Progress**

The Primary Service Provider and the parent/caregiver will be responsible for measuring progress on the goals/outcomes. The PSP will use the curriculum and assessment adopted by the district to measure progress throughout the year.

### **Natural Environment**

Services will be provided in the child's natural environment. Natural environment is

defined as the place where the child spends the majority of his/her day. Children on IFSPs typically are at home, childcare or preschool.

### **Assistive Technology**

IDEiA requires that every IFSP team consider and document a student's need for assistive technology. Assistive technology (AT) includes both devices and services. AT services directly assists a student with a disability in the selection, acquisition or use of an assistive technology device. Assistive technology devices can range from low-tech pictures to high-tech communication devices. Assistive technology services may include:

- Evaluation of student's needs
- Training and technical assistance for the student using the device
- Training and technical assistance for those involved with the student
- Device selection
- Aid in acquisition of the device

The IFSP team may also determine that an Assistive Technology Evaluation is necessary. If the team determines that your child needs assistive technology, keep in mind that many devices may be tried and rejected before the one that benefits your child is found. When the essential assistive technology device is identified, it should be described in the IFSP within the goals and/or present levels of performance. There may be more than one assistive technology device described to help your child.

The Bellevue Public Schools has an Assistive Technology Coordinator to support IFSP Teams in determining a student's assistive technology needs. If you have questions related to your child's assistive technology needs, please contact your case manager.

### **Continuous Services**

Children on an IFSP are eligible for continuous services. Continuous services allow the school district to provide special education services to your child year round. Children will be offered services within the summer months, when school is not typically in session.

### **Program Placement Decisions**

Once all the elements of the IFSP are determined, including services and supports, the IFSP team makes a placement decision. The first placement option considered for a young child is within his/her natural environment. Some students may need more intensive services.

## **Differences between the IFSP and IEP**

The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is developed for children under three years of age who qualify for special education services due to a developmental delay or disability. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is written documentation for students from ages three to 21.

A child must be transitioned from IFSP to IEP by Aug. 31<sup>st</sup> following the child's 3<sup>rd</sup>



birthday.

<b>IFSP</b>	<b>IEP</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Outlines the strengths and needs of the child and family.</li> <li>● Outcomes are focused on the entire family, not just the child.</li> <li>● The plan is reviewed at least every 6 months to monitor the progress on each goal.</li> <li>● The plan outlines all services in place to support the family, not only services provided by the school district.</li> <li>● Services Coordination is provided to the family while the child is on an IFSP. They can remain on an IFSP until Aug. 31<sup>st</sup> after the child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday, if the family chooses.</li> <li>● The IFSP addresses parental concerns and reflects strengths, resources and needs of the child and the entire family.</li> <li>● Services are available year round.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Outlines the student's present levels of performance</li> <li>● Goals are written regarding the student's educational needs</li> <li>● Goals on the IEP are reviewed annually</li> <li>● The IEP outlines specific special education and related services to be provided by the school district.</li> <li>● Services Coordination discontinues</li> <li>● Parents are members of the group that makes decisions about their child's educational placement</li> <li>● If deemed appropriate by the educational team, the child may be eligible to participate in extended school year services.</li> </ul>

## Home Visitation Policies

- Visits will occur Monday-Friday between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Visits must occur within Bellevue city limits
- If the child or family member is sick, please call the PSP or Services Coordinator
- If school is canceled due to inclement weather, home-visits will be canceled
- To protect providers and families from illness, providers may use the following guidelines: wearing smock and gloves, and frequent hand washing

## Early Childhood Programs

Bellevue Public Schools is partnering with families and the community to help ignite a love of learning in children. The programs are intended to complement the education that a child receives in the home or community through play time, books and conversation.

Early Childhood Center: The educational center is a special place for children and their families where parents learn how to be their child's best, first teacher. Parents help their children learn about the world through play, music, art and books. Families with children ages birth to eight, who live in the Bellevue Public Schools' attendance area are welcome, as are active duty military families.

Home and Community-Based Special Education Services: This program is individualized and specialized to meet the needs of children with disabilities or delays. Families are a part of the child's educational team and services are provided in the child's natural environment. Children ages birth to five years are eligible for a developmental screening/evaluation at no cost.

Preschool Program: Bellevue Public Schools' preschool program is designed for children with disabilities ages three to five years (placement is a team decision) and for students who are four years of age (by July 31) who qualify through a screening process.

Sarpy County Cooperative Head-Start/Early Head-Start: Sarpy County Cooperative Head-Start is a free program for families that meet the federally mandated income guidelines. The program offers education, health, nutrition, family support and disability services. Call 402-339-6592 for additional information.

## **Age 3-21**

### **Referrals: Getting the Process Started**

An age 3 to age 5 referral is a formal process to request special education testing for a child with a suspected disability. These referrals are made to the Office of Early Childhood at (402) 293-4941. It is the responsibility of the Early Childhood Team to receive and process referrals for children age 3 to 5 years of age who have developmental concerns.

The referral process for a student age 5 to 21 is the formal process to request special education testing for a child with a suspected disability. Before a referral for a special education assessment occurs, the regular education staff in the district must conduct and document various pre-referral interventions such as instructional strategies, accommodations, or other systematic efforts that have been tried in the regular education setting to resolve any apparent learning or behavioral problems. This is done through the Student Assistance Team (SAT) which may comprise of a building administrator, regular education teacher(s), special education teacher(s), school psychologist, and other support staff. The SAT will review progress periodically to determine if a referral is necessary to conduct a formal evaluation. The team also decides which areas of suspected disability will be evaluated.

The referral process is the first step in the special education process in determining if the student's areas of concern are having an educational impact; it does not necessarily mean the student has a disability. Before the evaluation can begin, parents must give signed consent for their child to be evaluated. See page 22 for the Referral Process Ages 3-21 Chart.

## Initial Evaluation

### 3-5 Year Olds and Kindergarten through age 21

Upon receipt of written consent for a special education evaluation, the school district has 45 school days to complete the evaluation.

School staff will coordinate to complete an evaluation. The evaluation may include parent input and teacher observation of the student, an interview with the student about their current abilities in school, and other types of formal and informal assessment tools. Evaluations are always conducted by qualified professionals and are provided by the school at no cost to the parent. If you have independent assessment information, you may choose to share it with the school. The results of the evaluation will be used to determine if your child is eligible for and in need of special education and/or related services in school. IDEiA defines the minimum legal requirements for special education, but legal requirements among states vary. The State of Nebraska has very specific criteria that must be met for your child to receive special education services. You may obtain more information about Nebraska laws, regulations, and statutes on the Nebraska Department of Education website at: [www.education.ne.gov/](http://www.education.ne.gov/)

## Nebraska Special Education Verification Guidelines

When making a determination of eligibility, the school district will use the eligibility criteria described by the Nebraska Department of Education Rule 51 and the Verification Guidelines for Children with Disabilities documents. Your child may be assessed for needs in one or more of the disabilities. For further description, refer to Nebraska Department of Education Rule and the Verification Guidelines for Children with Disabilities:

Autism	Deaf-Blindness	Developmental Delay
Emotional Disturbance	Hearing Impairment	Intellectual Disability
Multiple Impairments	Orthopedic Impairment	Other Health Impairment
Specific Learning Disability	Speech-Language Impairment	Traumatic Brain Injury
Visual Impairment		

<b><u>Questions You May Want To Ask:</u></b>
Why do you want to evaluate my child?
What do you think you may find from the evaluation?
What kinds of tests will you give?
What areas are you going to evaluate?
What will happen if I say no?
Will I get a copy of the evaluation results?
What if I disagree with the results?

## **After the Evaluation**

Following the evaluation, the school district will contact you to coordinate a time to review the results with the evaluation team members, which may include you, the parent/guardian, a special education provider, a regular education teacher, other individuals or agencies invited by the parents, someone to interpret the evaluation results and explain what services may be needed, your child if they are age 16 or older (recommended at all levels), other people or agencies that have special expertise or knowledge of the child, and an Local Education Authority (LEA). This is the Multidisciplinary Team Meeting (MDT). You may ask for the evaluation results **before** the meeting so you have time to review them.

The results of the evaluation are summarized in a draft report, which will document the student's strengths, and educational needs. If the team agrees the student meets verification criteria, the parent/guardian will then have the choice to have the student placed into special education services. By law, the school district will supply you with parent and procedural rights.

Following placement, a meeting to develop an IFSP/IEP will be planned. As a parent, you may wish to have the IFSP/IEP meeting at a later time so you can digest the information and think about your preferences for your child's plan.

If the student does not meet the verification criteria as determined by state law, he/she will be referred back to the SAT to implement strategies and accommodations based on the evaluation results. The student may be eligible for a 504 Plan. Section 504 is part of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) that protects individuals with a disability from discrimination and ensures that a student with a disability has equal access to an education. If you do not agree with the findings or decision by the MDT, you have the right to appeal a finding of no eligibility. You may refer to the parental rights and procedures for additional information.

## Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

If it is determined that the student qualifies for and is in need of special education services, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is developed.

In private schools, your child will have either an IEP or an “Equitable Service Plan” depending on if you reside within the Bellevue Public School’s district boundaries. If your child is in this setting, please work with your private school’s administration to initiate services.

## Your Child’s IEP Team

IDEiA emphasizes the importance of parents and staff working cooperatively as a team. The development of the IEP team is facilitated by the school district. IDEiA requires, by law, that the IEP team include parents, general educators, special educators and a district representative who is knowledgeable about special education. That representative of the school district is empowered to make decisions on the district’s behalf.

With the combined knowledge and resources of these individuals, students will be assured greater support and subsequent success. Parents/guardians must be invited to attend IEP meetings, but cannot be required to do so. Students are also encouraged to participate at all grade levels and are required to be invited starting at age 16 in Nebraska.

Other school staff and related service providers also may attend the IEP meetings. Parents may bring anyone they wish to the meetings. As a courtesy, it is suggested that the school district be informed if you plan to bring additional guests or advocates to the meeting.

A critical member of the school’s IEP team is the **IEP case manager**. Your child’s case manager at the school is responsible for his/her overall special education program and maintaining his/her official special education records. The case manager will schedule and conduct the IEP meetings and coordinate all special and related services for an individual student. The case manager should be the parents’ primary contact regarding the student’s special education services.

As a parent, you have a unique and important perspective on your child’s learning style, strengths, and needs. The school staff should ensure that you feel comfortable when communicating with them about your child. Parents have the right to be involved in all meetings that discuss the identification, evaluation, IEP development and educational placement of the child. The law ensures that parents and school personnel are equal partners in all steps of the IEP process.

Through the *Notice of Meeting*, the school district will inform you of the date, time and location of the meeting, along with the names of those who will attend. It is possible that additional individuals may be invited to attend the meeting. The district can invite only

persons with direct educational involvement with the student. The IEP process is a collaborative process among parents, school staff members, and other professionals who are involved with your child.

It is mandatory that all required members of the IEP team stay for the duration of the IEP meeting. Parents may give permission for a required team member to either be absent or leave early. If you wish for a specific staff member to attend, let your case manager know.

Student involvement in an IEP meeting is encouraged. The student's input, as well as the team's, on their strengths, needs, interests and preferences should determine the direction for the identified goals and services in the IEP. Supporting active student participation in the IEP process also assists students in developing self-determination skills that are necessary in adult life. Although it is not mandatory for a student to attend his/her IEP meeting, the district must ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered.

#### Possible IEP Team Members

- Parent
- Student
- LEA/School Administrator (required member)
- Regular Education Teacher (required member)
- Special Education Teacher (possible required member depending on verification)
- Speech/Language Pathologist (possible required member depending on verification)
- Occupational Therapist
- Physical Therapist
- Vision Consultant
- Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- School Psychologist
- Assistive Technology Specialist
- Services Coordinator
- Orientation and Mobility Specialist
- School Nurse
- Other individuals who may be knowledgeable about your child

## Contents of the IEP and IEP Meeting

The IEP documents and meeting follow a particular format. You will follow through the document as the IEP meeting progresses. Certain items that must be included on the IEP document and will be discussed at the meeting include:

### **Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)**

The IEP must state how the student is currently performing in school. This information is gathered from many sources and may include evaluation information, classroom tests and assignments, teacher observations, and information provided by parents. The PLAAFP

must also include how the student's disability affects his/her involvement and progress in the general education curriculum.

### **Annual Goals**

The goals and objectives on your child's IEP must focus on the skills and behaviors your child needs to learn in order to be involved in and progress within the curriculum.

- **Goals** describe the skill or behavior your child is expected to accomplish within one year. The goals must include a timeframe, a condition (how the student will do the task), the behavior (what the student will learn to do), and criterion (how often). If you have specific goal areas that you believe should be addressed, discuss these with your child's IEP team.

### **Measuring Progress**

The IEP must indicate the frequency and manner in which you will be informed of your child's progress toward annual goals. At the IEP meeting, you will discuss how often goal progress will be reported to you. You also have the right to talk to the case manager at any time for an update, or even call an IEP meeting if your child's needs have changed.

### **Special Education and Related Services**

This area lists all specialized services the district has agreed to provide, including **indirect** and **direct** services. This area also defines where the student will receive services, the specific amount of time, and the frequency of the service. These services may be provided individually or in a group setting.

- **Indirect** means the service provider consults with other team members, but does not work face-to-face with the student. For example, the special education teacher may consult with a speech therapist to discuss communication needs.
- **Direct** service is the time that the student is personally involved with the service provider.

### **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Explanation**

The IEP must explain how students with disabilities will be educated — to the maximum extent possible — with students without disabilities.

The IEP meeting will determine which settings are appropriate and how much time your child will spend in each area. If the student will not participate fully with their general education peers, the IEP must include a statement indicating the reason(s) for educating your child in other settings.

### **Accommodations and Modifications**

Students with disabilities may be able to participate in the regular classroom and be successful with the use of *accommodations* or *modifications*.

- An **accommodation** allows students to do the same work as the other students but with a change that allows them to be more successful — it does not alter the rigor of the material.
- A **modification** alters what is expected of the student. A modification lowers the

rigor of the material and individualizes the measure of success.

Accommodations and modifications should be written into a student's IEP. The agreed-upon changes should fit the student's individual needs. It is important to involve the student in this process to get his/her ideas on what changes would be helpful. More information about accommodations and modifications is available from PACER at <http://www.pacer.org/parent/php/PHP-c91.pdf>.

### **Participation in State and District-Wide Tests**

Most states require achievement tests to be given at various grade levels. The IEP must state the *accommodations or modifications* to be provided when standardized state or district tests are administered to the student. If the tests are not appropriate for a student, the IEP must state the reasons why and that the state's alternative testing will be used.

### **Assistive Technology**

IDEiA requires that every IEP team consider and document a student's need for assistive technology (AT). The definition of an assistive technology device is very broad, and includes a wide range of devices, which can range from "low tech" to "high tech". It includes any device or tool which helps a person with a disability complete a task which would otherwise be difficult or impossible for that individual, but is commonly expected of non-disabled peers.

Assistive technology is available in the following categories: augmentative communication, social communication, access to technology and tools, motor aspects of writing (handwriting), academic supports (written composition, reading comprehension, math), independent work skills and organization, positioning/mobility and self-care aids, assistive listening devices, vision aids.

### **Extended School Year**

Extended School Year (ESY) refers to special education services needed outside the regular school year to help students maintain progress toward their IEP goals. This service is offered during summer break but is not part of summer school — eligibility is very specific and school districts are required to provide ESY services to eligible students. The IEP Team decides annually whether Extended School Year Services are needed to assist students. The criterion for ESY is:

- 1) If there is *significant regression* of a skill or acquired knowledge from the student's level of performance on an annual goal that requires more than the length of the break in instruction to recoup unless the IEP Team determines a shorter time for recoupment is more appropriate;
- 2) ESY services are necessary for the student to attain and *maintain self-sufficiency* because of the critical nature of the skill addressed by an annual goal, the student's age and level of development, and the timeliness for teaching the skill; or
- 3) The IEP Team otherwise determines, given the student's *unique needs*, that ESY services are necessary to ensure the student receives a free appropriate public



education (an example being a student that has a medical/health condition that prevents the student from accessing educational programming for extended periods of time).

The purpose of ESY is to maintain a student's year-end skill level. The IEP Team may determine eligibility by observing the student's regression over breaks (either summer break or scheduled school-year breaks), and the time needed to recoup skills. If the IEP Team determines Extended School Year services are needed, they decide the summer goals, objectives and amount and type of service needed. ESY services should emphasize maintaining existing skills as stated in the IEP. Methods may be altered in order to maintain — as opposed to acquiring — new skills.

### **Program Placement Decisions**

Once all the elements of the IEP are determined, including services and supports, the IEP Team makes a placement decision. The first placement option considered for each student with a disability must be the general education classroom with the provision of necessary aids and supports. The team may also determine that service should be provided in other settings outside the regular education environment for a portion of the day. At times it may be necessary for a student to attend another school in the district or a program outside of the district. A student's specific needs will determine the setting and location for the provision of the services.

### **Secondary Transition Needs and Services**

School districts are required to prepare students with disabilities to progress and move from high school to community life and employment. Secondary transition areas include:

- Job exploration
- Work-based learning
- Counseling for transition and post secondary programs
- Work place readiness training
- Self-determination training

By law, your child's IEP is required to include a transition plan starting the year your child turns age 16. The IEP team may determine it necessary to discuss this prior to that IEP.

A post-secondary goal/s must be included in your child's IEP. The goal will include training, education, employment, and daily living (when necessary). This goal is separate from the annual goals and will discuss outcomes after your child has left services with Bellevue Public Schools. It will be measurable as a yes or no statement.

The IEP must address the course of study that promotes the movement toward the student's post-secondary goal/s. Transition needs must be addressed in each subsequent IEP. The IEP must identify instructional and related services to support the five areas of transition and identify inter-agency responsibilities related to post-secondary goals.

Transition services may include helping students learn to safely use public transportation,

helping students and families connect with other community services, and/or arranging pre-employment training. Transition services continue for students through age 21 who have not received their high school diploma and remain qualified for special education services due to identified needs in the IEP.

## Three-Year Re-evaluation

By law, students receiving special education services must be re-evaluated every three years with your consent. This may occur more often if there are significant changes in need or if requested by a member of the MDT. The order of events will be similar to that of the initial evaluation process. The purpose of re-evaluation is to:

- Determine if your child continues to qualify for and is still in need of special education and related services in the identified area or new areas;
- Identify how your child is progressing in school, review current educational needs, and identify new educational needs;
- Determine if educational impact is still present due to a verified disability;
- Provide updated information for your child's IEP/IFSP to help your child meet the annual goals and objectives that are in the IEP/IFSP and participate, as appropriate, in the general curriculum.

## Educational Records

You have the right to view your child's special education records. The school district shall comply with your request within 45 days. You must put your request in writing to the Director of Special Education and the district must respond within 10 school days.

The district must keep a log of who accesses your child's educational records. Parental consent is needed for records to be released.

If you feel there is information in your child's records that is incorrect or misleading, you have the right to request that the information be removed or changed. If the district does not agree, it must inform you in writing and offer a meeting to resolve the differences. If an agreement cannot be reached, you have the right to a hearing to challenge the district's position. A hearing officer will make the decision. You can also add your information to what is in question in the student's file. Before any educational records regarding your child are destroyed, the district needs to inform you of its intent.

## Section 504 (504 Plan)

Section 504 is a civil rights law that protects individuals with a disability from discrimination for reasons related to their disability and ensures that all students have equal access to their education. Section 504 defines a person with disabilities if he/she:

- has a physical or mental impairment that limits one or more of the person's major life activities (walking, speaking, working, eating, standing, lifting, bending, sleeping, seeing, breathing, caring for oneself, reading, concentrating, hearing,

- learning, performing manual tasks, thinking, communicating);
- has a record of such an impairment; or
- is regarded as having such impairment.

When a condition significantly limits a major life activity, an accommodation plan must be developed for that student. A team determines services under Section 504.

The requirements to qualify for a 504 Plan are somewhat less restrictive than special education criteria. A 504 Plan is most often utilized for students who are diagnosed with some form of physical, mental health, or medical condition (such as diabetes, migraine headaches, attention deficit disorder), but otherwise do not meet eligibility requirements for special education services. A 504 Plan is a written plan that provides for accommodations for the student, but not for specially designed instruction.

Note: Students should not have both a 504 Plan and an IEP. Children birth to age 5 are not eligible for 504 plans.

## **Resolving IFSP/IEP Issues**

You have the right to disagree with the school district's decisions concerning IFSP/IEPs, evaluations or educational placements of your child.

Occasionally parents have issues about what is written in the IFSP/IEP. Carefully review the proposed IFSP/IEP to ensure that all items proposed at the IFSP/IEP meeting are included. If you think an agreed-upon item is missing, contact the case manager to discuss this prior to giving written consent. If you have concerns about the services provided to your child, you should contact his/her teacher and/or case manager. You can ask for another meeting with the building's principal. The next step is to speak with the District's Director of Special Education or Coordinator of Early Childhood.

Usually parents and school staff can resolve issues without resorting to a formal process, but there are options when parents and the district are unable to resolve the differences. Three groups that can provide information about dispute options are the Nebraska Department of Education (402-595-2177), the Parent Training and Information Nebraska (800-284-8520), and Disability Rights Nebraska (402-474-3183).

## **Least Restrictive Environment**

The federal law, IDEA, mandates that students with disabilities must be educated with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate based on the student's needs. This is known as the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The Team (including the parent) determines the placement that the student needs to provide the services on the student's IEP and the Team must choose the least restrictive environment able to provide those services. This means that the student should attend the school he or she would attend if nondisabled, unless the Team determines that the nature of the student's disability will not allow that student to have a successful educational experience in that environment.

# **Bellevue Public Schools Special Education Contacts**

**Director of Special Education**

**Dr. Matthew Fenster**

**2600 Arboretum Drive**

**Bellevue, NE 68005**

**(402) 293-4000**

**[matthew.fenster@bpsne.net](mailto:matthew.fenster@bpsne.net)**

**Early Childhood Facilitator**

**Diane Ellis**

**2202 Washington Street**

**Bellevue, NE 68005**

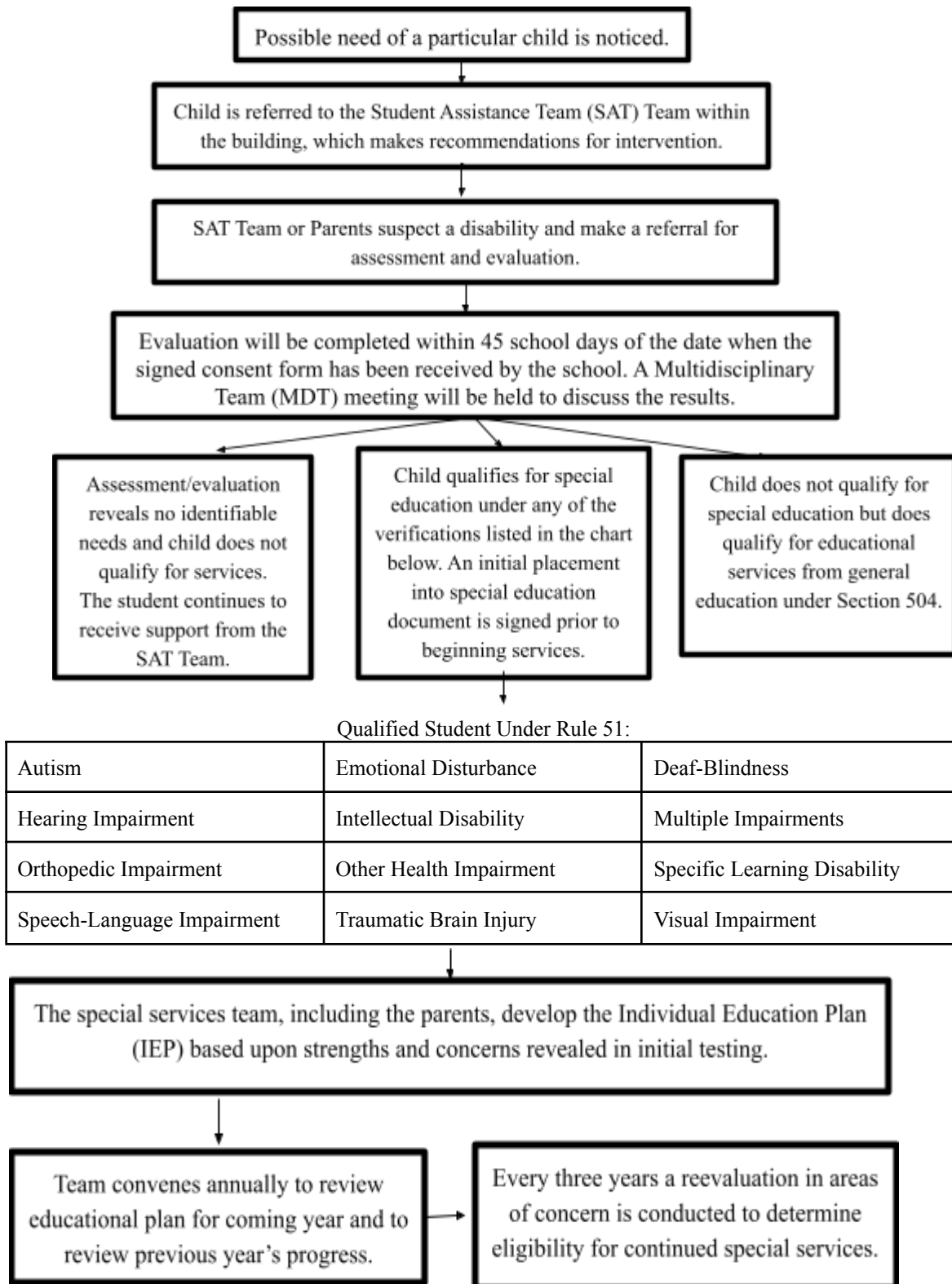
**(402) 293-4941**

**[diane.ellis@bpsne.net](mailto:diane.ellis@bpsne.net)**

## *The Referral Process: Birth to 3 Years*



## The Referral Process: 3 to 21 Years



## **Additional Resources For Persons with Disabilities and their Families**

**American Speech-Language-Hearing Association** | 301-296-5700 | <http://www.asha.org/>

**Answers 4 Families** | Providing internet based support to Nebraskans with special needs | 800-746-8420 | <http://www.answers4families.org/>

**AT4ALL** | Assistive Technology 4 All, recycling and lending assistive technology for people with disabilities | 877-201-4141 | <http://www.at4all.com/welcome.aspx>

**ATP** | Assistive Technology Partnership | Omaha Office: 877-201-4141 | <http://www.atp.ne.gov/>

**Autism Society of Nebraska** | 800-580-9279 | [www.autismnebraska.org/](http://www.autismnebraska.org/)

**Autism Spectrum Disorders** | Nebraska Department of Education's Autism Spectrum Disorders Network | 402-472-4194 | <http://www.unl.edu/asdnetwork/>

**Bellevue Special Olympics** | 402-658-0672 | [www.bellevuespecialolympics.org](http://www.bellevuespecialolympics.org)

**Brain Injury Association of Nebraska** | 844-423-2463 | <http://biane.org/>

**Career Solutions Inc** | 402-342-4418 | [www.olliewebbinc.org/](http://www.olliewebbinc.org/)

**Center for Parent Information and Resources** | 973-642-8100 | <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/>

**City of Bellevue, Human Services, Specialized Transportation Services** | | 402-293-3138 | <http://www.bellevue.net/departments/human-services/overview>

**Challenger Little League for Individuals with Disabilities** | 402-558-0031 | [www.challengerlittleleague.org/](http://www.challengerlittleleague.org/)

**Down Syndrome Alliance of the Midlands** | 402-554-6095 | [www.dsamidlands.org/](http://www.dsamidlands.org/)

**Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired** | Omaha Office: 402-595-2041 | <http://www.ncbvi.nebraska.gov/>

**Early Development Network** | Inter-agency Coordinating Council to help serve children age birth to three | 888-806-6287 | <http://edn.ne.gov/>

**Easter Seal Society of NE** | 402-345-2200 | <http://www.easterseals.com/ne/>

**Envisions** | 402-597-3336 | <http://www.envisionservices.com/>

**Goodwill Industries, IN** | 402-341-4609 | [www.goodwillomaha.com](http://www.goodwillomaha.com)

**Hands of Heartland, Inc.** | 402-933-0680 | <http://www.handsofheartland.com/>

**Housing.ne.gov** | Housing listing and locator service | 877-428-8844 | <http://housing.ne.gov/>

**ICanConnect** | National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP), provides free access to distance communication technologies to people with significant combined hearing and vision loss who meet federal income guidelines | 800-825-4595, TTY 800-320-2656 | <http://www.icanconnect.org/>

**Individuals, Promoting Opportunities, and Building Belief in the Blind** | 877-809-2419 | <https://www.ncbvi.nebraska.gov/>

**International Dyslexia Association** | 410-296-0232 | <https://www.dyslexiaida.org>

**League of Human Dignity** | 402-441-7871 | <http://leagueofhumandignity.com/>

**Learning Disabilities Association of America** | 412-341-1515 | <https://ldaamerica.org>

**NDE** | Nebraska Department of Education | 402-471-2295 | <http://www.education.ne.gov/>

**NDHHS** | Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services | 402-471-3121 | <http://dhhs.ne.gov/>

**NEBrainstorm** | Nebraska's Brain Injury Resource Network | 308-865-5012 | <http://www.braininjury.ne.gov/>

**Nebraska Library Commission, Talking Book & Braille Service** | This is a free resource for Nebraskans with visual or physical impairment or dyslexia that interferes with their use of regular print, also a free source for audio and Braille books and magazines, as well as easy-to-use players. | 402-471-2045 | <http://nlc.nebraska.gov/TBBS/>

**Nebraska's Rule 51** | Regulations and standards for special education programs | 402-595-2177 | [http://www.education.ne.gov/legal/webrulespdf/CLEAN51\\_2014.pdf](http://www.education.ne.gov/legal/webrulespdf/CLEAN51_2014.pdf)

**Nebraska's Rule 52** | Regulations and standards for early intervention special education programs | 402-471-3184 | [http://www.education.ne.gov/legal/webrulespdf/CLEAN52\\_2014.pdf](http://www.education.ne.gov/legal/webrulespdf/CLEAN52_2014.pdf)



**NRRS** | Nebraska Resource and Referral System | Connecting Nebraskans to services and resources with accurate and up-to-date information on thousands of agencies and organizations. | 800-746-8420 | <https://nrrs.ne.gov/>

**Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing** | The mission of the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is to provide advocacy, communication access and information to enhance awareness and services for improving the quality of life for all who experience hearing loss | 800-545-6244 | <http://www.ncdhh.ne.gov/>

**Nebraska Dyslexia Association** | 402-434-6434 | [www.nebraskadyslexia.org](http://www.nebraskadyslexia.org)

**Nebraska Lifespan Respite Network** | 866-737-7483 | <https://nrrs.ne.gov/respitesearch/>

**Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation** | 877-637-3422 | <http://www.vr.nebraska.gov/>

**Munroe-Meyer Institute** | 800-656-3937 | [www.unmc.edu/mmi/](http://www.unmc.edu/mmi/)

**OLLIE WEBB Center** | 402-346-5220 | [www.olliewebbinc.org](http://www.olliewebbinc.org)

**Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER)** | Understanding the Special Education Process | 952-838-9000 | <http://www.pacer.org/parent/resources/understanding-the-spec-ed-process.asp>.

**PTI Nebraska** | Providing information for families of children with disabilities | | 402-346-0525 | <http://pti-nebraska.org/>

**People First of Nebraska Inc.** | Advocacy Service | 402-559-4892 | [www.peoplefirstnebraska.com](http://www.peoplefirstnebraska.com)

**School Psychologist Files** | <http://schoolpsychologistfiles.com/testscores/>

**Special Olympics Nebraska** | 402-331-5545 | <http://www.sone.org/>

**VODEC, The Vocational Development Center, Inc.** | 402-455-4648 | <http://www.vodec.org/contact-us/>

### **Additional Resources for Military Families**

**Special Needs Identification and Assignment Coordinator (SNIAC)** : Ehrling Berquist Clinic, 2501 Capehart Rd Offutt AFB (402)294-2989

**Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) Coordinator:** Airman and Family Readiness Center, 106 Peacekeeper Drive, Offutt AFB, (402) 294-4329, [55FSS.FSFR@offutt.af.mil](mailto:55FSS.FSFR@offutt.af.mil)

**School Liaison Officer:** Airman and Family Readiness Center, 106 Peacekeeper Drive,  
Offutt AFB, (402) 294-4329, [55FSS.FSFR@offutt.af.mil](mailto:55FSS.FSFR@offutt.af.mil)

# Acronyms

AAC	Augmentive and Alternative Communication
ADA	Americans with Disability Act
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
AT	Assistive Technology
BD	Behavioral Disorder
BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan
BST	Basic Skills Tests
DB	Deaf-Blindness
D/HH	Deaf and Hard of Hearing
DD	Developmental Delay
DPH	Due Process Hearing
DPHO	Due Process Hearing Officer
EBD	Emotional or Behavioral Disorders
ECSE	Early Childhood Special Education
EDN	Early Development Network
ESY	Extended School Year
EI	Early Intervention
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FBA	Functional Behavior Assessment
IDEiA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act
IEE	Independent Education Evaluation
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IFSP	Individualized Family Service Plan
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MDT	Multidisciplinary Team
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
OT	Occupational Therapist
OHI	Other Health Impairments
OI	Orthopedic Impairment
PCA	Personal Care Attendant
PLAAFP	Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance
PSP	Primary Service Provider
SAT	Student Assistance Team
SLI	Speech or Language Impairment
SEAC	Special Education Advisory Council
SLD	Specific Learning Disability
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
VI	Visually Impaired

## Frequently Used Terms

**Accommodation** – Allows the student to do the same work as the regular education students with a change (i.e., taking tests in a quiet room) that helps him/her be more successful. This change does not change the rigor of the material being taught.

**Assistive Technology Device** – Any item, piece of equipment, or product system used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of children with disabilities.

**Assistive Technology Service** – Any service that directly assists a student in the selection, acquisition or use of an assistive technology device.

**Consent** – Means that you say “yes”. Consent means that you understand and agree in writing to the activity that is being requested, such as an evaluation or an IEP.

**Curriculum** – The coursework being taught.

**Direct service** – Service provided directly to the student from the professional.

**Evaluation** – Testing and observations used to determine the eligibility of the student for special education services.

**IDEiA** – The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEiA) is the nation's special education law. IDEiA provides federal funding to help states and local communities provide special education opportunities for students.

**IEE (Independent Educational Evaluation)** – An evaluation provided by a mutually agreed upon independent professional who is not employed by the school system, at no cost to the parent. The school district is required to give the parent several choices of qualified professionals to perform the IEE. The parent can then choose which professional conducts the IEE. To request an IEE, the parent needs to notify, in **writing**, the Director of Special Education that they disagree with the district's evaluation and are requesting an IEE. Parents should keep a copy for themselves as well. Parents also have the right to a second opinion at any time at their own expense. The school district must consider this information.

**IEP** – An Individualized Education Plan is a specially designed program of services, instruction, and support designed to meet the individual needs of students who require special education and related services.

**IEP Case Manager** – The person at the school who coordinates a student's IEP and sees that it is carried out. This person is the first point of contact for any issues or concerns that a parent may have. If parents work with other agencies, they may work with others who are called case managers.

**IEP Team** – The group of people responsible for defining a student’s educational plan. The Team must include:

- A parent.
- A representative of the district who is authorized to assign resources.
- At least one of the student’s special education teachers.
- At least one of the student’s regular education teachers.
- There may be more team members as appropriate.

**IFSP** – An Individual Family Service Plan is a specially designed program of services or supports to meet the needs of children, birth through age three, who need special education.

**Indirect service** – Consists of work on the student’s behalf that ensures access, accommodations and service coordination. It is not direct service, as it does not occur face-to-face with the student on a regularly scheduled basis.

**LRE (Least Restrictive Environment)** – the educational setting that provides an appropriate program, including special supports needed for the student, in as typical a school environment as possible.

**Modification** – A change that lowers the rigor of the material and changes what a test or assignment measures.

**Natural Environment** - The place where the child spends the majority of his/her day.

**Positive behavior intervention** – A plan to address problem behaviors; it addresses both the source of the behavior and ways to deal with the behavior so the student can behave more appropriately.

**Primary Service Provider** – The team decides which provider can best meet the child’s and family’s needs. Then the PSP will provide services with the other team members on consent.

**Referral** – Anyone can make a referral for a special education evaluation. When classroom interventions are not successful, the classroom teacher may make a referral to the Student Assistance Team who will consider whether the child should receive further evaluation. This team, including the parent, decides the areas to be evaluated and the types of evaluation to be completed.

**Related Services** – Services required which allow a child to benefit from special education. An example may be transportation or occupational therapy.

**Resource room** – A student may receive his/her special education and related services in the resource room, rather than a regular education classroom.

**Routines Based Interview (RBI)**- A semi-structured interview used with families,

teachers, and child care providers in order to gain meaningful information about how a child participates in everyday activities. IFSP outcomes/goals are developed from this interview.

**Services Coordinator** – Assists the family of an eligible infant or toddler with disabilities within a community to identify and meet the child’s and family’s needs through coordination of informal and formal supports.

**Services with regular education peers-** Special education services, which occur in the regular education classroom (i.e., inclusion).

**Services without regular education peers-** Special education services, which occur outside of the regular education classroom (i.e., pull-out).

**Special Education** – Instruction specially designed to meet the unique needs of a student with disabilities, at no cost to parent(s).

**Student Assistance Team (SAT)** – A group of persons utilizing problem solving and intervention strategies to assist the teacher(s) in the provision of general education. Before referring a child for an evaluation, the classroom teacher must try pre-referral interventions to see if the child’s performance improves with simple changes in curriculum or environment. At least two pre-referral interventions must be tried and documented. If the child’s performance improves, an evaluation may not be needed. If problems continue, an evaluation will help identify more specific ways to help the child learn.