

# AISD

# Special Education

# Parent Guidebook



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## **Dear Parents,**

Arlington ISD would like to welcome you to our special education parent community. When your child was recommended for Special Education services, you may have been greatly relieved that your child would receive needed supports, or you might have been reluctant to agree with these services. Special Education is a new world filled with unfamiliar meetings and vocabulary that can seem daunting in the beginning.

AISD wants to make this process easier for you by providing the information you need to understand the Special Education services available for your child. We also want to help you become familiar with the agencies to contact when your child needs support outside of the public school setting.

## **Why Navigating Special Education Is Tricky**

Parents are often overwhelmed by the amount of documents they receive. This Parent Guidebook is designed to be placed in the binder, along with other important information about your child. As you journey through the maze of Special Education, we hope this book will serve as a map to empower you with the information and support you need to help your child.

This handbook seeks to provide parents a basic overview in the special education process and how to use collaborative strategies and facilitation skills to improve that process. We hope to give parents tips, tools, tactics, and educator perspective—all of which will enhance collaboration with the school team. At the end of the day, better collaboration among the adults in your child’s life will increase his or her educational outcomes. AISD encourages you to utilize various sections of this handbook at different times as you navigate through your child’s special education process. As you journey through the maze of Special Education, we hope this book will serve as a map to empower you with the information and support your need to help your child.

## **Laws, Rules and Regulations for Providing Special Education Services**

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act guarantees every eligible student a “free appropriate public education,” sometimes called FAPE. The IDEA was most recently reauthorized by Congress in 2004. Though some provisions have changed, IDEA’s basic requirements remain the same. The law says public schools must:

- find and identify students who have a disability;
- involve parents in decision making;
- evaluate (test) students in a nondiscriminatory way;

- develop an individualized education program (IEP) for each student that will help him/her be involved in and progress in the general curriculum;
- decide what special instruction and related services the school district will provide;
- provide services in the least restrictive environment (a placement that allows a student with disabilities to be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with students who do not have disabilities);
- maintain education records/files; and
- provide processes for resolving parent complaints and grievances.

Section 504: Under Section 504 (of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C.A. Section 794), no program or activity receiving federal money may discriminate against any qualified person with a disability. These regulations apply to all schools, including private schools that receive or benefit from federal funds. Each district is required to have a 504 officer. You can get more information on Section 504 from:

U.S. Office for Civil Rights, Dallas Office 1999 Bryan Street, Suite 1620 Dallas, Texas, 75201 (214) 661-9600 Web site: <http://www.ed.gov/OCR> E-mail: [OCR\\_Dallas@ed.gov](mailto:OCR_Dallas@ed.gov)

Some students who do not qualify for special education services under the IDEA may receive services under Section 504. Students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and some students with Dyslexia are good examples. Section 504 also requires that all students have an equal opportunity to participate in activities and services at school, including: school clubs, athletic programs, social activities, transportation, health and counseling services and vocational programs.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): The ADA is a federal law passed in 1990 which gives people with disabilities, including students, protections like those provided to people on the basis of race, sex and national origin. All public schools must comply with the ADA. The ADA bans discrimination based on disability in the areas of public accommodations, state and local government services, employment, transportation and telecommunications.

## **The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

FERPA, 20 U.S.C.A. § 1232(g), is the federal law which gives parents of students under age 18 the right to see, make copies of and request corrections of their child's records. If you have any questions or concerns, send your complaints to:

FERPA Office U.S. Department of Education Room 4074, Switzer Building 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20202-61 86.

File your complaint as soon as possible after the incident occurs and keep a copy of your letter. It is also appropriate and considerate to send a copy of the complaint to your child's school.

**Confidentiality of Records** A student's records are private, and school districts, with some exceptions, must get parental consent before showing the records to anyone not involved in the student's education. The school should have a list of the names and positions of school employees who can see your child's records without your consent. At no time should other students have access to private records.

**Getting Records** If you think something written in the education records is wrong or misleading, or violates your child's rights, ask school officials to change it. Within a reasonable time, they must decide whether they will make the change. If school officials refuse to make the requested change, they must tell you they have refused and let you know about your right to a hearing. This hearing is different from the due process hearing mentioned elsewhere in this manual. If the hearing shows the records are wrong, school officials must change the records and let you know in writing what changes they made. If the hearing shows the school district does not have to change the records, they must allow you to add your own statement to the records explaining why you disagree or why you think the statements are unfair. The school district must keep your statement with the records. Whenever the school district shows the records to other people, they must show your statement also. If you have questions about getting information in your child's records changed, contact the Executive Director for Special Education, Counseling and Psychological Services.

**Other Records** You also have the right to see any education records kept by private schools which receive federal funds, state schools, state hospitals, state agencies and community Mental Health and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (MM/DD). While there are exceptions, these records are private and usually cannot be shown to persons who are not employees without your consent.

## **Words to Know**

**Accommodations:** Adjustments made in how a student with a disability is taught or tested. Accommodations do not change what the student is taught or what they are expected to know. Common examples of accommodations are: highlighted textbooks, extensions of time for a student who writes slowly, or seating close to the teacher.

**ADA (American with Disabilities Act):** A federal law passed in 1990 that prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities. Public schools are covered by the ADA.

**Adapted Physical Education (APE):** An appropriate physical education plan for students with special needs who are not able to participate in regular PE with modifications.

**Adult Student:** Students age 18 and over are considered to be an adult student unless the student's parent, or other individual, has been granted guardianship of the student under the Texas Probate Code.

**Alternate Education Programs (AEP):** A disciplinary placement for students who violate the district’s student code of conduct or engage in behaviors that would result in an AEP placement. Placement of students with a disability is determined by the ARD committee.

**ARD Committee (Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee):** In Texas, the name for the group made up of a student’s parents and school staff who meet at least annually to decide whether or not the student has an eligible disability and what special education and related services will be provided. Its major responsibility is the development of the individual education program (IEP) for students receiving special education services. In Texas, these meetings are called “ARD meetings”, and the committee develops the ARD document.

**Assessment:** Testing done by school staff to gather information about a student. All students are required to take the statewide assessment called the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR). Students receiving special education services take the same state and district-wide assessments given to all students, unless their ARD committee determines a student should take an alternate assessment. See the page titled “Understanding Statewide Assessments” in this handbook for more information.

**Assistive Technology (AT):** An assistive technology device is any item, piece of equipment or product used to increase, maintain, or improve the functioning of a student with a disability. Assistive technology devices for students with disabilities include those used for seating and positioning, mobility, augmentative communication, computer access and instruction, environmental control, adaptive toys and games, visual and listening aids.

**Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP):** A written plan, based on a Functional Behavior Assessment, designed to identify and address, through specific supports and services, behaviors that prevent appropriate social interactions and learning.

**Case Manager:** A special education teacher assigned to a student. The case manager is responsible for monitoring a student’s progress and is a liaison between the school and home.

**Code of Student Conduct:** The rights and responsibilities of each member of the school community in establishing and maintaining good discipline at district schools. A copy of the Code of Student Conduct is online and can be requested from the campus.

**Community Based Instruction (CBI):** A service beginning as early as elementary age when students go into the community to learn functional life skills.

**Consent:** Written permission given by a parent to have his or her child evaluated for Special Education services or for the initiation of special education services and testing.

**Diagnostician:** A person certified to assess students for special education eligibility. They are qualified to administer cognitive and academic testing used to formulate recommendations for instruction.

**Developmental Delay:** Refers to a child who has not gained developmental skills expected of him/her, compared to others of the same age.

**Early Childhood Intervention (ECI):** A statewide program for children from birth to age three who have developmental delays. Services are available for eligible children in their natural environment (home, day care, preschool, etc.). An Individual Family Service Plan is developed for each child.

**Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE):** A continuum of services for eligible children 3 through 5 years of age. This program focuses on improving physical, language, cognitive, self-help, social and emotional skills.

**Education Service Centers (ESC):** Education Service Centers are located in each of 20 geographic regions covering the state of Texas. Their main function is to provide training and technical assistance to the school districts located in their region. ESCs must also include parents in some of its trainings. Arlington ISD is located in Region 11, [www.esc11.net](http://www.esc11.net)

**Eligibility:** The determination of whether or not a child has a disability and an educational need that qualifies him or her for special education services.

**Evaluation:** An initial Full and Individual Evaluation is completed to determine if a student has one of the thirteen disability conditions identified by state and federal guidelines and requires specially designed instruction. A reevaluation must occur at least once every three years unless the parent and the district agree that a reevaluation is unnecessary. A reevaluation cannot occur more than once a year unless the parent and the district agree to the reevaluation. The evaluation will include multiple sources of information: formal standardized measures, parent information, teacher information, and observations as well as informal data.

**Extended School Year (ESY):** Special education services offered beyond the regular school year to students who have difficulty retaining critical skills and require a significant amount of time to recoup the skills. The determination of ESY services is made by the ARD committee.

**Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):** Federal law protecting the confidentiality of students and parents. FERPA requires written parent consent prior to releasing records (except to another district to which the student has moved), and allows parents the right to access and request changes to their child's records.

**Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** Special education and/or related services designed to meet the individual needs of each student at no cost to the parents, guaranteed to all students with disabilities by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act.

**Full Individual Evaluation (FIE):** A comprehensive evaluation that is conducted on individual students to determine the presence of a disability and need for special education services.

**Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA):** An assessment of why a student behaves as he/she does given the nature of the student's disability and considering environmental factors. The FBA is used by the ARD committee in developing a student's Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP).

**Homebound:** An in-home program established for students whose illness or injury prevents them from attending school for four or more weeks as determined by a physician and an ARD Committee.

**IDEIA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act):** The federal law requiring school districts to provide students with disabilities a free appropriate public education. Formerly known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Education of All Handicapped Children Act and P.L. 94-142

**Inclusion:** A service delivery option in which a student receives instruction in the general education classroom with the support of a teacher or paraprofessional from the special education department on a full time, part time or consult basis. Grades are given by the general education teacher or jointly by the special education and general education teacher as determined by the ARD Committee.

**Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE):** Educational evaluation of a student by an evaluator who does not regularly work for the school district. Parents who are not satisfied with the school's evaluation can request an IEE.

**Individual Education Program (IEP):** A written plan that details the specially designed instruction and related services that must be provided to each student who receives special education services. Parents and school personnel work together at the ARD meeting to write the IEP. It must be reviewed and revised every year.

**Initial Placement:** The initial educational setting or placement of a student needing special education services. An initial placement requires written consent by the parent.

**Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** The right to an education, to the maximum extent appropriate, in a setting with non-disabled peers, with access to the general curriculum.

**Limited English Proficiency (LEP):** Through the student's Home Language Survey and assessment, if it is determined that a student has limited proficiency in the English language.

**Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP):** A person certified to assess students to determine eligibility for special education services. They are qualified to administer intelligence, academic and psychological assessments used to formulate recommendations for academic and behavior instruction and provide counseling as a related service.

**Manifestation Determination Review (MDR):** A review of the relationship between a student's disability and behavior that is subject to disciplinary action.



**Modifications:** Modifications, unlike accommodations, change the level of instruction provided or tested. Modifications create a different standard for the student receiving them. The most common modifications are those made to the general education curriculum for a student with a cognitive disability. Curriculum modifications should be in the student's IEP.

**Occupational Therapy (OT):** A related service for students with physical, emotional, developmental or cognitive disabilities in the area of fine motor skills, developmental independence, or daily living skills needed for their education.

**Paraprofessional:** The term paraprofessional is assigned to a variety of campus support positions such as educational assistants, library assistants, office assistants and administrative assistants.

**Parent:** IDEA 2004 expands the definition of parent to include: natural, adoptive or foster parents; guardians (unless the child is a ward of the state); individuals acting in the place of natural or adoptive parents such as grandparents, stepparents, other relatives with whom the child lives; individuals responsible for the child's welfare; and assigned surrogates.

**Physical Therapy (PT):** A related service that serves students with physical disabilities or movement difficulties. The goal of physical therapy is to maximize physical independence and gross motor skills needed in the school setting.

**Positive Behavior Supports:** Activities and strategies that are positive in nature that support the student in learning appropriate behaviors.

**Referral Process:** A formal notification that a student is experiencing difficulties which may require screening and evaluation to determine if the student needs Special Education services.

**Response to Intervention (RTI):** a model addressing the needs of all students through a continuum of services which provide: (1) high-quality instruction and scientific, researched-based, tiered intervention strategies aligned with individual student need; (2) frequent monitoring of student progress to make results-based academic or behavioral decisions; (3) data-based school improvement; and (4) the application of student response data to important educational decisions (such as those regarding placement, intervention, curriculum, and instructional goals and methodologies).

**Section 504** (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973): Federal law that protects people with disabilities to assure that they are not discriminated against because of their disability.

**Speech and Language Pathology (SLP):** An instructional service for students who have a communication disorder which affects educational performance. Speech or Language Impairment services can begin at 3 years of age. Services include therapy to improve fluency, articulation, or language.

**State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR):** STAAR will be given to students in grades 3-8 and to students taking high school level End of Course (EOC) exams including English I, English II, Algebra I, Biology and U.S. History.

**Texas Education Agency (TEA):** The state agency ultimately responsible for making sure every student with a disability receives a free appropriate public education. State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) will be given to students in grades 3-8 and to students taking high school level courses in the four core subject areas of English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies.

**Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS):** The required curriculum for each grade level used in Texas public schools. TEKS should be considered the “general curriculum” referenced in IDEA.

**Transition:** The process and planning for a student moving from elementary school to junior high, junior high to high school, then high school to adult life.

**Vocational Education:** Training and instruction designed to prepare students to work in a certain trade or profession. The programs that the district provides are the Work Based Learning (special education setting) and the VOC (the general education setting).

## **Acronyms Commonly Used in Special Education**

**AIP** Accelerated Instruction Plan

**ABA** Applied Behavior Analysis

**ADA** American with Disabilities Act

**ADA** Average Daily Attendance

**ADHD** Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder

**AEIS** Academic Excellence Indicator System

**AEP** Alternate Education Programs

**AES** Alternative Education Settings (for disciplinary action)

**AGC** Access to the General Curriculum

**AI** Auditory Impaired

**APE** Adaptive Physical Education

**ARD** Admission / Review / Dismissal

**ASD** Autism Spectrum Disorder

**ASL** American Sign Language

**ASHA** American Speech, Language and Hearing Association

**AT** Assistive Technology

**AU** Autism BIP Behavior Intervention Plan

**BIP** Behavior Intervention Plan

**CA** Chronological Age

**CBI** Community Based Instruction

**CBVI** Community Based Vocational Instruction

**CF** Code of Federal Regulations

**CHIP** Children’s Health Insurance Program

**CPI** Crisis Prevention Intervention

**CTE** Career and Technical Education

**DAEP** Disciplinary Alternative Educational Program

**DB** Deaf Blind DOE Department of Education

**DSM** Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

**ECI** Early Childhood Intervention

**ECSE** Early Childhood Special Education

**ED** Emotionally Disturbed

**ELL** English Language Learners

**EOC** End-of-Course Examinations

**ESEA** Elementary and Secondary Education Act

**ESC** Education Service Center ESL English as a Second Language

**ESY** Extended School Year

**FAPE** Free and Appropriate Public Education

**FBA** Functional Behavior Assessment

**FERPA** Family Education Rights and Privacy Act

**FIE** Full and Individual Evaluation

**FVE** Functional Vision Evaluation

**HB** Homebound HLS Home Language Survey

**IDEA** Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

**ID** Intellectual Disability

**IEE** Independent Educational Evaluation

**IEP** Individualized Education Program

**IFSP** Individual Family Service Plan

**ISS** In-School Suspension

**ITP** Individual Transition Plan (retired phrase)

**IQ** Intelligence Quotient

**JJAEP** Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program

**LD** Learning Disability

**LEA** Local Education Agency

**LEP** Limited English Proficiency

**LPAC** Language Proficiency Assessment Committee

**LRE** Least Restrictive Environment

**LSSP** Licensed Specialist in School Psychology

**MD** Multiple Disabilities MI Multiple Impairments

**NCEC** Non-Categorical Early Childhood NOS Not Otherwise Specified

**OAC** Opportunity Awareness Center

**OCD** Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

**OCR** Office of Civil Rights (US Department of Education)

**ODD** Oppositional Defiant Disorder

**OHI** Other Health Impairment

**OI** Orthopedic Impairment

**O&M** Orientation and Mobility

**OSEP** Office of Special Education Programs

**OT** Occupational Therapy

**PASS** Positive Approach to Student Success

**PBIS** Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

**PBMAS** Performance Based Monitoring Analysis System

**PEIMS** Public Education Information Management System

**PLAAFP** Present Level of Academic Achievement & Functional Performance

**PT** Physical Therapy

**RDSPD** Regional Day School Program for the Deaf

**REED** Review of Existing Evaluation Data

**RPTE** Reading Proficiency Tests in English

**RTI** Response to Intervention

**SC** Self-Contained

**SI** Speech Impairment

**SLD** Specific Learning Disability

**SLP** Speech Language Pathologist

**SSI** Student Success Initiative

**STAAR** State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness

**TAC** Texas Administrative Code

**TBI** Traumatic Brain Injury

**TCB** Texas Commission for the Blind

**TEA** Texas Education Agency

**TEC** Texas Education Code

**TEKS** Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

**TSBVI** Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

**TSD** Texas School for the Deaf

**VI** Visual Impairment

**WBL** Work Based Learning

This list is not a fully exclusive list.

## **Eligibility Categories for Special Education under IDEA**

If the full and individual evaluation shows that a student meets one or more of the following, an ARD committee will meet to determine if he / she is eligible to receive special education services under IDEA.

- **Autism (AU):** a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotypical movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.
- **Deaf-Blindness (D-B):** visual and hearing impairments that occur or exist concurrently, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.
- **Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH):** includes deafness which means a hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification that adversely affects a child's educational performance. This category also includes an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating and that affects the student's educational performance but who is not included under the definition of deafness.
- **Emotional Disturbance (ED):** A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors; an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.
- **Intellectual Disability (ID):** A student with an intellectual disability exhibits significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behaviors that manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects the student's educational performance. In Texas, a student with an intellectual disability is one who is functioning at two or more standard deviations below the mean on individually administered scales of verbal ability and either performance or nonverbal ability and who concurrently exhibits deficits in adaptive behavior.
- **Multiple Disabilities (MD):** concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability and visual impairment, intellectual disability and orthopedic impairment, etc.) the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education

programs solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include students who have deaf-blindness.

**Orthopedic Impairment (OI):** a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes impairments due to the effects of congenital anomaly (e.g., clubfoot, absence of some member, etc.), impairments due to the effects of disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis, etc.), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).

- **Other Health Impairment (OHI):** A student with other health impairment exhibits limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever or sickle cell anemia and that adversely affects the student's educational performance.

- **Specific Learning Disability (SLD):** The term "specific learning disability" means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia. A student with SLD exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance and achievement relative to age, grade-level standards as indicated by significant variance among specific cognitive function.

- **Speech Impairment (SI):** a communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment that adversely affects the student's educational performance.

- **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI):** an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment or both that adversely affects the student's educational performance. The term includes open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem-solving, sensory, perceptual and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, and speech. The term does not include brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

- **Visual Impairment (VI):** an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects the student's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

- **Non-Categorical Early Childhood (NCEC):** for students ages 3 – 5 who may have an intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, a learning disability or autism. The child must be re-evaluated before their sixth (6th) birthday to determine eligibility under the previous categories

## **Steps in the Special Education Process – An Overview**

**Step 1: Referral:** Is the student suspected of having a disability and is suspected that specially designed instruction is required to address said disability? If so, a parent, legal guardian, teacher, or other professional involved in the care or education of the student may refer the student to special education. The school will gather information to decide if the student should be evaluated (tested) for special education eligibility.

**Step 2: Notice of Rights and Consent:** During the referral process, and at other significant decision-making steps after the referral, the district must send you written information (called “notice”) telling you about the actions the school wants to take (or is refusing to take) regarding your child’s education and about your rights.

If the school does not think your child needs to be evaluated for special education, they must give you notice that tells you why they made that decision and what you can do if you disagree. If the school does want to evaluate your child, they must give you written notice of your rights and get your written consent. The evaluation process will not begin until you have consented in writing. If you do not consent to testing, the district may ask for a due process hearing and ask a hearing officer to allow them to evaluate your child without your consent.

**Step 3: Full and Individual Evaluation:** If the referral process indicates that a student has a suspected disability may need special education and related services, the school must, after obtaining the parent’s consent, do a full and individual initial evaluation to determine if the student has a disability and needs special education services. The school must complete the evaluation process within 45 school days from the date the school receives written consent for testing signed by the parent or legal guardian.

When the evaluation is completed, the school will contact you to schedule an ARD meeting. This meeting should be held within 30 calendar days of the completion of the evaluation. Current rules say that the school must give you written notice of the meeting at least five (5) school days before the ARD meeting so you can prepare. At the first ARD meeting after the evaluation, the team will decide whether your child is eligible to receive special education services. You must be a part of that decision. If the student is found eligible, the ARD committee will propose a plan to assist the student in making progress toward the curriculum.

**Step 4: The ARD Meeting:** The Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee meets at least once a year to develop your child’s IEP (Individualized Education Program). You, the parent, are an important member of your child’s ARD committee. The ARD committee must include a parent, the student (if appropriate), and an assessment representative (if evaluation results are being



discussed), a campus administrator (Principal or Assistant Principal), a special education teacher or representative, and a general education teacher. Other required support personnel that provide services to your child (speech pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, etc...) may also be a part of the ARD committee. An annual ARD will be scheduled each year to review your child's progress, placement, and proposed services, and IEP for the coming year.

**Step 5: The IEP:** The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written plan designed specifically for your child. It is an agreement between the school and parents on how the student will be educated. The IEP must be reviewed at least annually. The most important function of the ARD committee is the development of the IEP. Your participation and input is important. As the parent, you may have additional information to share with the committee.

Note: There are eleven additional considerations for students with Autism. The ARD committee must consider Extended Year Service, Daily Schedules Reflecting Minimal Unstructured Time, In-Home Training or Viable Alternative, Positive Behavior Support Strategies, Futures Planning, Communication Interventions, Social Skills Supports and Strategies, Professional Educator / Staff Support, Teaching Strategies, Parent Training, and Suitable Staff to Student Ratio.

#### **Step 6: After the ARD Meeting**

- Make sure you have a copy of the ARD document.
- It is important to keep in contact with your child's teachers. Find out the best way to communicate with the teacher (email, notebook, phone calls, etc...)
- Read all progress reports and other notes sent home during the school year.
- Schedule parent-teacher conferences as needed.
- Request additional ARD meetings, if needed.

### **Explanation of Procedural Safeguards**

When your child has been referred for testing, you will receive a document that explains your rights regarding your child's education. This document is called "Notice Procedural of Safeguards": Rights of Parents of students with Disabilities" and they will be given to you whenever the following happens:

- Upon the initial referral to special education or your request for evaluation
- One time a year
- When a decision is made to take disciplinary action that constitutes a change of placement
- Upon receipt of the first due process hearing complaint in a school year
- Upon your request.

## **The ARD Process Example:**

Use the following ideas and suggestions to help you better plan for and participate in the IEP process and ARD meetings for your child.

### **Opening remarks and introductions**

- Remember you are a member of the ARD committee. Make sure you know everyone at the meeting and why they are there. Introduce any friend, relative or advocate you have brought. It is appropriate to notify the school before the meeting if you plan to bring anyone other than your spouse.
- Read the agenda and add any items you want to discuss.

### **Reviewing Present Level of Educational Performance**

- Share your ideas about your child's progress; show pictures or other documentation about what he/she can do outside of school, including assistive technology solutions that are helpful. Remind the team you want your child's program to help the child use and build on his/her strengths and abilities.
- Share any reports you have from outside therapists, tutors, consultants or doctors.
- Make sure you understand whether your child has made progress on IEP objectives as a result of the services received.
- Ask questions if something is not clear. At this point, you should have a clear picture in your mind about how your child is doing.
- If your student attends the meeting, this is a good time for them to share their likes, dislikes, hopes and dreams. Their portfolio may also be presented at this time.

### **Developing Measurable Annual Goals and Short-term Objectives or Benchmarks**

- Talk about what you want for your child when he/she leaves school. Make sure the goals and objectives you include will lead to the outcomes you want for him/her as an adult.
- Ask what students without disabilities his/her age will learn and how he/she might also learn that information.
- The school will develop a draft of goals and objectives prior to the meeting. This is a working draft. You and the school will work together to finalize goals and objectives. Talk about all the goals and objectives/benchmarks suggested by you and school staff. Working collaboratively, the ARD committee decides which ones should be included, keeping in mind the long-term outcomes for your child.

- As you review the draft of the goals and objectives/benchmarks, remember that the IEP must be designed to meet your child’s educational needs and that you and the school staff make up the ARD committee. The ARD committee’s responsibility is to revise, add or delete goals your child should achieve in the coming year and the benchmarks toward achieving those goals.
- Ask questions if you do not understand how your child’s progress will be measured or what services he/she will receive during the school day or who will provide the services.
- Be as specific as possible when developing the goals.

### **Deciding on Related Services**

Discuss all supports, modifications or accommodations your child needs to reach his/ her IEP goals and be involved in and progress in the general curriculum.

Examples include but are not limited to

- specific learning and teaching strategies,
- adapted expectations, curriculum or materials,
- help from a paraprofessional aide, or other related services provided in the typical classroom,
- adaptive equipment, and/or
- assistive technology devices (“low tech” or “high-tech”).

Ask questions like

- What is needed to implement the IEP in general education classes?
- What would the student’s daily schedule look?
- Who will provide support, adaptations or modifications? Or
- When would the student and/or teacher need these supports?

If necessary, remind committee members that your child cannot be excluded from general education classrooms for the lack of

- related services,
- special equipment,
- modifications to the general education,
- more intensive services (smaller student / teacher ratio),
- support staff, and
- conveniences such as transportation, sufficient space and building/classroom accessibility.

### **Coming to Mutual Agreement**

- If all are in agreement with the IEP and the recommended placement, sign and indicate your agreement, then congratulate the team on a job well done!

- If you disagree with any required elements of the IEP, the school must offer you a recess of no more than 10 school days. You and other ARD members must agree on a time, date and place for the next meeting.
- During the recess, you may gather more information, think of new options, work on documentation or get other people involved.

Keep in mind that if you are not in agreement with the student's IEP or placement after the recess, the school can implement the IEP unless you file for a due process hearing within 5 days following the ARD.

### **Closing the Meeting**

Tell the ARD committee the ways you will be a supportive member of your team. You can provide support to your team by

- saying you want to be involved and are willing to help,
- giving positive feedback to teachers and administrators about things that work well for your child,
- becoming involved and visible by volunteering in the classroom, library, or other school programs; attending school functions; joining the P.T.A. and participating in site-based management teams and meetings and special events, or
- communicating regularly with teachers throughout the year (notebooks, phone calls, meetings) and/or sharing articles and other resources of interests. Ask your child's teachers the best way to communicate with them (email, notes, phone calls, etc.).

### **Procedural Safeguards explain the following information:**

- All information has to be in your native language or an interpreter must be available to help you understand the information.
- In order to evaluate your child, the school must have written consent for the assessment. The consent can be revoked at any time.
- Any time action is taken that would impact a child's education, the child is being evaluated for special education or the program changes, prior written notice has to be given. The school must provide information on what evaluation procedures will be followed and you will be given a contact person's name, phone number and address to contact with any questions about this process.
- During the evaluation time, a collection of information about your child's special learning needs, strengths and interests will occur. The evaluator will ensure that there is no bias to race, culture or native language. As a parent, you will receive a copy of the completed evaluation report.
- A parent is one of several members of the ARD committee. As a parent, you are to have a written notice of an ARD five (5) school days prior to the meeting. You can waive the five (5) school

days if you would like to have the ARD sooner. If you cannot attend the ARD, you can request a phone ARD or have the committee proceed without you and mail home the results of the meeting.

## **Resources**

[Autism Training Online Courses](#)

[Autism Training Video Library](#)

[National Autism Association Safety Box](#)

[The ARC Autism Now](#)

[Behavior at Home](#)

[Behavior Problems: Discipline That Works](#)

[Parent Training and Information](#)

[Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports for Families](#)

[Parenting a Child who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#)

<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/specific-disabilities/>

[Texas Parent to Parent](#)

[Texas Project First \(English\)](#)

[Texas Project First \(Spanish\)](#)

The Legal Framework <http://framework.esc18.net/display/Webforms/ESC18-FW-LandingPage.aspx>