

There are times when a school must explain, in writing, their decisions about a child's education and the reasons for making those decisions. This written communication is called **prior written notice**. Parents have the right to receive prior written notice (PWN) whenever the school wants to (or refuses to):

- evaluate their child,
- change their child's disability identification,
- change their child's educational placement, or
- change the way in which their child is provided a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

The school should provide parents with prior written notice in any of these events. Sometimes, however, schools tell families decisions over the phone, in a meeting, or in a conversation. If parents want the notice in writing, they should ask the school for it. It is best to put the request in writing (and keep a copy for their records).

Below is an example letter for parents requesting written notice. The most important parts of the letter will be the blanks filled in with details from the parents! Parents are welcome to use part or all of the sample letter below.

Date (month, day and year)

Your name, address and daytime telephone number

Dear (Person's name)

At our meeting (or) during our conversation on (date), we discussed my child's (evaluation, eligibility, placement, IEP, services, etc.). I requested (_____). . . and was denied (or) I was told the school intends to (_____). . . but I have not received any information about this decision in writing. In line with the IDEA regulations, I am requesting prior written notice regarding (be specific about what you want the school to explain or answer.)

According to the IDEA, at 34 CRF §300.503, prior written notice must include all of the following:

- A description of what the school is proposing or refusing to do;
- An explanation of why the school proposes or refuses this action;
- A description of any other options the school considered and the reasons why those options were rejected;
- A description of each evaluation procedure, test, record, or report the school used as a basis for this decision;
- A description of any other relevant factors that went into this decision;
- Information on how I can obtain a copy of procedural safeguards and an explanation available to me, and
- Information on sources I can contact for help in understanding IDEA's regulations.

I look forward to receiving a detailed response to my request as soon as possible. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely, Your name

Letter writing tips for parents:

There are times when you, as a parent, may want to communicate in writing with your child's school about a problem or concern with your child's education or well-being. Each letter should include the following basic information:

- The date (month, day and year) on your letter.
- Your child's full name and the name of your child's main teacher.
- Describe what you want, rather than what you don't want. Keep it simple.
- Your address and a daytime phone number where you can be reached.
- Keep in mind this person may not know you, your child, or your child's situation. Be clear and include facts.
- Give the facts without letting anger, frustration, blame or other negative emotions creep in.
- After you write your first draft, put the letter aside for a while and look at it again to revise it with fresh eyes.
- Have someone else read your letter. Is your reason for writing clear? Can the reader tell what you are asking for? Would the reader say "yes" if he or she received this letter? Can your letter be improved?
- Use spell and grammar check on the computer.
- Always end your letter with a "thank you".
- **Keep a copy for your records!**

ASK Essential Questions

Ask yourself the following questions and state the answers in your letter:

- Why am I writing?
- What are my specific concerns?
- What are my questions?
- What would I like the person to do about this situation?
- What sort of response do I want: a letter, a meeting, a phone call, or something else?

Related Resources at askresource.org/resources

Prior Written Notice

Additional Resources:

<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/notice/>