

**Whether your request for your child's Special Education Evaluation is granted or not, there are some important next steps to know about...**



The Disability Suspected Form process discussed in Part 1 is *JUST THE FIRST STEP* in securing a relevant and useful evaluation. There are important next steps to take regardless of whether there is agreement that an evaluation is needed.

## Understanding the Evaluation Process, Part 2

IF THE ANSWER TO THE "WILL YOU EVALUATE?" QUESTION IS "YES", make sure you receive, sign, and return any consent forms promptly. Then, you can expect that the evaluation will take place within 60 days of the date you put the signed consent back in the hands of the educators. Make it clear you want to be involved. The next page describes tips for meaningful parental involvement in the evaluation process.

IF THE ANSWER TO THE "WILL YOU EVALUATE" QUESTION IS "NO", make sure you receive your Prior Written Notice (PWN). The notice, which is usually written on a one-page form, should include: an explanation of why the school and AEA refuses to conduct an evaluation; a description of any options the school and AEA considered and the reasons why those options were rejected; a description of each intervention procedure, assessment, record, or report the school and AEA is using as a basis to refuse the parents' request for evaluation; and a description of any other factors relevant to the school and AEA's refusal.

Follow-up to be sure you receive your PWN within 10 days. Most schools and AEAs are well prepared and provide one immediately when asked. If yours doesn't, you may want to follow-up in writing to request it on paper and give a deadline (10 days from date of receiving the decision verbally) in which you wish to have it in hand. Once you have the PWN, review it thoroughly to determine if you believe the educators have offered a good reason for denying an evaluation.

What is most important at this point is that you understand, trust and agree with the answer about the need or lack of need for an evaluation. If you don't agree or understand, keep asking questions and talking about your concerns *objectively* until you feel comfortable with the next steps that will be taken. If you just can't reach an agreement, this might be a good time to call ASK Resource Center or your local Parent Education Connection. Through us, you can talk to a professional who is also a family member that has "been there, done that", and can help you understand what is happening and help you sort through the next questions you might want to ask or the steps you might want to take. The Procedural Safeguards Manual for Parents outlines your rights if you continue to disagree. We can help you understand how to take those steps, and provide emotional support and guidance if you need to do so.

# Parental Involvement in the Evaluation Process



Understanding IDEA and Special Education terminology, and relating your child's needs to educators using those terms will help you communicate in ways that will help them best understand you.

## Definition of an Educational Disability

According to the Special Education Eligibility Standards adopted by the Iowa Department of Education in July, 2006, "Disability" for purposes of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) is referred to as an "educational disability". An educational disability requiring the services of Special Education is "a skills deficit, a health or physical condition, a functional limitation, or a pattern of behavior that adversely affects educational performance. An educational disability 1) results in educational performance that is significantly and consistently different, diminished, or inappropriate when compared to the expectations for peer and 2) significantly interferes with a) access to general education settings and opportunities, b) developmental progress, c) involvement and progress in the general curriculum, or d) interpersonal relationships or personal adjustment."

Keep in mind that if your request for an evaluation is granted, you also have a right to meet with the other members of a team knowledgeable about your child to decide together exactly what data should be gathered in the course of the evaluation to determine if your child qualifies for special education or other support services. If you have outside data you believe should be considered, such as a private evaluation, share that information with the team as well.

## Initial Evaluation — Basic Tips

- 1) The 60-day timeline begins when you sign the AEA's Disability Suspected Form and consent for evaluation, and returned it to the school. You DO NOT have to sign it the day you receive it. Take it home and take time to review it and ask any questions first.
- 2) The consent for evaluation form includes some boxes for the "performance domains" or areas that will be covered by the evaluation. Know what is covered under each domain, and be sure that all boxes representing areas of concern are checked. AEA 267 provides the following explanations for each box:

Academic – Grade level achievement of standards related to listening comprehension, oral expression, basic reading skills, reading comprehension, math calculation, math problem solving and written expression

Behavior – Awareness of self, identification and expression of emotions, self-regulation and interaction of others

Physical – Gross motor skills, fine motor skills, and mobility for learning, living and working

Health – General condition of the body or mind, especially in terms of the presence or absence of illness, injury or impairment

Hearing/Vision – The ability to perceive sound and/or the ability to see

Communication – Receptive and expressive language (form, content or use), including but not limited to, language (social communication), vocabulary, speech sound production, voice (nasality) and fluency

Adaptive Behavior – Every day living skills, work skills or school functioning skills that an individual learns in the process of adapting to his/her environment (i.e. organizational skills or "executive functioning").

A meeting should be scheduled before the end of the 60 day timeline to go through the results of the evaluation and determine eligibility for special education services. At least two days before the meeting, parents should request a copy of the Educational Evaluation Report (EER), which summarizes all of the data that was collected. This way, parents have a chance to review the information and think of questions or decide whether or not they agree with the information. Parents do have a right to ask questions and work through this ahead of time. The School Psychologist will often help with this.



## Evaluations for Infants and Young Children

If you are concerned about the development of a child who is not yet school aged, and suspect he/she has a disability, there are support services allowed for inside IDEA called *Early Intervention*. *Early Intervention* is a system of services for young children between birth and age three that helps babies and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities learn skills that typically develop during the first three years of life.



In Iowa, *Early ACCESS* is the name of the program responsible for providing these services. *Early ACCESS* is a partnership between families with young children (ages 0-3) and providers from the Department of Education, Public Health, Human Services, and Child Health Specialty Clinics. This program is for families and staff to work together in identifying, coordinating and providing services and resources that will help the family assist in their child's growth and development.

A child under the age of three who has a disability, health condition or who is experiencing a delay of 25% or more in one or more areas of growth and development is eligible for these services. There is no cost to families for service coordination activities; evaluation activities to determine eligibility; identifying concerns and needs; determining priorities and resources of the family; or for the development of the *Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP)* if the child is eligible. Some ongoing services may have costs or sliding fees, but those will be determined on an individual family basis.

If you have questions or concerns regarding a specific child please call-toll-free: 1-888-425-4371 or visit the website: <http://www.EarlyACCESSIowa.org>

## A Parent's Perspective

My 2<sup>nd</sup> child was born with congenital defects. To cope, I attend a support group meeting offered by Early ACCESS. They offered workshops with information regarding our rights and responsibilities as families with children with disabilities. As soon as I realized that my 3rd born was not reaching her toddler milestones, her verbal skills were regressing and she seemed to show sign of being deaf, I expressed my concerns to her pediatrician. Her pediatrician suggested that I continue to wait, and allow her time to grow.

Fortunately, my experienced taught me that waiting could affect learning opportunities. Thanks to the information provided to me through these meetings, I knew that I could contact Early ACCESS as a parent who suspected my child was showing signs of development delay and request an evaluation or screening. At my next pediatric appointment, I mentioned to the pediatrician that I went ahead and set up my appointment with Early ACCESS to have a screening done.

My taking that first step is what prompted the pediatrician to make the necessary referral that my daughter required in order for a specialist to evaluate her as well. This referral accelerated the full evaluation process my daughter needed in order to identify her disability. When we wrote her first IFSP (Individual Family Support Plan) her needs were addressed, and proper services were provided as a result of a good evaluation.



<http://www.earlyaccessiowa.org/>

## Revisiting Re-evaluations



All parents know that as children learn, grow, and develop, their needs change. For students with IEPs, those changing needs have to be recognized and reflected in the educational planning process. That means periodical re-evaluations for special education services are necessary to determine if a student continues to be an eligible child with a disability as defined by IDEA (the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and, if so, to help gather the most current information about the student's needs and abilities to be used for the development of an appropriate IEP.

As you advocate for your child's changing special education needs, knowing the answers to some of the frequently asked questions about re-evaluations will give you a clearer understanding of how the re-evaluation process works and the role you play in initiating a reevaluation and determining what information it should provide.

For a list of Frequently asked questions, and their answers about Re-evaluations, click on the re-evaluation document link in the "Tips and Tools" section below.

## Tips & Tools

Clearly, evaluation processes for Special Education and Early Childhood are very complex. We have a few Access Info Sheets to help you remember the basics, just click to view:

1. [What Every Parent Should Know About IDEA Evaluations](#)
2. [Requesting an Initial Evaluation for Special Education Eligibility](#)
3. [Revisiting Re-Evals: Answers to FAQs about the IDEA Reevaluation Process](#)



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