

FAQ: (adapted from Oakland schools)

1. What do parents do when they suspect their child has a disability?

When parents suspect that their child has a disability, it may be helpful to contact the student's teacher to review their concerns and learn what resources the district has to support the student's learning. Revised 10/5/11 Oakland School buildings often have in place "child study teams" or "student assistance teams." The teacher presents the student's learning and/or behavior concerns to the building team for suggestions on strategies and interventions.

If those interventions are not successful and the student's learning and/or behavior are significantly different from same-aged peers, the parents or the teacher may make a referral for an evaluation to determine eligibility for Special Education services.

A parent starts the referral process by making a written request to the school administrator and Special Education staff asking that their child be evaluated for Special Education services due to specific concerns.

Within ten (10) school days of receiving the written request, the district will contact the parent to review their concerns, make a plan for an evaluation and request their consent to evaluate their child.

2. Are grades a factor in considering eligibility for Special Education services? What else is considered?

Yes. In all cases, the student's ability and achievement level are considered. The IEP Team would consider grades as one of many sources when conducting a data review. In order to be eligible for Special Education services, the evaluation would need to show evidence of the suspected disability being an educational handicapping condition that requires specialized instruction beyond what could reasonably be delivered through general education. The IEP Team would determine that the suspected disability adversely affected the student's educational performance and was not due to lack of appropriate instruction or limited English proficiency.

Michigan has thirteen areas of eligibility for Special Education services (e.g., speech & language impaired, specific learning disability, emotional impairment, cognitive impairment) and each has some factors for consideration specifically related to the type of suspected disability. The federal regulations require each district to draw upon information from a variety of sources, including aptitude and achievement tests, parent input, teacher recommendations, as well as information regarding a child's physical condition, social or cultural background, and adaptive behavior. Grades are a factor; however, grades are only one factor among many others under consideration by the IEP Team.

3. Can a school district determine a child is not eligible for Special Education services when the child has been diagnosed with a disability by a doctor or other professional?

Yes. A doctor (e.g., family physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or neurologist) can make a diagnosis identifying a medical condition that is not an educational handicapping condition. For example, the medical condition may be managed without school intervention and does not substantially interfere with the student's ability to be successful in school.

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Examples:

a. A doctor may diagnose Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); however, the diagnosis by itself is insufficient for meeting the criteria for Special Education services under Otherwise Health Impaired (OHI).

b. A student may have juvenile diabetes; however, the medical condition is managed through medication and diet with school intervention. Also, the medical condition does not interfere with the student's ability to be successful in school.

c. A student may have been diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) by a physician; however, the student is achieving with the expected range for his age, is participating in extracurricular activities, is completing schoolwork and passing tests.

The student has a mild issue with maintaining a preferred order in his school locker and work

Areas in classrooms, specific food preferences for lunch and some insistence in following Routines and procedures. The student is engaging in conversation with peers and adults and is

Well known to the student body for his knowledge of sports facts.

The student has been provided accommodations in general education classes that meet his Needs and does not require Special Education. In this case, the student has a medical Diagnosis; however the student does not have an educational handicapping condition.

4. How does a district determine educational placement?

Educational placement is made based on considering the least restrictive environment for the student. Identifying the least restrictive environment is made based on the student's needs and occurs through discussion of the IEP Team. Factors that contribute to an educational placement decision include the parent/family input, academic developmental and functional needs of the student.

Placement is a need-based decision. For example, a student with an eligibility of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may have their educational needs met in a variety of settings such as, general education classroom, resource room or classroom for students with ASD. The needs of the student determine the educational setting.

5. What is the Present Level Statement and why is it important?

The Present Level Statement is short for the formal term Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP). This is the section of the IEP where the student's needs are identified. The Team then works to meet those needs through goals and objectives, supplementary aids and services, programs and services, or transition services and activities. Revised 10/5/11 Oakland Schools

A PLAAFP includes 4 components:

1. Identified area(s) of need (e.g., math calculation, reading fluency, self-care, behavior, speech articulation)
2. Baseline data

3. Narrative summary of the baseline data in understandable terms
4. Description of the disability' s impact on the student' s involvement and progress in the general education curriculum.

6. What is a 504 Plan?

“504 plan” refers to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act which specifies that no one with a disability can be excluded from participating in federally funded programs or activities including elementary, secondary or postsecondary schooling.