

Independent Educational Evaluation

An independent educational evaluation (IEE) is an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not an employee of New Hanover County Schools (NHCS). A parent is eligible to receive an IEE at public expense if the parent disagrees with the Formal Evaluation the school district conducted or obtained for the child. For purposes of this procedure, "Formal Evaluation" means the procedures used to determine whether a child has a disability and the nature and extent of the special education and related services the child needs. "Public expense" means the school district either pays for the full cost of the evaluation or ensures the evaluation is otherwise provided at no cost to the parent.

A NHCS Formal Evaluation must be complete before a parent may obtain an IEE at public expense. The NHCS Formal Evaluation is complete when the parent is provided with a proper notice of evaluation findings, as required by law. In addition, all IEE's must meet the NHCS criteria for Formal Evaluations, which is the criteria NHCS uses when it conducts its own Formal Evaluations. Finally, parents may only request one publicly funded IEE for each Formal Evaluation the district conducts or obtains.

If NHCS receives a parent request for an IEE, NHCS may pay for the IEE. If NHCS does not pay for the IEE, NHCS will initiate a due process hearing without unnecessary delay and a hearing officer will decide who is responsible for the IEE costs under relevant state and federal law. Consistent with the parent's right to an IEE, the district may also propose mediation. The parents will be responsible for IEE costs if the hearing officer finds that:

1. the NHCS's evaluation was appropriate; and/or
2. the IEE fails to meet NHCS criteria for Formal Evaluations and no unique circumstances justify deviation from that criteria.

A. Procedure to request an IEE at public expense

1. Parent must submit a written request for an IEE to the NHCS Executive Director of Special Education and Related Services, and may include an explanation of the reasons they object to the Formal Evaluation NHCS conducted or obtained for the child. NHCS, however, will not deny parents a publicly funded IEE solely because they do not provide reasons for requesting an IEE.
2. If a parent requests an IEE, NHCS will provide the parent with the following information:
 - a. A list of the names and addresses of IEE examiners located in the New Hanover County area. The list will consist of IEE examiners who, in the judgment of NHCS, are qualified to perform the IEE. If a qualified examiner is not located in the area, NHCS will identify a qualified examiner located elsewhere.
 - b. A copy of the district's criteria for special education evaluations, including criteria regarding evaluator qualifications and costs.
3. When NHCS pays for the IEE, written approval for payment must be secured prior to conducting the IEE, in accordance with state procurement requirements.

B. Evaluation plan (OPTIONAL)

If a parent notifies NHCS before obtaining an IEE, the NHCS Executive Director of Special Education and Related Services may recommend the parent and NHCS develop an evaluation design. The purpose of evaluation designs is to encourage genuinely independent, unbiased IEE's that are valuable to both the parent and district staff members of the IEP team. NHCS, however, will not deny a publicly funded IEE because a parent refuses to participate in this process.

If a parent agrees to participation in this process, the parent will work with the other members of a child's IEP team to develop an evaluation design. An evaluation design may identify the scope of the evaluation and the evaluator, and help to ensure the IEE will comply with district criteria for special education evaluations. In some cases, the district will contact the evaluator directly to arrange for the IEE on the parent's behalf. For more information, parents may contact NHCS's Director of Special Education and Related Services at 254-4445.

Evaluation Criteria for NHCS Formal Evaluations and IEE

State and federal law requires the New Hanover County Schools to evaluate children with disabilities who are in need of special education and related services. The district conducts a Formal Evaluation when there is suspicion that a student may have a disability that requires specifically designed instruction, and reevaluates children with disabilities at least once every three years or when conditions warrant a reevaluation.

NHCS is committed to ensuring each child's IEP team bases its decisions on high quality, reliable and educationally sound information. As a result, NHCS has established the following list of criteria for all Formal Evaluations the district conducts or obtains. Unique circumstances may justify deviation from these criteria. If a parent or NHCS staff member is aware of such unique circumstances, they should inform the Problem Solving Team leader at the school immediately.

1. The evaluator must hold a valid license from the state of North Carolina in the field related to the known or suspected disability. The evaluator must have extensive training and experience in evaluation of the area(s) of concern and be able to interpret instructional implications of the evaluation results. In instances where no "applicable license" exists, NHCS must be satisfied that the evaluator has extensive training and experience related to the known or suspected disability.
2. The evaluator must be located within 30 miles of New Hanover County.
3. The evaluator must be permitted to directly communicate and share information with members of the IEP team and the NHCS Executive Director of Special Education and Related Services or designee. The evaluator must also release the assessments and results, including any parent and teacher surveys, to the members of the IEP team and the NHCS Executive Director of Special Education and Related Services or designee.
4. Unless otherwise determined by the members of a child's IEP team, the evaluator must observe the child in one or more educational settings. The evaluator shall make at least one contact with the child's general education teacher for the purpose of determining how the student is progressing in the general curriculum. In addition, evaluators are

encouraged to make additional contacts with other involved general or special education teachers, and related service providers.

5. Absent unique circumstances, evaluations may not exceed the NHCS's maximum allowable costs. A schedule of maximum allowable costs for particular evaluations follows. If a parent requests unreasonable reimbursement of travel costs or other related costs in connection with any evaluation, the district will suggest mediation and/or initiate a due process hearing. The district will not pay unreasonable travel costs unless a hearing officer, applying state and federal law, orders NHCS to do so.
6. The evaluation must comply with any and all relevant provisions of the [Policies Governing Services for Students with Disabilities](#).
7. Maximum Allowable Cost Schedule:

	<u>RATE</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
a. Psychologist	\$ 200/hr.	12 hrs.
b. Speech-Language Pathologist	\$ 65/hr.	10 hrs.
c. Occupational Therapist	\$ 60/hr.	10 hrs.
d. Physical Therapist	\$ 60/hr.	10 hrs.
e. Other	\$ 60/hr.	10 hrs.
f. Travel	\$0.58/mi.	60 miles