

## **An Informative Guide to the Role of Parents/Guardians in the CST Evaluation Process**

What is a CST? A Child Study Team (CST) is a team of professionals designed to evaluate children for special education services. The basic CST consists of a school psychologist, a learning disabilities/teacher-consultant, school social worker, and (for preschool students) a speech-language specialist.

What can I expect at the Initial Intake Meeting? Within twenty (20) calendar days of receipt of the written parent referral, the CST will schedule an initial intake meeting. The meeting should consist of the parents/guardians, as well as the entire CST. The purpose of this meeting is for you to meet the team and allow them to become familiar with your child. The CST will decide whether or not an evaluation of your child is necessary. Parental consent for the evaluation must be received before testing begins; it may be given that same day. Please feel free to ask the team questions as your understanding of the process will enable you to be more informed.

Can you give me an overview of the Evaluation Process? If an evaluation is warranted after the intake meeting, the CST has 90 days to complete their assessments and hold the eligibility meeting. An evaluation may consist of the following components: psychological evaluation by the school psychologist, evaluation of learning strengths and needs by the learning consultant, speech and language evaluation by a speech pathologist, and a social history assessment with the parent/guardian(s) by the school social worker. The results of this testing will be documented and you will receive a copy of this report before the final meeting. Within 90 days, the eligibility meeting will be held to discuss results of the testing and determine your child's eligibility for services. If your child is determined eligible, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be developed. Parent/guardian consent to the IEP must be given before services can begin.

What services are available for my preschooler if found eligible? A full continuum of services shall be made available to meet the needs of the identified preschool student ranging from integrated general education programs to a special class, depending on the individual needs of the child. If determined necessary, related services may be included in your child's IEP. Some children are also eligible for extended school year services.

What is the role of the parent/guardian in the evaluation process? You know your child better than anyone; therefore, your role as parents/guardians is to provide the CST with as much information about the social, emotional, language, and cognitive development as possible. The CST will need your assistance in making sure they have the most comprehensive picture of your child so the appropriate level of support may be given. Becoming an advocate for your child is the best way to play a valuable role in the

evaluation process. If your child is determined eligible for services and you wish to proceed with implementing the IEP, you will need to register your child with the school district. When registering your child, which is required before they begin preschool, the following information will be needed: child's birth certificate, immunization records, and two (2) proofs of residency (any residency questions should be directed to the assistant superintendent for business).

- **Case Manager** A school district employee who coordinates meetings with you and appropriate school staff members. The case manager also serves as your contact when you have questions regarding your child's special education program and services.
- **Child Study Team Evaluation** A way of collecting information about your child's special learning needs, strengths, and interests. An evaluation is used to help make decisions about whether your child is eligible for special education. The evaluation will include administering individual tests, observing your child, a review of records, talking with you and your child. The evaluation may include the following: an educational assessment, health appraisal, psychological assessment, social assessment, a speech/language assessment, and any other pertinent medical evaluations.
- **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** This is a written plan that details what the child will be taught and documents what will actually be provided to the child through special education and related services.
- **Preschool Disabled** Children ages three to five, with an identified disabling condition and/or measurable developmental impairment, who require and would benefit from special education and related services.
- **Related Services** which children with educational disabilities require to benefit from their educational programs. Related services include the following: counseling the child, counseling or training the parents about the educational needs of their child, speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, transportation or recreation, as well as other appropriate services which the child needs to benefit from an education as required by their IEP.
- **Special Education** Instruction and needed related services modified or designed, at no cost to parents/guardians, to meet individual needs of a child with disabilities.