

Chelsea Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)

Meeting Minutes

Date: October 7, 2025

Topic: Parents' Basic Rights – Notice of Procedural Safeguards

Presenters:

- Cindy Rosenberg, Administrator of Special Education & Pupil Personnel Services, Chelsea Public Schools
- Leslie Leslie, Project Director/MASSPAC, Federation for Children with Special Needs

1. Welcome and Introductions

- Meeting opened by welcoming families and SEPAC members introductions.
- Cindy Rosenberg and Leslie Leslie introduced themselves and outlined the purpose of the session: to review parents' rights in the special education process and ensure families feel informed and empowered.
- A strong turnout of families attended, representing students across Chelsea Public Schools.

2. Presentation Highlights

The presenters reviewed the Parents' Basic Rights: Notice of Procedural Safeguards, covering the following key areas:

What is Special Education?

- Specialized instruction and services for students ages 3–22 with disabilities who have not graduated.
- Goal: to provide support so students make progress in the least restrictive environment (LRE).
- Guiding principle: "Maximize opportunities, minimize the impact."

Prior Written Notice

- Parents must receive written notice whenever the district proposes/refuses an evaluation, IEP, placement change, or termination of services.
- Notices must include the action proposed, justification, and alternatives considered.

Parental Consent

- Required for evaluations, services, placements, and excusing TEAM members.
- Consent may be revoked at any time.
- Students over 18 become their own decision-makers unless a guardian or educational surrogate is appointed.

Special Education Determination

- Eligibility requires a documented disability, an impact on educational progress, and a need for specialized instruction/related services.
- Determinations are TEAM decisions for students ages 3–21.

Alternatives if Not Eligible

- Supports such as DCAP, MTSS, Title I services, after-school help, counseling, or a 504 Plan may be provided.

Timelines

- Evaluation consent form sent within 5 days of request.
- Evaluations completed within 30 days of signed consent.
- TEAM meeting and IEP proposal within 45 days.
- Parents receive copies of evaluations 2 days before the TEAM meeting.
- Parents have 30 days to review and respond to the IEP.

Independent Educational Evaluations (IEE)

- Parents may request an independent evaluation within 16 months if they disagree with district findings.
- IEEs may be covered publicly if income criteria are met; otherwise, parents can pursue at their own expense.

Access to Student Records

- Parents and students 14+ have the right to inspect records within 10 days of request and may authorize advocates to review them.

Dispute Resolution

- Parents and schools may resolve disagreements through BSEA, facilitated IEP meetings, or mediation.
- Families were provided resources, including FCSN and DESE links.

FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education)

- IEPs must address unique student needs, provide meaningful progress, and be at no cost to parents.

Placement in Private Schools

- Parents rejecting an IEP and seeking private placement must notify the district in writing 10 days in advance and may request a BSEA hearing.

Transition Planning

- Begins at age 14, included in the IEP.
- Covers measurable postsecondary goals and services.
- Graduation with a diploma is considered a change in placement, ending eligibility.

Discipline & Manifestation Determination

- Students with disabilities may be suspended up to 10 days. Beyond this, educational services must continue.
- Manifestation determination meetings are required for suspensions over 10 days to determine whether behavior was linked to disability or IEP implementation.

Partnering with Parents

- Emphasis on collaboration between schools and families.
- Research shows family engagement leads to improved student outcomes.

3. Questions and Discussion

- Parents asked clarifying questions on evaluation timelines, discipline, situational experiences, IEP services, and advocacy.
- Discussion highlighted the importance of early advocacy and family-school partnerships.
- Presenters shared contact information and online resources for families seeking additional support.

4. Closing and Next Steps

- Cindy Rosenberg thanked families for their attendance and participation.
- Leslie Leslie encouraged parents to reach out to the Federation for Children with Special Needs for continued guidance.
- SEPAC announced the next meeting: December 2, 2025.

5. Adjournment

- Meeting concluded with appreciation for strong family turnout and a reminder that all families of students with disabilities are welcome at future SEPAC meetings.

Resources shared:

- MA DESE Special Education: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/specialeducation/>
- Facilitated IEP Meetings:
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/facilitators-for-iep-team-meetings>
- Federation for Children with Special Needs: <http://www.fcsn.org>