BEAUFORT COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

2026-2027 Independent Educational Evaluation Criteria

1. Parents of children eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, at 20 U.S.C.A. §1401, et seq.) are entitled to an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) of their child if the parent disagrees with an evaluation obtained or conducted by the District. 34 C.F.R. §300.502.

2. An IEE is defined as an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the school district responsible for the child's education. 34 C.F.R. §300.502(a)(3)(i).

3. Parents may obtain an IEE at the expense of the school district (public expense) or their own expense. As stated above, the right to request an IEE at public expense is dependent upon a parent's disagreement with the most recent evaluation performed by the District. If the District has not conducted its own evaluation, the parent does not have a right to an IEE. Only one IEE may be funded for each evaluation completed by the District. The District may ask for further explanation to help determine the parent's concerns/basis for the disagreement when deciding whether to grant the IEE at public expense. However, the parents are not required to answer specifically as a precondition to the District funding of the IEE.

4. If the District wishes to deny a request for a District-funded IEE that otherwise meets the District's criteria, it must initiate a special education due process hearing within a reasonable time. This is to demonstrate that the evaluation objected to by the parent is appropriate and meets the standards of the IDEA. If the final decision of the proceeding is that the District evaluation is appropriate, the parents still have a right to an IEE, but not at District expense.

5. An IEE, whether funded by the parents or the District, must be considered by the IEP team in any decision made regarding the provision of a free and appropriate public education to the child and may be presented as evidence at a special education due process hearing regarding that child. 34 C.F.R. §300.502(c)(1). However, the fact that an IEP team reviews and considers an IEE does not automatically render the District liable for the costs of such evaluation. IEEs, at parental expense, should still comply with Paragraphs 8(c)-(f) and relevant portions of Paragraph 12.

6. If a special education hearing officer requests an IEE as part of a hearing, the evaluation must be funded by the school district. 34 C.F.R. §300.502(d).

7. A reasonable time after the request for a district-funded IEE is received, the District will provide parents with a list of professionals qualified to perform the IEE and who otherwise meet the District's criteria. Parents, however, do not have to choose any of the listed professionals. Regardless of who is selected, the criteria specified below in paragraphs 8 and 12 will apply to District-funded evaluations. IEEs, at parental expense, should still comply with Paragraphs 8(c)-(f) and relevant portions of Paragraph 12. Parents may inquire with the Office of Special Services to ensure that the evaluator chosen meets the District's criteria. Upon written request from parents, the District will undertake arrangements for the IEE, including contracting with the evaluator, verifying compliance with the criteria, and processing payment.

8. When the District funds an IEE, the criteria under which the evaluation is obtained must be the same as the criteria the District uses when initiating an evaluation. 34. C.F.R. §300.502(e). The following criteria shall be applied to parent-requested IEEs performed at District expense:

    a. The District limits the travel distance to obtain an IEE to the general local geographic area where the District obtains its evaluations, which is considered to be within a 100-mile radius of the District.
    b. The District will only pay a reasonably comparable rate for IEEs. Although an IEE can be more costly than a comparable District evaluation, the cost cannot exceed an amount more than 25% above the average cost of comparable District-initiated evaluations or $3,500, whichever is greater. District evaluations are comprehensive and may involve assessments conducted by multiple evaluators (e.g., psychologists, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, board-certified behavior analysts, etc.) and cover multiple components/areas of need. Even if multiple evaluators are involved in conducting an IEE, the cost of the entire IEE must be at most the greater of 25% above the average cost of a District-initiated evaluation or $3,500. The IEE agreement and subsequent compensation encompass fees associated with the evaluation itself. Any additional costs related to the review of evaluation findings or IEP meeting attendance will be the responsibility of the parent.
    c. The qualifications of the evaluators chosen to perform IEEs must comport with the qualifications required of evaluators selected by the District for

District-initiated evaluations in accordance with applicable Federal regulations, state laws, and state regulations.

d. The District requires that IEEs utilize a variety of assessment tools and methodologies to obtain comprehensive and relevant information regarding the student's functional, developmental, and academic performance. This includes consideration of parent input and is intended to support determinations of eligibility under IDEA and set forth in the SC Standards for Evaluation Eligibility Determination (SEED), as well as to inform the development of the student's IEP, including how the student will access and progress within the general education curriculum—or, for preschool-aged children, participate in developmentally appropriate activities. Data collected should include observation(s) of the child in their school environment to document their academic performance and behavior in the areas of concern. These observations may consist of structured observations, parent and teacher rating scales, ecological instruments, behavioral interventions, functional analyses of behavior and instruction, and anecdotal records.
e. Since the District reviews existing evaluation data as part of its evaluation process, independent evaluators will also be expected to review and consider existing evaluation data as part of the IEE.
f. Since the District reviews current educational records as part of its evaluation process, independent evaluators will also be expected to review educational records as part of the IEE.
g. Where a Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) disclosure exception does not otherwise apply, the pursuit of an IEE at public expense constitutes parental consent for the District to provide relevant evaluations and educational records to the independent evaluator and for the independent evaluator to provide the evaluation report to the District.

9. Parents who seek and obtain an IEE at public expense are responsible for notifying their selected independent evaluator(s) of the District's IEE criteria and the corresponding obligation to comply with those requirements. If a parent obtains an IEE that does not comply with District criteria, the District may refuse to fund or reimburse the parent for the costs of the IEE. This result may be avoided if the parent contacts the District prior to independently obtaining an IEE and allows the District to undertake the necessary arrangements for the selected evaluator to perform the IEE in accordance with these

criteria. Upon authorization for an IEE following a written parent request, the District will undertake arrangements for the IEE, including contracting with the independent evaluator, further advising the evaluator of the evaluation criteria, and making payment. If the parent chooses for the District to arrange the IEE directly with the independent evaluator(s), the District will require that a good-faith estimate of expected charges to conduct the IEE be provided in accordance with Section 2799B-6 of the Public Health Service Act.

10. To ensure a meaningful and productive discussion, the District requests that reports be submitted five (5) school days prior to the IEP meeting. However, the District will not deny IEP team consideration of a timely submitted IEE if this timeline is not met.

11. The District will fund an IEE that does not comply with the criteria set forth above only if the parent demonstrates that extraordinary or unique circumstances are present to warrant a departure from District criteria. The parent must make a written request for an exception, including an explanation of the extraordinary or unique circumstances, prior to the evaluation. The District shall decide in such situations, on a case-by-case basis, prior to the evaluation, in light of the child's existing evaluation data and other relevant information.

12. If approved, payment for the evaluation will be made directly to the independent evaluator, who must agree to first provide an original typed report directly to the District, with a copy provided to the parents. The District is not required to request further parental consent for the independent evaluator to provide the evaluation report directly to the District. Assessment protocols must be made available for District when requested, and the report must contain original signatures and the titles of all assessment personnel involved in the evaluation. The report must also comply with applicable requirements of state and Federal regulations with respect to evaluations (the District will assist with these matters, as necessary). An agreement by an independent evaluator to perform an IEE obligates the evaluator to comply with these requirements, which criteria and obligations shall be communicated to the evaluator by the parent prior to the IEE appointment date.

13. District funding of an IEE may also include reasonable related costs (such as transportation costs at the District rate) upon prior written approval of the District. Parents must request and obtain written District approval for reasonable associated costs before incurring them if they intend to seek payment from the District. If necessary, the District may provide funds for these expenses prior to the IEE appointment(s) or reimburse them after the appointment(s).

14. A District agreement to waive a portion of the above requirements or criteria in any particular case should not be interpreted to mean that the District would not impose that requirement or criterion in other or subsequent cases.

    If parents have questions about the above criteria or otherwise need assistance in obtaining an IEE, they may contact the District Lead School Psychologist at leah.greco@beaufort.k12.sc.us or 843-929-8799.

BEAUFORT COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Independent Educational Evaluators for the 2026-2027 School Year

The district has established a comprehensive list of approved Independent Educational Evaluators for the 2025-2026 school year, organized by service type to assist families in obtaining independent Families seeking psychological evaluations have several options available.

Lowcountry Neuropsychology and Behavioral Healthcare, located at 1001 Paris Avenue in Port Royal, SC 29935, offers services and can be contacted at 843-271-3737 or through their website at www.lowcountrynp.com. **Gayle Fellers, Ph.D.**, a private practitioner located at 1041 Johnnie Dodds Blvd, Suite 5C in Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464, is available at 843-364-4734 or drgayle@aol.com. **Carolina Anchor Psychological & Educational Consulting, LLC**, located at 3003 Dunes West Blvd Suite 6 in Mt. Pleasant, SC 29466, can be reached at 843-256-6814 or lake@carolinaanchor.com.evaluations.

For speech, physical, and occupational therapy evaluations, families have multiple providers to choose from. **HealthLink for Children at Beaufort Memorial Hospital** operates two locations: the main clinic at 990 Ribaut Road, Suite 210 in Beaufort, SC 29902 (843-522-5900) and the Bluffton Clinic at 31 Innovation Drive in Bluffton, SC 29910 (843-522-7180). **Now We're Talking Therapy Services**, located at 1536 Fording Island Road, Unit 105 in Hilton Head Island, SC 29926, is available at 843-837-2080. **Lowcountry Therapy Services** operates two locations: the Bluffton clinic at 254 Red Cedar Street in Bluffton, SC 29910 and the Beaufort clinic at 1873 North Paris Ave. in Port Royal, SC 29935. Both locations can be reached at 843-970-2899.

BEAUFORT COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Independent Evaluator Responsibilities

Independent evaluators conducting evaluations on behalf of families must adhere to comprehensive assessment standards and district requirements. When conducting an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE), evaluators are responsible for utilizing a variety of assessment methodologies to obtain comprehensive and relevant information regarding the student's functional, developmental, and academic performance. This includes conducting structured observations in the school environment to document academic performance and behavior in areas of concern, which may incorporate structured observations, rating scales, ecological instruments, behavioral interventions, functional analyses, and anecdotal records. Evaluators must also review all existing evaluation data and current educational records as part of the IEE process, while incorporating both parent and teacher perspectives into the evaluation. All evaluation components must be conducted in accordance with the South Carolina Standards for Evaluation and Eligibility Determination (SC SEED).

Evaluators must also comply with established cost and scope requirements. The total IEE cost cannot exceed the greater of 25% above the average cost of comparable district-initiated evaluations or $3,500, whichever is greater. This cost limit applies to the entire IEE, even if multiple evaluators are involved. Upon completion, evaluators must submit an original evaluation report directly to the district with a copy provided to parents; the district does not need to request additional parental consent for this submission. Reports must include original signatures and titles of all assessment personnel involved and evidence of compliance with all applicable state and federal regulations for evaluations. To facilitate IEP meeting preparation, reports and assessment protocols should be provided to the district within five school days prior to the scheduled IEP meeting.

By agreeing to perform an IEE, evaluators acknowledge their obligation to comply with all district criteria and requirements, which will be communicated by the parent prior to the appointment date. Non-compliance with district criteria may result in non-payment or non-reimbursement. Additionally, evaluator compensation covers the evaluation itself only; any additional costs related to reviewing findings or IEP meeting attendance are the parent's responsibility. For questions about IEE procedures or assistance obtaining an IEE, parents and evaluators may contact the District Lead School Psychologist, Leah Greco, at leah.greco@beaufort.k12.sc.us or 843-929-8799.