

Special Education

Parent Handbook

KALAMAZOO RESA
Special Education

Kalamazoo RESA
1819 East Milham Avenue
Portage, MI 49002

www.kresa.org

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How to Obtain Services

If disability is suspected for children age birth-five:

- Birth-3: Contact Early On at (269) 250-9649
- Ages 3-5: Contact PET at (269) 250-9670 or Build Up

If you think your child would benefit from special education services, call your local school.

Persons responsible for special education programs and services are listed below:

Central Service Area
Rikki Saunders, Director of Special Education
1220 Howard Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49008
Phone: (269) 337-0161
Serving: Kalamazoo Public Schools

Eastern Service Area
Molly Ray, Director of Specialized Instruction and Interventions
3010 Gull Lake Road, Kalamazoo, MI 49008
Phone: (269) 250-8924
Serving: Climax Scotts, Comstock, Galesburg-Augusta, Gull Lake & Parchment School Districts

Southern Service Area
Anne Gordon, Director of Educational Supports and Intervention
8107 Mustang Drive, Portage, MI 49002
Phone: (269) 323-5010
Serving: Portage, Schoolcraft & Vicksburg School Districts

Kalamazoo Public School Academies
Kalamazoo Covenant Academy..... (269) 226-2100
Oakland Academy..... (269) 324-8951
Paramount Charter Academy..... (269) 553-6400
Youth Advancement Academy..... (269) 353-4193

Letter to Parents

Dear Parents/Family:

Welcome to Kalamazoo RESA. Our goal is to assist you on your journey of special education by building a partnership with you to address the needs of your child/student. The Special Education process can be complicated, challenging, and overwhelming; please know we are here to support and work collaboratively with you.

This handbook serves as a guide to inform you about the special education processes and what you can expect. If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to your child/student's teacher or building administrator for assistance.

We believe when parents, schools, and communities work together children/students can achieve their greatest potential.

Sincerely,

KRESA Parent Advisory Committee for Special Education

KRESA Administrative Staff

Special Education Parent Advisory Committee

The Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) is comprised of parents of children with disabilities from the public school districts and public school academies in Kalamazoo County.

The PAC participates in the development, review, and amendment of the KRESA Plan for the Delivery of Special Education Programs and Services.

See www.kresa.org/special-education/parent-resources for more information.

Notice of Non-Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of the School District that no staff member, candidate for employment, program participant, or recipient of services shall experience discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation or transgender identity) disability, age, religion, height, weight, marital or family status, military status, ancestry, genetic information, or any other legally protected category (collectively "Protected Classes"), in its programs and activities, including employment opportunities.

Any questions concerning Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, Title VI, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin, or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, should be directed to the director of special education listed on the inside of the cover.



What is Special Education and referral?

Special education is specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parent, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability.

All districts have a Child Find obligation. This means each district has in place procedures to identify, locate, and evaluate students suspected of having a disability and needing special education services.

Children/Students suspected of having a disability may be referred in a number of ways:

- Children birth-5 years old may be referred for an evaluation by:
  - a physician,
  - parent,
  - or others such as caregivers or childcare providers
- School age students may be referred for an evaluation by:
  - parents/family
  - school personnel
  - others with information pertaining to the child

Special Education Evaluation K-12

What is the Purpose of Evaluation?
An evaluation is done to answer these questions:

- How is the child currently performing in school? (present level of academic achievement and functional performance)
- What are the child's educational needs?
- Does the child have a disability that impacts their education?
- Does the child need special education and related services?
- What accommodations or modifications, if any, are needed to enable the child to meet annual goals in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) and participate, as appropriate, in the general curriculum?

What Are the Steps in the Evaluation Process?
Before a child is evaluated for the first time, the school must notify the parents. The notice describes evaluations that the school proposes to conduct. The parents must give their informed consent for the child to be evaluated.

Prior to the school requesting parent consent for evaluation, the child's team gathers and reviews existing information on the child. This includes evaluations and information provided by the parents, current classroom-based assessments and observations, and teacher and other service providers' observations. After this information is reviewed, the school may recommend additional evaluations be conducted. Once the parent/family has provided consent, the district has 30 school days to complete the additional evaluations and hold an IEP.

How is a Child Evaluated for the Presence of a Disability?
The evaluations are given individually, in the child's native language, using nondiscriminatory evaluations. Any standardized tests must be administered correctly by trained, knowledgeable personnel.

Eligibility

Who Decides if a Child is eligible for Services?
A team of qualified professionals which includes the parents, will analyze the evaluation data to determine if the child/student meets eligibility criteria for the 13 eligibility categories and if the child needs special education services.

Who is a "Child with a Disability"?
The definition includes the following qualifications:

- Children from birth through age 25 who have not graduated from high school;
- Children who have the characteristics of a specific disability as defined in the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (the special education eligibility categories are listed in this document) **and** because of that disability, need special education/ related services



Special Education Eligibilities

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) – A developmental disability involving academic, behavioral/social and communication skills that adversely affects educational performance.

Cognitive Impairment (CI) – Delays in intellectual development and adaptive skills that adversely affect educational performance.

Deaf-Blindness (DB) – Hearing and visual impairments causing severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that adversely affect educational performance.

Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) – Any degree of hearing loss that interferes with development or adversely affects educational performance.

Early Childhood Development Delay (ECDD) – Developmental delays that cannot be identified under any other Special Education disability category; this eligibility is available to children birth through age 7.

Emotional Impairment (EI) – A disability where behaviors over an extended period of time adversely affect educational performance.

Specific Learning Disability (LD) – A disability which impacts one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, speak, read, write or do math, adversely affecting educational performance.

Other Health Impairment (OHI) – Health impairments due to a chronic or acute health problem that adversely affect educational performance.

Physical Impairment (PI) – A severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects educational performance.

Severe Multiple Impairment (SXI) – A combination of severe mental and physical disabilities that adversely affects educational performance.

Speech and Language Impairment (SLI) – Communication delays or disorders in language, articulation, fluency or voice that adversely affect educational performance.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) – An acquired injury to the brain that adversely affects educational performance.

Visual Impairment (VI) – An impairment characterized by partial sightedness or blindness that adversely affects educational performance.

See Part I of the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education for more information.

What Happens After a Child is Found Eligible?

An IEP Team comprised of the parents, school professionals and the student, when appropriate, develops an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the child. The child begins to receive special education/related services designed to meet the child's needs once the parent gives consent for the school to implement the provision of programs and services. Please note the IEP is updated at least annually and eligibility must be reviewed every three years.

What is an IEP?
An IEP meeting is a collaborative process where the IEP team develops a written plan called an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to address the unique needs of the child.

Who are the members of the IEP Team?

- The parent
- Not less than 1 general education teacher (if the child is, or may be, participating in the general education environment)
- Special Education teacher or provider
- A representative of the public agency
- An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of the evaluations
- At the discretion of the parent or agency other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child
- When appropriate, the child

Some individuals may fulfill several roles as appropriate

How Does a Parent Participate in the Decision-Making Process?
Parents are involved in a variety of ways:

- Parents have the right to participate and provide information at meetings to discuss identification, evaluation, educational placement, reevaluation, and the appropriate education of the child;
- Parents give consent for initial evaluations and reevaluations;
- Parents receive regular reports on their child's progress;
- Parents must notify the school district if they intend to remove their child from the public school; and
- Parents may be involved at the local level through the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). The Michigan Department of Education also involves parents in activities related to special education.

How Should the Student be Involved in the IEP Meeting?
Students have a place at the IEP meeting because they have insights as to their learning strengths and needs. When students are involved in determining their goals and objectives, it is likely they will have more commitment to achieving them. Each student should have the opportunity to be a part of the process.

Students participate in their transition planning starting with the IEP that will be in place the year they turn age 16. Transition plans are updated at least annually.

Students who are age 17 are notified that their rights will be transferred to them upon reaching the age of majority (18).

What are some good tips for engaging in the IEP process?
It is important to remember this team is coming together for one common purpose—the child. Each member of the IEP team comes to the IEP table with different perspectives, experiences, and expertise and therefore, there may be differing opinions. Each member of the team should have a voice to share perspectives and information related to the child. It is important to communicate effectively and always assume positive intentions. If something is unclear seek clarification. Your child will engage with the school for a long time so it is important that team members develop a collaborative/ trusting relationship that maintains a focus on the child.

Parent	Student	General Education Teacher	Special Education Teacher/ Provider	District Representative
▪ Knowledge of strengths and interests ▪ Information on the disability and how it impacts them at home and in the community ▪ Other factors that may be relevant ▪ Assessment results/ behavior plans from outside sources	▪ Knowledge about what is working for them ▪ Areas they may need some additional support ▪ Other factors that are connected to school performance ▪ Preferences and interests ▪ Goals for life	▪ Knowledge of current and future grade level expectations ▪ Data on performance ▪ Observations from the classroom ▪ Information on what is working well with current support ▪ Areas of additional needs ▪ Teacher support needed to ensure student success	▪ Data on IEP goals ▪ Information on the disability and how it impacts performance ▪ Observations ▪ What is working well ▪ What additional support may be needed ▪ Expertise on specially designed instruction	▪ Observations within the school environment ▪ Knowledge of district resources ▪ Knowledge of grade level expectations ▪ Supervision of Specially Designed Instruction ▪ Knowledge of the IEP process

What is Included in the IEP?
The IEP includes:

- a statement of the child's present level of academic achievement and functional performance;
- a statement of measurable annual goals, including short-term objectives related to:
  - meeting the needs that result from the disability to enable the child's involvement and progress in the general curriculum, and
  - meeting each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability.
- a statement of special education services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child, and any program modifications or supports provided by school personnel;
- an explanation of when the child will not participate with non-disabled children in the regular class and other activities;
- a statement of any accommodations the student needs to take state- or district-wide assessments;
- the projected date for initiation, duration, anticipated frequency, and location of programs and services;
- a statement of the child's postsecondary vision and related transition activities, to be included in the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16; and
- a statement of how the child's progress toward the annual goals will be measured and how the parents will be regularly informed of that progress.

What happens if I disagree with the IEP?
The most effective dispute resolution methods use direct, early, meaningful communication in a collaborative manner with the district. While the district has the obligation to offer FAPE, it is important that all IEP team members voices are heard and any concerns or thoughts be addressed. When disputes cannot be resolved through informal methods, there are other more formal options available such as IEP facilitation, mediation, state complaint or due process complaints. The Michigan Department of Education's Special Education Dispute Resolution Options offers a description of these options.

Key Terms

What is Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)?
LRE involves consideration of the setting in which the child receives an education. The law indicates that children with disabilities are most appropriately educated with their non-disabled peers. Attending special classes or separate schools or removing children with disabilities from the regular classroom occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability prevents the child from achieving satisfactorily even when supplementary aids and services are provided.

What is a "Free Appropriate Public Education" (FAPE)?
FAPE includes the special education/related services provided to children with disabilities at public expense, under public supervision and direction, without charge to parents. The programs/services written into the IEP must meet Michigan Department of Education standards and be provided according to the IEP.

Procedural Safeguards

What are the Procedural Safeguards?
Procedural safeguards ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected. The safeguards provide information needed by parents to make decisions about their child's education. The safeguards also explain the procedures that are in place to resolve disagreements between parties.

The Procedural Safeguards in this book come from federal and state laws and regulations. Sometimes they are difficult to understand. If you have any questions regarding them, please contact your ISD/ESA or local school district for assistance.

Procedural Safeguards Notice
https://www.michigan.gov/mde/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/specialeducation/proc-safe/Procedural_Safeguards_Notice.pdf

608 West Allegan Street
P.O. Box 30008 Lansing, MI 48909 517-241-7075
www.michigan.gov/mde



Description of Programs & Services

Ancillary/Related Services
This term means developmental, corrective, and other supportive services including but not limited to psychological services, speech therapy, counseling services, orientation and mobility services, transportation.

Autism Spectrum Disorder
The programs/services for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are designed to develop language and communication, academic achievement, and social skills.

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)
ECSE programs/services are designed to bring family and school together to develop academic, social-emotional and communication skills for children from birth through five years of age.

Emotional Impairment
The programs/services for students with Emotional Impairment (EI) are designed to develop academic and social skills for students with social-emotional needs.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing
The programs/services for students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) are designed to provide academic support for students who require specialized teaching techniques and/or adaptive equipment due to a hearing impairment.

Homebound & Hospitalized Services
These services are designed as a self-study program/ service that allows pupils to maintain their coursework and studies while unable to attend school due to medical confinement to the home. For students with disabilities, who are eligible for these services, a minimum of 2-non-consecutive hours of service will be provided.

Learning Disabilities
The programs/services for students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) are designed to provide specialized instruction and learning strategies when students exhibit learning needs in academics and language.

Cognitive Impairment
The programs/services for students with Cognitive Impairment (CI) are designed to develop academic, social, communication and functional life skills for students with intellectual disabilities.

Other Health Impairment
The program/services for students with Other Health Impairment (OHI) are designed to provide support for students who require specialized learning strategies and/or adaptive equipment due to a health impairment.

Physical Impairment
The programs/services for students with Physical Impairment (PI) are designed to provide support for students who require specialized learning strategies and/or adaptive equipment due to a physical impairment.

Elementary and Secondary Resource Programs
Resource programs are designed to provide academic support to students who require specialized learning strategies.

Secondary Transition Services
Services designed to help high school students move into adult roles, including post-secondary and vocational education, independent living and community participation.

Severe Cognitive Impairment
The programs/services for students with Severe Cognitive Impairment (SCI) are designed to develop academic, social, communication and functional life skills for students with intellectual disabilities.

Speech/Language Impaired Services
Speech/Language Impaired (SLI) support services include specialized learning strategies for students whose impairment interferes with receptive and expressive language.

Visual Impairment
The programs/services for students with Visual Impairment (VI) are designed to provide academic support for students who require specialized teaching techniques and/or adaptive equipment due to a visual impairment.

Teacher Consultant
Teacher Consultant services are designed to support students who require specialized learning strategies in the general education setting.

See Part 3 of the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education for more information.

Medicaid Parental Consent Annual Notification

Change in Regulation
Since 1993 the State of Michigan has participated in a federal program known as Medicaid School-Based Services. The program assists school districts by partially reimbursing the provision of medically-related services as listed on Medicaid-eligible students' Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) or Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs). Parents/ guardians of Medicaid-eligible students used to have to give written permission or consent annually for districts to access a child's public benefits or insurance for School-Based Services, however, in 2013 the regulations regarding parental consent changed. Now, a school must obtain written parent consent prior to accessing a child's public benefits or insurance for the first time; thereafter, school districts must notify parents/guardians in writing annually to continue to access public benefits or insurance.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MEDICAID SCHOOL-BASED SERVICES

Will claims by my school district for School-Based Medicaid impact my family's Medicaid benefits?
No. The School-Based Services program does NOT impact a family's Medicaid services, funds, or limits. Michigan operates the School-Based Services program differently than the Family Medicaid program. The School-Based Services program does not affect your family's Medicaid benefits in any way.

Is there a cost to me for school services?
No. Services written into IEPs and IFSPs are provided to students while they are at school at NO cost to the parent/guardian. It is the continuing responsibility of the school district to ensure that students are provided all required special education and related services at no charge to you or your child.

Am I required to provide consent to the school to access my child's public benefits or insurance?
No. You may refuse to provide consent and you may withdraw your consent at any time.

Who will see this information about my child?
Information about your child's school-based services may be shared with the Michigan Medicaid agency and its affiliates for the purpose of verifying Medicaid eligibility and submitting claims for school-based services. You have the right to withdraw consent to disclose your child's personally identifiable information to the Michigan Medicaid agency and its affiliates at any time.

Will my consent or refusal affect my child's services?
No. Regardless of whether you have Medicaid coverage or not, and whether you provide consent or not, the school district will still provide services to your child at no cost according to their IEP or IFSP.

What if I have other questions or concerns?
Please call your school district's Special Education department with any questions or concerns.

Organizations That Assist Parents

Special Education Process

KRESA Special Education Parent Advisory Committee ..... Phone: (269) 250-9323
Michigan Alliance for Families ..... Phone: (800) 552-4821
Michigan Department of Education ..... Phone: (888) 320-8384
Disability Rights Michigan ..... Phone: (800) 288-5923
Michigan Special Education Mediation Services www.mikids1st.org

Services for Parents and Students

ASK Family Services ..... Phone: (269) 343-5896
Association for Children's Mental Health ..... Phone: (888) 226-4543
Kalamazoo Autism Society ..... Phone: (269) 326-3023
Special Health Care Services ..... Phone: (800) 359-3722
Disability Network of SW Michigan ..... Phone: (269) 345-1516
Easter Seals of Michigan ..... Phone: (248) 475-6400
Elizabeth Upjohn Community Healing Center ..... Phone: (269) 343-1651
Epilepsy Foundation of Michigan ..... Phone: (800) 337-6226
Family & Children Services ..... Phone: (269) 344-0202
Integrated Services of Kalamazoo ..... Phone: (269) 373-6000
Leader Dogs for the Blind ..... Phone: (888) 777-5332
Learning Disabilities Association of Michigan ..... Phone: (616) 284-1650
Michigan Association for Deaf & Hard of Hearing ..... Phone: (586) 778-4188
Bureau of Service for Blind Persons Training Center ..... Phone: (269) 337-3848
Michigan Department of Human Services ..... Phone: (269) 337-4900
Michigan Integrated Technology Supports ..... Phone: (517) 908-3930
Michigan Hands and Voices ..... Phone: (248) 845-8762
Michigan Rehabilitation Services ..... Phone: (269) 337-3700
The Arc Community Advocates ..... Phone: (269) 342-9801
United Cerebral Palsy Assn. of Michigan ..... Phone: (800) 827-4843

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