**Child Find Process**

**Special Education**

1. **Who can make a referral for special education services?**

When a concern is expressed by either school staff, student, or a parent, the student’s academic ad social/emotional status is reviewed through a problem solving process.

**2. What are the steps of the evaluation process?**

a. Submit request for an evaluation to the Executive Director of Specialized Services.

b. Within 14 days of receiving a request for an evaluation the District will determine whether an evaluation is warranted.

c. If the District moves forward with an evaluation a domain will be completed and the evaluation will be completed within 60 days.

d. To receive special education services, students must be determined to have on of the following exceptionalities as defined by the *Illinois State Board of Education*:

\* Autism

\* Deaf-Blindness

\* Deafness

\* Emotional Disability

\* Hearing Impairment

\* Intellectual Disability

\* Multiple Disability

\* Orthopedic Impairment

\* Specific Learning disability

\* Speech or Language Impairment

\* Traumatic Brain Injury

\* Visual Impairment

e. If the student is found to be eligible for special education support, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is developed and reviewed annually.

**504 Plans**

1. **Who can make a referral for an evaluation under Section 504?**

Anyone can submit a referral; the referral however, does not automatically result in an evaluation.  By law, the decision to conduct a case study under Section 504 Evaluation must always be a team decision.  The school’s team may determine that other interventions should be implemented before an evaluation is necessary.

1. **What is the purpose of the evaluation?**

Under Section 504, the evaluation is used to determine whether or not a student has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity that, in turn, requires accommodations, aids, or services for the student to have equal access to their educational environment.

1. **What are the steps to the evaluation process?**

If a parent/guardian has a concern that his/her student has a need that could be addressed through a Section 504 accommodation plan, the first step is to contact his/her student’s counselor.  The counselor may ask the parent/guardian some questions to learn more about his/her student’s needs. They may also ask the parent to complete a parent questionnaire and/or provide medical documentation regarding the concern. This documentation will be shared with a school support team to determine if an evaluation is warranted or if other supports may be appropriate.  If the team determines an evaluation is warranted, parents will be contacted by school personnel to discuss what will be included in the evaluation. Parent consent will be obtained and the school team has 60 school days to gather the information to determine if the student is eligible and requires a Section 504 plan to meet his/her needs. An eligibility meeting will take place where the team, including the parent and student, will review the data. If a student is eligible, an accommodations plan will be developed at that time to address the needs identified through the evaluation.  If the student is not eligible for a Section 504 plan, alternative supports or interventions may be discussed.

1. **Who conducts the 504 evaluation?**

A team of district personnel participate in the evaluations.  Depending on the nature of the referral/needs of the child, this could involve any of the following: school psychologist, social worker, nurse, speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, and classroom teachers.  In addition, information is gathered from parents and from outside sources offered by parents.

1. **What are the components of a 504 evaluation?**

The components of a Section 504 evaluation are individualized to the concerns related to each student.  Some examples of sources of information that are utilized in 504 evaluations include medical documentation from a physician, documentation provided by a student’s private therapist, review of school records, teacher feedback, classroom observation, student interview, test logs, behavior rating scales, and/or documentation of student’s difficulty or inability to take tests under timed conditions.

1. **How is eligibility determined?**

In order for students to be eligible for a Section 504 plan, they must meet all three criteria outlined below:

The student has a mental or physical impairment, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment.

The impairment results in the substantial limitation of a major life activity.

NOTE: “Substantial limitation” must be interpreted without regard to the ameliorative effects of mitigating measures (e.g. medications, prosthetic devices, assistive devices, or learned or adaptive neurological modifications that a person may use to eliminate or reduce the effects of an impairment. Also, an impairment that is episodic or in remission is a Section 504-protected disability if, when in an active phase, it would substantially limit a major life activity).

Does the substantial limitation result in the child’s inability to access the general education curriculum without accommodations? The limitation results in difficulties in the student’s ability to receive instruction and/or to produce school work.

1. **How long does it take to complete the case study?**

Illinois State Rules and Regulations related to special education evaluations allow sixty (60) school days for the evaluation to be completed. Best practices recommends similar procedures for Section 504 evaluations. This includes days of the regular school year that students are in session for instructional purposes. Typically, a 504 evaluation is completed in much less time than 60 school days, but this is not a legal requirement.

1. **What happens if I submit a private evaluation?**

Results of a private evaluation are considered by the District and may be utilized as one source of information during evaluations.  However, a private evaluation, in and of itself, cannot be used to determine eligibility, as the District must conduct an evaluation to establish educational need.

1. **If my child is eligible for a Section 504 plan, how are the accommodations determined?**

Accommodations are determined on an individualized basis and must be designed to address a student’s specific area(s) of need.  These needs are determined through the  evaluation process.

**10.Does a school 504 team have to consider multiple and varied sources of information (parent/guardian & school documentation) in order to determine if a student is eligible for accommodations and/or services under Section 504?**

Yes.  Section 504 requires that “information from a variety of sources be considered and documented” (i.e. aptitude and achievement tests, teacher recommendations, physical condition, social or cultural background, adaptive behavior, and observations from parent/guardian, teachers, and school personnel).

**11. Does a physician’s diagnosis of ADHD automatically result in a student being eligible for Section 504?**

No. A physician’s diagnosis alone does not automatically result in eligibility under Section 504. A physician’s diagnosis should be considered as one piece of evidence when evaluating the student’s eligibility under Section 504. The key to eligibility under Section 504 is whether the student’s disability substantially limits a major life activity to the degree that the student warrants accommodations to have equal access to their educational environment.

**12. What happens if a student refuses an accommodation and/or service from a teacher?**

Teachers cannot force a student to accept accommodations and/or services.  Accommodations are consistently reviewed and discussed at annual review meetings, and/or in meetings as needed, to evaluate which are appropriate to meet the student’s needs.

**13. What can parents/guardians do if they are dissatisfied with the way schools are serving students who are eligible for Section 504 protections?**

Please refer to Parent Rights and Procedural Safeguards.