

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – SCHOOL DISTRICT

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1. What is the process for accessing school services?

A school district must conduct an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services and any areas of suspected educational disability must be investigated.

2. How is the evaluation initiated? Who can refer?

A family may begin the evaluation process after providing proof of residency within District boundaries and can request the evaluation by contacting the special education department. A referral may be initiated by the holder of educational rights or anyone with written parent/guardian consent to initiate the referral. This may include, among others, physicians, social workers, early childhood provider agencies, related service providers, or private and public preschools.

3. At what age should families contact the school district?

Families may contact the school district to initiate a referral by 2 years 9 months to receive evaluation and recommendations prior to the third birthday, which is when a child is eligible to start if determined eligible for special education services.

4. What evaluations can the school district perform?

School districts can evaluate students in multiple areas of development by conducting a psycho-educational evaluation (sometimes termed a developmental assessment). This may include assessments in the areas of cognition, academics/pre academics, motor skills, daily living, adaptive skills, vocational/prevocational, behavior, social/emotional, educationally related health needs (could involve a District Nurse), and communication. Standardized, Non-Standardized, Dynamic, Play-Based, and Observational assessments are conducted. Parent and provider input is gathered and considered.

5. What happens after the evaluation?

Evaluations may take up to 60 days to complete. Once complete the transdisciplinary assessment team meets with the family to review results and make recommendations based on findings. If a child is found eligible for services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) may be co-created to outline the individualized goals, services, and supports necessary for the child to be successful in the educational environment.

6. What are the eligibility categories for special education?

Hard of Hearing, Deafness, Other Health Impairment, Speech or Language Impairment, Multiple Disabilities, Intellectual Disability, Established Medical Disability (up to age 5 only), Autism, Orthopedic Impairment, Visual Impairment, Deaf-Blindness, Emotional Disturbance, Specific Learning Disability, and Traumatic Brain Injury.

7. What services can the school provide?

School Districts can provide a wide variety of educationally related services, which could include specialized academic instruction, school-based OT/PT, speech and language therapy, behavior interventions and supports, counseling, parent training, nursing, access to community resources from various agencies, and mental health support.

8. What role does the Primary Care Pediatric provider play in the school district evaluation and services?

Primary care providers are excellent educational partners in that they are a reliable source of historical information and can identify atypical development early. Referrals from primary care providers are common and lead to earlier interventions and improved educational outcomes for students.

9. If a child has a medical diagnosis of Autism or is deemed "At Risk" for Autism by a medical professional, is the school district required to provide special education services?

The school district is required to explore Autism using the educational disability criteria for Autism, which varies from the medical criteria. If there is an adverse educational impact, the district may offer special education services under this educational disability category. This process would apply to any medical diagnoses as the school district considers all relevant factors associated with a medical diagnosis when considering any of the 14 special education eligibility categories.

10. If a physician writes an order for educational services or staffing, will the District provide it?

A school District considers all input provided and determines what is appropriate to support the student in the educational environment through the evaluation and IEP process. A team of specialists, which may include a district nurse, works with the family and outside providers to determine needs to be addressed. The school district then makes a FAPE (free, appropriate public education) offer based on all assessment and input gathered.



This information was provided by San Marcos Unified School District. This information also applies to other school districts in San Diego County.

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