

Parent Information Notice

Screening and Evaluation: The West Allegheny School District employs the following procedures for locating, identifying, and evaluating specified needs of school age students requiring special programs and services. These procedures, as required by law, are as follows:

The district, as prescribed by section 1402 of the School Code, routinely conducts screenings of a child's hearing acuity (kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 7th, and 11th grade in the fall), visual acuity (all students every year in the fall), and speech and language skills (teacher, parent, and outside agency referrals). Gross motor and fine motor skills, academic skills, and social and emotional skills are assessed by teachers and support staff on an ongoing basis. Screening activities include DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) - K-2, review of group-based data such as cumulative enrollment and health records, report cards, and achievement test scores. Identified needs from these screening sources, as well as information obtained from parents and outside agencies, are assessed, noted within student records, and discussed with parents. These school records are always open and available to parents and only to school officials who have a legitimate "need to know" about the child. Information from records is released to other persons or agencies only with appropriate authorization, which involves written permission by parents.

Screening information will be used by school personnel within the student's school to meet his/her specific needs or to document the need for further evaluation. If it is determined that a child needs additional services, the classroom teachers will make adjustments relative to such things as the child's learning style, behavior, physical inabilities, and speech problems to be more in keeping with traditional classroom expectancies. Parents will be notified if a child is receiving accommodations/adaptations. If a student does not demonstrate progress, and it is determined that a student may be eligible for special education services, the student is referred for a multidisciplinary evaluation. After all of the evaluations are completed, a Comprehensive Evaluation Report is prepared with parent involvement and includes specific recommendations for the types of intervention necessary to deal with the child's specified needs. When the Comprehensive Evaluation Report is completed and in accordance with state regulations, an IEP team meeting with parent involvement is scheduled to develop an appropriate individualized education program (IEP) for the student.

Parents of students who suspect that their child is exceptional and in need of special education services may request a multidisciplinary team evaluation of their child through a written request to the Building Principal or Coordinator of Pupil Services.

Services for School Age Exceptional Children: The school district provides a free, appropriate, public education to exceptional students according to state and federal mandates. To be eligible, the child must be of school age, need specially designed instruction and meet eligibility criteria for mentally gifted and/or one or more of the following physical or mental disabilities as set forth in the Pennsylvania State Standards: autism/ pervasive development disorder, blindness/ visual impairment, deafness/hearing impairment, physical disability, serious emotional disturbance, specific learning disability, and speech/language impairment.

Services designed to meet the needs of eligible students include annual development of an individualized education program (IEP), triennial multidisciplinary reevaluation, supportive intervention in the regular class, supplemental intervention in the regular class or in a special education resource program, and placement in a part-time or full-time special education class outside of the regular school. The extent of special education services and the location for the delivery of such services are determined by the parents and staff at the IEP team meeting and are based on the abilities, chronological age, and the level of intensity of the specified intervention. The school district also provides related services, such as transportation, physical therapy, and occupational therapy that are required to enable the student to derive educational benefits.

Prior to the initiation of services, parents are presented a "Notice of Recommended Educational Placement" (NOREP) with which they may agree or disagree. If parents disagree with the program being recommended, they have the right to request a pre-hearing conference, mediation and/or a due process hearing.

Services for Students in Nonpublic Schools: Public special education is accessible to resident students attending nonpublic schools by permitting the nonpublic school student to enroll on a part-time basis in a special education program operated in a public school.

Special education programs are accessible to nonpublic school students through dual enrollment following the multidisciplinary team evaluation and development of an individualized education program (IEP).

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Parent Information Notice

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Parents of nonpublic school students who suspect that their child is exceptional and in need of special education may request a multidisciplinary team evaluation of their child through a written request to the Coordinator of Pupil Services.

Services for Protected Handicapped Students: The school district will provide to each protected handicapped student, without discrimination or cost to the student or family, those related aids, services, or accommodations which are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school programs and extracurricular activities to the extent appropriate to the student's abilities. To qualify as a protected handicapped student, the child must be of school age with a physical or mental disability which substantially limits or prohibits participation in, or access to, an aspect of the school program. Services and protections for protected handicapped students are different from those applicable to all eligible students enrolled in special education programs. Additional information about the evaluation procedures and provision of services to protected handicapped students is available by contacting the Coordinator of Pupil Services at (724) 695-5221.

Services for Preschool Age Children: Act 212, the Early Intervention System Act, entitles all preschool age children with disabilities to appropriate early intervention services. Young children experiencing developmental delay or physical or mental disabilities are eligible for early intervention services.

The Pennsylvania Department of Welfare is responsible for providing services to infants and toddlers, defined as children from birth through two years of age. Contact Early Learning Institute, 2500 Baldwick Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15205, (412) 837-1502.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is responsible for providing services to preschool age children from age three through five. Contact Project DART, 475 East Waterfront Drive, Homestead, PA 15120, (412) 394-5816.

Confidentiality of Student Records: The privacy rights of parents and students are mandated by federal legislation known as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (Buckly Amendment), state regulations (Chapter 14 - Special Education Services and Programs, Chapter 12 - Student Rights and Responsibilities), and district policy.

The different categories of information maintained by the school district are as follows: educational and health records, personally identifiable information, and directory information. With the exception of the receiving school district, educational and health records and personally identifiable information cannot be disclosed or released without parental consent or adult student (a student who is eighteen years of age or older, married, or attending an institution of post secondary education) consent. Consent information, known as directory information, can be released without consent. Directory information means information which would be considered not harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. This information includes the following: student's name, address, date and place of birth, courses taken, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, degrees and awards received and the most recent previous educational agency or institution attended by the student. Also, group or individual interviews, photographs, or videos of students are directory information, and these items may be used by the district in various publications or by the media.

Written parental or adult student request is required for the disclosure of educational and health records and personally identifiable information. The consent must specify the records that may be disclosed and purpose of the disclosure and identify the parent or class of parties to whom the disclosure may be made. A written record of the disclosure must be maintained by the school district. Parents or adult students have the right to inspect and review the student's educational records within thirty (30) days of the date the district receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to the school principal a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The principal will then make arrangements for access to inspect the records. Parents and adult students can seek an amendment to the student's educational records that the parent or adult student believes to be inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights. The parent or eligible student can do so by writing the school principal, clearly identifying the part of the record to be changed, and specifying why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the district decides not to amend the record, the district will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise the individual of his/her right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

Parents or adult students have the right to file complaints concerning alleged failures of the district to comply with the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. Such complaints should be directed to the Health, Education, and Welfare Office, Washington, D.C.