

TIP SHEET #12: REFERRING CHILDREN FOR PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

WHAT services are available through the CPSE?

The Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) provides special education services to children ages 3-5. There are 10 CPSE regional offices in the City. Once a child enters kindergarten, responsibility for his or her special education services moves from the CPSE to the child's school if the child attends a Department of Education public school or to the district Committee on Special Education (CSE) office if the child attends a charter or private school.

Children eligible for preschool special education services may receive related services, such as speech, occupational, or physical therapy or counseling; Special Education Itinerant Teacher (SEIT) services, where a teacher is assigned to work with a child; a full- or half-day special class in an integrated setting, where children with and without disabilities are taught in the same class by a special education teacher; or a full- or half-day special class, where preschool students with disabilities are taught by a special education teacher. If students are recommended for related services or SEIT services only, they may enroll in a pre-K, Head Start, EarlyLearn, or child care program and should receive the SEIT or related services at the preschool they attend.

WHEN to refer a child to the CPSE

Refer a child to the CPSE whenever he or she may have a developmental delay or disability.

- If a child turns 3 between January 1st and June 30th, he or she is eligible for preschool services starting on January 2nd.
- If a child turns 3 between July 1st and December 31st, he or she is eligible for preschool services starting on July 1st.

A child does not need to be enrolled in school in order to be evaluated or to receive preschool special education services.

Refer any child receiving Early Intervention (EI) services to the CPSE for evaluations 4 months (120 days) before the child becomes eligible to receive services. To avoid gaps in services, do not rely on the EI program to make the referral for preschool special education. If a child receiving EI services is found eligible for preschool special education services before the child's third birthday, the parent may choose to have the child continue to receive EI services, instead of CPSE services, for up to several months after the child's third birthday.

HOW to refer a child to the CPSE

STEP 1: Identify the district in which the student lives.

Go to the DOE's website at <http://schools.nyc.gov/SchoolSearch/Maps.aspx>. Enter the child's home address at the top and click "Search." Look at the district listed below the child's zoned school; that is the district for the child's address. You can also call 311 and ask for the school district based on the child's address.

STEP 2: Send a letter of referral to the CPSE.

Mail or fax a letter addressed to the CPSE that serves the district where the child lives. You can find the contact information for the CPSE at <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/SpecialEducation/ContactsResources/cpse.htm> or by



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www.advocatesforchildren.org

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calling 311. The letter should describe why the child needs services and include any prior services the child has received. We suggest that you keep the fax confirmation sheet or mail the letter “return receipt requested.”

STEP 3: Look for a packet from the CPSE.

Once the CPSE receives the referral, it should immediately send the parent:

- a) A notice that the referral was received;
- b) An official list of approved preschool evaluation sites in NYC; and
- c) A “consent for initial evaluation” letter (also called a C-IP letter).

ADVOCACY TIP: Professionals may ask the CPSE to send packets directly to them in addition to the parent. Contact the CPSE Administrator if neither of you receives the packet within a week of the CPSE’s receipt of the referral.

STEP 4: Choose an evaluation site and schedule an appointment.

Generally, evaluation sites ask that parents sign consent in person at the first appointment. When choosing a site, make sure you choose a site that offers bilingual assessments if the child requires them. Evaluation sites must conduct a psychological evaluation, social history, and observation, and may conduct other evaluations, such as a speech, occupational therapy, or physical therapy evaluation, if needed. The child also will need a physical. If a child has behavioral challenges in preschool, make sure the evaluator observes the child in school.

STEP 5: Attend the IEP meeting.

The CPSE must schedule an IEP meeting within 60 calendar days of the date when the parent signs consent for evaluations. Follow up with the CPSE to ensure a timely meeting. If the child is eligible for services, he or she will be classified as a “preschool student with a disability.”

ADVOCACY TIP: There are often waiting lists for preschool special education services, particularly preschool special classes. Make sure the team recommends what the child needs and not merely the services that are available. IEP teams can develop Partial Service Plans for SEIT and/or related services while students are waiting for a seat to become available in a preschool special class.

Parents should visit any proposed programs, and they must sign a consent form before services can begin. For more information, refer to the Tip Sheet ‘Following Up After an IEP Meeting.’

WHO can refer a child to the CPSE?

A parent may refer a child to the CPSE. Others, such as a doctor or social worker, may request a referral for special education evaluations, but cannot refer a student directly. Professionals writing letters on behalf of a parent should include the parent’s signature when possible to make sure the referral is accepted.

For more information, see Advocates for Children’s Guide to Preschool Special Education:
http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/preschool_special_ed_guide.pdf.