



Advocates for Children of New York  
Protecting every child's right to learn

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## Start of School Questions & Answers for Families of Students with Disabilities

**My child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), and I'm not sure where they're supposed to go in September. Who should I talk to at the Department of Education (DOE)?**

### *IF YOUR CHILD IS A PRESCHOOLER...*

If your child is a preschooler who needs related services only—such as speech, occupational, or physical therapy; counseling; or vision, hearing, and health services—and/or a Special Education Itinerant Teacher (SEIT), contact programs you are interested in directly or call the DOE Outreach Team at (212) 637-8000. You can find a list of programs with open seats at [www.myschools.nyc](http://www.myschools.nyc). The Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) will arrange for SEIT and/or related service providers to serve your child based on the recommendations in their IEP. The CPSE does *not* arrange placement for children in general education classes, early childhood programs, or daycare settings.

If your child is a preschooler who has a placement recommendation for a “special class” (a class where all students have disabilities) or a special class in an integrated setting (a class where some students have disabilities and others do not), contact the CPSE for the district where you live. (See the box on the next page for contact information.)

### *IF YOUR CHILD IS IN GRADES K-8...*

If your child is in kindergarten through 8th grade and needs related services only, Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS), Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) services, or a special class in a District 1-32 school (special class ratios 12:1 or 12:1:1), and you participated in the kindergarten or middle school admissions process, go to the school you received an offer to in the spring. If you moved or did not participate, contact your zoned school, if you have one, to arrange for registration. To find your zoned school, go to [www.schools.nyc.gov/find-a-school](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/find-a-school) or call 311. If you do not have a zoned school or would like to explore other options, visit a Family Welcome Center. To find more information about the various special education classroom settings in District 1-32 schools, see [www.schools.nyc.gov/special-education/school-settings/district-schools](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/special-education/school-settings/district-schools).

### *IF YOUR CHILD IS IN HIGH SCHOOL...*

If your child participated in the high school admissions process, your child should go to the school where they received an offer in the spring. If your family has moved or would like to explore other options, visit a Family Welcome Center.

### IF YOUR CHILD NEEDS A DISTRICT 75 PROGRAM...

If your child is in elementary, middle, or high school and needs a District 75 program (special class ratios 12:1:1, 8:1:1, 6:1:1, or 12:1+(3:1)), and you still haven't been sent a Prior Written Notice or School Location Letter, or you received a letter with a placement that you don't think will be able to meet your child's needs, call the District 75 placement office for your borough:

- Director of Placement: (212) 802-1578
- Manhattan: (212) 802-1570
- Bronx: (212) 802-1569
- Brooklyn: (212) 802-1574
- Queens: (212) 802-1573
- Staten Island: (212) 802-1572

For more information about District 75, see [www.schools.nyc.gov/special-education/school-settings/district-75](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/special-education/school-settings/district-75) or call (212) 802-1578.

### IF YOUR CHILD WAS NOT IN A NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOL LAST YEAR AND HAS AN IEP FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE...

If your child is in preschool, contact the CPSE. If your child is in grades K-8, contact your zoned school, if you have one, to register—that school will complete a Comparable Services Plan (CSP). If you do not already have a placement for the fall and do not have a zoned or assigned school, visit a Family Welcome Center for a placement. Either the Family Welcome Center or the school that is assigned with complete the CSP. If you believe your child should attend a specialized public school program or a non-public school, visit your home district's Committee on Special Education (CSE). If possible, bring a copy of your child's IEP from the former school district and copies of any recent evaluations to all of the above.

### What if my elementary or middle school child shows up to their zoned school for the first day of school and we're told that the school doesn't have a seat?

Your zoned school should let your child attend classes there while the DOE finds another school that does have a seat. If another school has already been found, the zoned school should give you a letter with that information. If the school turns you away without giving you another option, contact:

- The Family Support Coordinator at your District Superintendent's Office; and/or
- The DOE's Office of Student Enrollment.

**Family Welcome Centers**  
[www.schools.nyc.gov/welcomecenters](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/welcomecenters)  
 The centers are open Monday through Thursday, 8am–5pm, and Fridays, 8am–3pm.

**Office of Student Enrollment**  
 CALL (718) 935-2009 or EMAIL  
[ESEnrollment@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:ESEnrollment@schools.nyc.gov)  
*(elementary school)*  
[MSEnrollment@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:MSEnrollment@schools.nyc.gov)  
*(middle school)*  
[HSEnrollment@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:HSEnrollment@schools.nyc.gov)  
*(high school)*

**District Superintendents' Offices & Family Support Coordinators**  
[www.schools.nyc.gov/Superintendents](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/Superintendents)

**Office of Pupil Transportation**  
 CALL (718) 392-8855 or go to  
[www.optnyc.org](http://www.optnyc.org)

**Committees on Special Education & Preschool Special Education**  
[www.schools.nyc.gov/special-education/help/cpse-cse](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/special-education/help/cpse-cse)

**DOE's Special Education Hotline**  
 CALL (718) 935-2007 or EMAIL  
[specialeducation@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:specialeducation@schools.nyc.gov)

#### AFC's Jill Chaifetz Education Helpline

If you try everything suggested here, but your child is still not in school or not receiving special education services, please call (866) 427-6033, Monday–Thursday, 10am–4pm.

## **When I tried to get help for my child who is entering pre-K or kindergarten, the school told me that neither is required.**

Although you don't *have* to send your child to preschool or kindergarten, you have the *right* to send your child to a pre-K program the year they turn four and to kindergarten the year they turn five. If you want your child to attend preschool or kindergarten, the DOE must provide an appropriate class and all the services on your child's IEP. In fact, if your child qualifies, they can start receiving special education services in the year they turn three. Your child has a right to receive special education services even if they are not enrolled in a preschool program or public school kindergarten class.

## **What if my child gets to school and the school doesn't have the type of program on the IEP?**

NYC public schools are expected to support the special education needs of most students from their community, so begin by working with your school. If that doesn't work, reach out to the DOE's Special Education Hotline or contact the Family Support Coordinator at your Superintendent's office.

If your child's IEP needs changes, the school is supposed to hold an IEP meeting to discuss and agree on appropriate supports and services. It may also be possible to amend the IEP without a meeting if you and the school agree in writing to the changes.

**IMPORTANT:** *Any changes to the IEP must be based on your child's needs and not simply the programs the school currently offers, and no changes should be made without giving you a chance to give input.*

## **What if my child hasn't been offered a placement for a self-contained class (special class with only students with disabilities in a District 75 or district school) before the start of the school year?**

First, see the steps above for information about who you can contact to ask for a placement. Additionally, you may be entitled to a P-I letter ("Nickerson" letter) that allows you to place your child in a state-approved non-public school that can provide the program on your child's IEP for one school year at DOE expense. This is complicated, so please see *Advocates for Children's Guide to Special Education* for more details: <http://bit.ly/afcspecialled>.

## **My child is supposed to receive assistive technology (AT) or related services (OT, PT, counseling, etc.). Who do I contact if that's not happening?**

Your child has a right to receive all the services on their IEP. All schools should be able to provide related services and AT. Check with your school in September to make sure things are in place and work with the school if they're not. You can also reach out to the Family Support Coordinator in the Superintendent's office. If you are still having trouble, call or email the DOE's Special Education Hotline or email [RelatedServices@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:RelatedServices@schools.nyc.gov).

If the school cannot provide a service, school staff should work with their Borough Citywide Office (B/CO) to identify a provider at a contract agency. If that doesn't work, the B/CO will issue a Related Services Authorization (RSA). The RSA is a voucher that allows you to go to an independent provider for related services.

If your child is not receiving the related services on their preschool IEP, contact your Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) administrator. If the CPSE can't help, call the DOE's Special Education Hotline or email [RelatedServices@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:RelatedServices@schools.nyc.gov).

## **WHEN YOU ENROLL YOUR CHILD...**

Bring proof of immunization, proof of New York City residence, and the IEP (if new to New York City). If you are enrolling in the New York City school system for the first time, bring proof of age. For the list of documents that the school will accept, visit <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enrollment-help/new-students> or call (718) 935-2009. Even without proof of immunization or age, your child should still be enrolled while the school helps get these documents. You do NOT need to show proof of immigration status.

### **My child is supposed to get specialized (door-to-door) transportation, but we have not heard anything yet about pick-up arrangements. What should I do?**

If your child needs specialized transportation to get to school, the IEP must make that clear. Some students may need a mini-bus, special equipment, air conditioning, or a shorter ride. If so, make sure that's all on the IEP. Ask for an IEP meeting to add that language. Bring copies of your evaluations and a doctor's note thoroughly identifying and explaining the need for the additional services to the meeting. Depending on your child's medical condition, the DOE may require extra forms to be filled out by your child's doctor before the meeting. Those forms can be found on the DOE website along with all other medical forms at [www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/health-and-wellness/health-services](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/health-and-wellness/health-services). If you don't see what you need, contact OPT's Customer Service number or the DOE's Special Education Hotline.

If your child's IEP includes specialized transportation, you should get a letter by the end of August with their bus route information. The letter will include the medical accommodations and special equipment needs (if any) listed on your child's IEP. You can also call OPT's Customer Service number. Have your child's NYC student ID number when you call. If the letter comes, but has information that is not correct, or if you don't receive a letter at all, contact your child's school and call OPT right away.

Going forward, families must have an NYC Schools Account (NYCSA) in order to find information about their child's busing online. If you don't have an NYCSA, which gives parents and guardians access to all sorts of information about their children, please go to your child's school or a Family Welcome Center to register for one, or go online to <https://mystudent.nyc/>.

### **My child has medical needs and requires nursing supports at school. What should I do?**

If your child needs nursing services at school, make sure to get all medical forms, including the medication authorization form (MAF) and/or request for provision of medically prescribed treatment (non-medication), filled out by their doctor and submitted to the DOE as soon as possible. If your child requires a one-on-one nurse at school or on the bus, please make sure that the doctor states your child's need for a 1:1 nurse on every form, *even when the form does not ask for this information*. We also recommend that your child's doctor submit a separate letter or report detailing your child's medical and nursing needs. You must submit new forms each school year; they are available at [www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/health-and-wellness/health-services](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/health-and-wellness/health-services).

## **My child uses a wheelchair, and I am worried that their classroom isn't going to be accessible. Who should I call to find out? What should I do if it's not?**

Call the school's principal or parent coordinator and ask. You can also find a list of accessible sites at [www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/buildings/building-accessibility](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/buildings/building-accessibility). There you can find Building Accessibility Profiles (BAPs) for partially accessible schools at every level. Those profiles have a lot more detail about what in the school building is and is not accessible. If you are still worried, reach out to the DOE's Special Education Hotline or write to [accessibility@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:accessibility@schools.nyc.gov).

## **What are the DOE's specialized programs?**

All schools are expected to serve and meet the needs of most students with disabilities from their neighborhood. There are some highly specialized programs that are not offered in every school. These include programs for some students with autism or intellectual disabilities, and programs for students who need bilingual special education services. For more information on these specialized programs, see [www.schools.nyc.gov/special-education/school-settings/specialized-programs](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/special-education/school-settings/specialized-programs).

If your child has already been evaluated for one of the specialized programs, but doesn't yet have an offer to one, or you are interested in learning more about specialized programs, contact the specialized programs team at [specializedprograms@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:specializedprograms@schools.nyc.gov). If your child hasn't yet been evaluated, but you'd like them to be, speak to the IEP team at your school to arrange.

## **My child has been accepted at a charter school. When we showed up to register and school staff found out they have an IEP, staff said we could stay only if we agreed to go without our special education services or change the services, or they turned us away altogether. What should I do?**

Call the Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships at (212) 374-5419 or go to [www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/support/get-help-at-your-charter-school](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/support/get-help-at-your-charter-school) and click on "file a complaint."

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION....**

We urge families to look at the DOE's website, specifically:

- [www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enrollment-help/meeting-student-needs/students-with-disabilities](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enrollment-help/meeting-student-needs/students-with-disabilities) (for specific information on enrollment and students with disabilities)
- [www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enrollment-help/meeting-student-needs](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enrollment-help/meeting-student-needs) (for enrollment information for all students)
- [www.schools.nyc.gov/special-education/preschool-to-age-21/special-education-in-nyc](http://www.schools.nyc.gov/special-education/preschool-to-age-21/special-education-in-nyc) (for information about special education supports and services in New York City)

Advocates for Children's guides for parents are available at [www.advocatesforchildren.org/get\\_help/guides\\_and\\_resources](http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/get_help/guides_and_resources).

*This fact sheet does not constitute legal advice. This fact sheet attempts to summarize existing policies or laws without stating the opinion of AFC. If you have a legal problem, please contact an attorney or advocate.*

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