



### **Overview**

Public schools are required to provide eligible children with disabilities with specialized instruction, services and supports to address their educational needs in the least restrictive environment. Your child may be eligible for special education if your child: 1) has an intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, hearing impairment, deafness, speech or language impairment, visual impairment (including blindness), autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities and 2) needs special education as a result of that disability, as determined by an evaluation team.

Under Pennsylvania and federal law, a child with a disability has a right to special education and related services that are provided at no cost to the family, under public supervision, in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), and in conformity with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Once a determination is made by an evaluation team that a child is eligible for special education, the IEP is developed (initially, and then as needed but at least annually) by an IEP Team, including parents, to define individualized goals for the child, what specialized instruction and related services are needed, and how often and where they will be provided.

Each school must ensure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are nondisabled. The first place the IEP team must consider is the general classroom in the neighborhood school your child would attend if your child did not have a disability.

### **How do I get started?**

Eligibility for special education is decided through an evaluation process:

A parent or guardian may request an evaluation of their child for special education at any time. This can be done by sending a letter to the school principal or by asking a school employee, such as your child's teacher. Keep a record of your written or verbal request. A Permission to Evaluate–Evaluation Request form should be sent to you within 10 calendar days of your request.

-OR-

The school may contact you to request permission to evaluate your child. You must consent in writing to your child's evaluation before the process can begin.

### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

The PEAL Center  
[www.pealcenter.org](http://www.pealcenter.org)

Hispanos Unidos para Niños Excepcionales (HUNE)  
<https://www.huneinc.org/>

The PA Training and Technical Assistance Center  
<https://www.pattan.net/>

Education Law Center  
<https://www.elc-pa.org/>

Disability Rights Pennsylvania:  
[www.disabilityrightspa.org/](http://www.disabilityrightspa.org/)