

## **I am concerned about my child - what can I do?**

*Frequently asked questions about services and accommodations available*

### **If I think my child has a problem that impacts their learning experience, what should I do?**

First discuss your concerns with your child's classroom teacher. If your child has a problem that prevents him or her from functioning in a general school program without special help, your child's teacher makes a referral to the Student Success/Study Team (SST). You may also send a written request for an assessment to your local school or district's Special Education Department.

### **What is a Student Success/Study Team (SST)?**

The SST is intervention to help your child succeed in school. The SST is made up of the parent(s), teachers and other school personnel based at your local school. This team reviews a student's learning strengths and needs. The SST then plans steps to take to assist the student in succeeding in the general education program. Some children will never go beyond this step

### **What is an assessment?**

An assessment in special education is the process used to determine a child's specific learning strengths and needs in all areas of suspected disabilities. It may be used to determine whether or not a child is eligible for special education services. This involves the collection of records, observation by staff, parent reports and teacher reports. In this context, reports are forms that describe the student and what their behavior, strengths and weaknesses may be. Specific standardized educational tests may be used to decide if a student meets a threshold for special education.

### **May I obtain an independent assessment of my child, and must that assessment be considered by the school district in educational planning?**

Parents may have an independent assessment done, at their own expense, at any time, and the results may be considered by the school to support the need for appropriate educational services. Under certain conditions the school district may pay for an independent assessment. A diagnosis by a medical professional may not mean that an IEP is required. Even with a medical diagnosis the student must meet the requirements under the law (IDEA). This is determined by the school district, but can be appealed.

### **What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?**

The IEP is a written document developed for each student eligible for special education. Eligible students who fit into one of thirteen categories specified by law.

An IEP is based on the educational needs of the student as specified by the IEP team (professionals and parents). The IEP is designed for the student to make progress with their education in a way that best fits their needs. An IEP can be fairly simple or very long and in depth, depending on the needs of the student. It includes a list of what services the student will receive and where and how often he/she will receive them. They also include a list of measurable educational goals for the student to achieve in the coming year. IEPs are required by law due to the IDEA act.

### **If my child is NOT eligible for special education services and an IEP, are there still ways that the school can help my child?**

If your child does not qualify for an IEP in one of the 13 categories, there are other ways in

which your child may receive help. Accommodations, or changes to the regular education environment, can be made for students at the school site level. In some cases a student may qualify for a 504 accommodation plan which is developed by parents and school staff.

### What is a 504 Plan?

A 504 plan allows students with disabilities to access general education classwork. This is for students who have a disability that significantly impacts a major life activity. Examples include allowing additional time for testing or homework, specifying the location a child needs to sit in a classroom, or changes to a classroom to allow easier physical access for that student. 504 plans exist because of federal civil rights law.

### What organizations are there where I can find out more?

**SELPA 1 CAC** - A parent and community organization for four local school districts that provides parent education, support groups and ability awareness training. [www.selpa1cac.org](http://www.selpa1cac.org)

**Parents Helping Parents** - Offers support, info, and classes to families of people with special needs. [www.php.com](http://www.php.com) 408-727-5775

**Learning Challenges Committee** - Parent organization from local PTAs that help with advocacy and inclusion for students and families with special needs. [lcc.lamvptac.org](http://lcc.lamvptac.org)

