

CHILD FIND AND REFERRAL

School personnel and other concerned parties are responsible for identifying children who are having difficulty in school and may need special education services. Teachers usually contact a parent and talk over these concerns. Others who are in contact with children including parents, doctors, child care workers, etc., may also recognize that a child is having difficulties with some aspect of development.

How do I know if my infant or preschooler might need a special education program?

If you suspect your child is having difficulty learning and is an infant, ages birth through two years eleven months, or preschool age, 3 years through 4 years 9 months, contact the County Education Office at 805-964-4711 in Southern Santa Barbara County and 805-922-0334 in Northern Santa Barbara County.

How do I know if my school-age child might need a special education program?

If your child has a demonstrated problem that prevents functioning effectively in a regular school program without special assistance, then your child may need a special program. Special education is one kind of special program. Public schools also have other programs available to assist students who need help, such as programs for students with limited English ability, School Improvement Programs, and Response to Intervention Programs.

What is response to intervention?

Response to intervention is the practice of providing high-quality instruction and intervention matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make important decisions about change in instruction or goals, and applying child response data to important educational decisions in the general education environment.

Who do I contact if I have a concern?

First, contact your child's teacher. If you are not able to resolve the problem, then speak to the principal. He/she may be able to suggest other school programs or modifications to help your child. School sites often have other staff, such as a resource teacher or counselor, to talk to you about your concerns. If you don't feel your concerns are being addressed, call the school district office and talk to someone in the special education department.

What happens before a referral to special education?

Before the school refers a student for a special education assessment, certain modifications of the student's current program must have been considered and, where appropriate, utilized. The first step is usually the referral to the Student Study Team (SST). Your district may call this team by another name, such as: Student Intervention Team (SIT), Student Assistance Team (SAT), Child Guidance Team (CGT), Student Success Team (SST), Child Study Team (CST), etc. The Student Study Team (SST) is made up of teachers, school administrators, and other specialists, such as, speech-language pathologist (SLP) also known as the speech/language specialist or speech therapist, counselors, or the reading specialist. The purpose of the SST is for general education teachers to identify the students' problems and to use all the resources available to the general education classroom to solve them. This may include providing increasing intensive interventions to help the student make appropriate progress. Students should be referred to special education only after all other school resources have been considered and appropriately used in a general classroom experience. Parents are strongly urged to utilize the general education intervention process before referring to special education; however, parents may at any time officially refer the student, in writing, for an assessment to determine special education eligibility. The SST process is not a required part of the IEP eligibility process (See question #16, "What is a Referral for Special Education Assessment").

What are some of the program modifications the school might consider and utilize?

The Student Study Team may consider many options to assist the student. These options include but are not limited to:

- Classroom modifications
- Other general education programs such as Migrant Education, Alternative Programs, and/or programs for basic skills remediation (Chapter 1, Remedial Reading, Learning Assistance Specialist, RtI etc.)
- Using special materials
- Specialized Remedial Program(s)
- Behavior Contracts
- Counseling
- Schedule Changes
- Modified Day

- Independent Study
- Retention
- Suggestions for parents to implement at home
- Referral to other agencies or medical professionals

Why is the Student Study Team process necessary?

The use of the Student Study Team (SST) assists regular classroom teachers in modifying instruction for students having difficulty in their classrooms. It also helps prevent identifying students as students with exceptional needs when all they really need is a little extra attention.

The SST also assists in documenting that modifications in the regular classroom have been implemented and whether these modifications meet the student's educational needs. Documentation that the classroom modification cannot meet student needs is a necessary part in determining that the student may require special education programs and services. When the members of the SST believe that all reasonable alternatives have been tried and are not sufficient, a referral should be initiated for special education assessment. Parents may refer for assessment while other informal interventions are occurring.

Does someone contact me if special education services are being considered?

Parents have the right to be a part of the Student Study Team (SST) process and will know of the referral for assessment by participating at the SST meeting. If the parent is not in attendance when the referral is made by the team, the parent will receive a "Notice of Receipt of Referral for Special Education Assessment" in the mail prior to or with the receipt of an Assessment Plan. Usually parents are contacted by phone to discuss the referral. You should discuss the Assessment Plan with your student's teacher, psychologist, or other specialist who is conducting the assessment to be sure you understand the process.

What is a referral for special education assessment?

A formal referral is a written request for assessment to determine whether the student requires special education services. Within 15 days of receipt of the referral, an assessment plan may be submitted to the parent(s) for written permission to begin the evaluation or the district may choose to deny the assessment in the form of a written notice to the parent, explaining the reason why the district will not be

assessing the student at this time. An initial assessment may not begin without written parental permission.

Who can make a referral?

In addition to the SST, a formal written referral for assessment can be made directly to the school site or district administrator by parent or guardian, school personnel, public or private agency, student, or other interested persons.

However, the district may encourage the referring party to utilize the SST process since a direct referral does not eliminate the need for documentation of general education modifications. Parents are notified if anyone other than parent makes a referral. The district may decide if an assessment is appropriate or not. If an assessment is to be conducted, the parent will receive a Prior Written Notice and an Assessment Plan. If the district does not think an assessment is appropriate, the parent will be informed in writing why the assessment is not appropriate at this time in accordance with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 1415 (b)(3) and (4) and (c)(1) of Title 20 of the United States Code.

What is 504?

504 is NOT a special education law. It is a section of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Section 504 prohibits discrimination against handicapped persons, including both students and staff members, by school districts receiving federal financial assistance. All individuals who have exceptional needs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are also considered to be handicapped and therefore protected under Section 504. However, all individuals who have been determined to be handicapped under Section 504 may not have exceptional needs under IDEA. The IDEA defines as eligible only students who have certain specified types of disabilities and who, because of one of those conditions, need special education (specially designed instruction). Section 504, on the other hand, protects all handicapped students, defined as those having any physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (including learning). Section 504 covers all students who meet this definition, even if they do not fall within the IDEA enumerated categories and even if they do not need to be in a special education program. A 504 Plan is a protection for students who may need accommodations in the general education program but are not eligible for IDEA special education services.

