

Niskayuna SEPTA Agenda

December 8, 2021

7:00pm

Please note: member business and all reports will be brief or tabled in order to provide time for our speaker series.

Meeting called to order 7:03pm

In attendance (18): S. Grimason, C. Morrison, Betzaida, Tiffany, H. Schlossberg, Doussou, J. Dominelli, N. Modasra, E. Morphy, N. Normandin, E. Halayko, K. Tully, J. DiPasquale, A. Mahar, B. Graber, J. Feuerbach, A. Yakhoub, N. Rabino, T. Beauparlant

Speaker Series

Tina Beauparlant, Regional Manager and Educational Specialist with the Capital District office, Parent to Parent of NYS: **A Beginner's Guide to the Special Education Process.**

Tina's presentation notes

This presentation is for parents that are just starting out – but not everyone starts off in special ed in the same way! We all come into the special ed system in a very different way, and our experiences are unique. We each make our own knowledge base.

Presentation will be distributed to us. Highlights are below:

What is special ed?

- Specially designed education – individual or group instruction; special services or programs
- Designed to meet *unique* needs of students with disabilities. Unique is key!
- Key term: FAPE - free, appropriate public education. Special ed services and programs are provided at no cost.

Initial referral process for services

- Referrals must be in writing to CSE (committee on special education) chairperson – start with your home district first
- You can find this information on each school district's website
- Guide: [*Special education in plain language*](#) - has good templates
- You can also talk to principal to discuss options. E.g.: RTI - response to intervention - can provide some help at first.
- You can withdraw your request.

Then what?

- Evaluation to determine services. This is the overall process, though districts may vary in steps for flexibility.
- CSE determines if a student is eligible for special ed services.
- *Even if you have a diagnosis, the diagnosis must be impeding education.*
- District has a written consent form. Must be used.

- *Evaluations take place on a yearly basis.*
- Pre-schools (ages 3-5) – referrals go to Committee on Pre-school Special Education (CPSE) – you choose an evaluator from an approved list.
- County pays for services; CPSE administers.
- District begins to pay for services for ages 5-21, CSE at this point.
- Parental input is so important! Make sure you know the test being done on your child.

Evaluation

- Physical exam
- Psychological evaluation – mandatory for pre-school, only if determined appropriate for school-age students
- An evaluation almost always happens
- OT, PT, Speech – related services. Commissioner's Rules & Regulations, part 200 show all of the related services.
- Social history
- Observation of your child in their current educational setting – make sure kids are being observed *in different parts of the day*

Tests are assessments that are appropriate for your child:

- Functional behavior assessment (FBA) - can range from avoidance (struggling to sit in class because actually struggling in class), to refusal to do particular work, to problems attending
- Assistive technology evaluation (ATE) - technology to help do school work (e.g., iPad with software instead of pencil/paper)
- Independent Education Evaluation (IEE) - done separately
- Vocational assessment for post-secondary (VAPS) – required at age 14, or sooner if necessary. Leaving HS – what does a child see themselves doing after high school? IEP can help address this. Section might be blocked out before HS, but won't be once child is in HS. *Remember we're hoping to make everyone's dreams a reality!*

Timelines

- Pre-school: initial eval 60 *calendar* days (Saturdays and Sundays are included) from signed consent. When the district receives your signed consent, the time clock starts. Mail it in or bring it to CSE chair office.
School age (5+): initial eval 60 *school* days from signed consent unless extended by mutual agreement of student's parents. Sat/Sun/holidays not included
- What if district is out of compliance?
 - Eval not done – district out of compliance
 - If COVID – could have been done last year, and there were certain stipulations
 - Could file complaint with state ed, but would make sure this doesn't happen again

Members of committee - don't forget, your child should be included! Learning self advocacy.

Eligibility

- Have to have a variety of diagnoses, more than one diagnosis is possible
- BUT there will be one of 13 classifications, looking at which one is impeding your child the most
- You might see additional info under medical alerts in the IEP. Really important for everyone - students, teachers, parents.

IEP

- Your concerns as a parent are important and should be part of this
- Think about needs for your child
- IEPs can be / should be well rounded
- Parent training is so important and can be included in your IEP – every district does this very differently
- Don't forget about transition services at age 15 or possibly a younger age if appropriate

LRE - Least Restrictive Environment - this is an important term! Location and placement, LRE comes into play

ACCESS-VR and other transition coordinators may be contracted out.

Annual review = 1x/year = reevaluates the program and IEP → can be done more frequently
Only holiday over the summer: July 4

ESY = extended school year

Reevaluations done every 3 years on diagnosis

PRIOR NOTICE

Nobody can stop services once they are implemented. If something needs to change, district needs prior written notice. Have to go back to Committee to have a meeting, and everyone must agree that the service will stop. This includes identification, eval, or ed placement.

Nothing can be changed without a formal, legal CSE meeting (compared to a team meeting - when it might be just teachers / providers). A legal CSE meeting:

- Notice given to parents
- All participants are present + CSE chairperson

Team meetings

- Take notes! This helps prepare you for a potential CSE meeting.

Pay attention to the alerts on an IEP - and make sure teachers know about that.

You're not there to be liked but you are there to be an advocate.

What if you can't work things out?

- You can make a state complaint - to state ed + district
- You can ask for an impartial hearing, but you have to do mediation first
 - Mediation centers are continually trained on special ed law
 - Mediation process is 30 days; if not resolved, then go to resolution then hearing
 - The hope is to never have to go through that...

What if you're not eligible for an IEP?

- Committee must say why / provide info
- But you can go to the 504 team - simple accommodations / modifications.
- By law don't need to provide any other services (PT, OT, etc.) for 504

COVID changes?

- Things are back to normal now
- But we need to be reasonable – and things are up and down
- Every district is trying to figure it out
- 21 counties, so many districts – every school is trying to make it work
- *Engage in a conversation with the CSE, see if you can get make up services*

Parent advocates?

- Parents can connect with other parents, but where to find an advocate? This is a parent MEMBER. It's not mandated any more, but you as a parent you can request one – has to be in writing, 72 hours in advance.
- P2P will find and connect with others. P2P will talk with you, help create agenda for CSE meeting, look at IEP.
- (Tina likely won't be the person that does that - she teaches parents to be advocates)

What other sources / avenues for parents? What if I feel overwhelmed?

- Connect with other parents, don't feel alone
- Try to make sure you know your rights
- Talk to other parents
- THIS CAN BE A LONELY ROAD – connect with others!
- P2P has a parent matching program – very specific matching based on support you need

<https://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications>

Reports tabled for next meeting:

Member business

- [Meeting minutes for approval, 2021-11-16](#)

Presidents' Reports

- Thank you to everyone for making National Special Education Day a success!
- Sledding is planned for January 16 – more details on our mailing list and social media

Treasurer's Report

- Brief update on finances
- [Renew your membership online](#)

Faculty advisor's report

Adjournment