



Handbook for Caregivers  
Special Education  
2025-2026 School Year

Dear Caregivers,

The rules, regulations, and processes that are in place for students with disabilities are immense and complex. This handbook is an attempt to provide you information in a way that is more user-friendly. This is not a replacement for the official documents - including the Parent Rights in Special Education - and is not a replacement for the opportunity to have conversations with Special Educators and other professionals to ask questions to help you gain a better understanding of what is happening. It is offered to you simply as a resource.

Starting with the 2025-26 school year, we are shifting to a new model of delivery for special education. We will have professionals whose primary focus is case management and the procedural requirements of special education and we will have professionals whose primary focus will be on instruction and services. In this updated handbook, there is information about this change and how this will impact your interactions and communications with your child's special education team.

As in past years, this document will be a work in progress. Information that is new this year will be in blue text and starts on page 9. I will update it as new questions are posed, new processes are developed, and/or feedback is given about it. For this reason and the fact that there are many links built into it, if you are able to access it electronically, I would encourage you to do so. If you would like a printed copy, please let us know and we will be happy to provide one. Please send me your thoughts and questions so that I can make improvements and make this useful for you.

We appreciate that you entrust your children to us every day and look forward to partnering with you in the coming school year!

Take care,

Peggy-Sue Van Nostrand  
MRPS Director of Student Support Services

## Special Education Department

Name	Role	Contact Information
Peggy-Sue Van Nostrand	Director of Student Support Services	<a href="mailto:peggysue@mpsvt.org">peggysue@mpsvt.org</a> (802) 225-8687
Pam Foster	Assistant to the Director of Student Support Services	<a href="mailto:pamf@mpsvt.org">pamf@mpsvt.org</a> (802) 225-8686
Kristin Bowers	Out of District Case Manager	<a href="mailto:kristinhagenbarth@mpsvt.org">kristinhagenbarth@mpsvt.org</a>
Lindsay Thomas	School Psychologist	<a href="mailto:lindsaythomas@mpsvt.org">lindsaythomas@mpsvt.org</a>
Suzanne DaVia	Special Educator, District Evaluation Team	<a href="mailto:suzanne@mpsvt.org">suzanne@mpsvt.org</a>
Joe Fricione	K-6 Case Manager	<a href="mailto:josephfricione@mpsvt.org">josephfricione@mpsvt.org</a>
Theresa Akerley	7-12 Case Manager	<a href="mailto:theresaakerley@mpsvt.org">theresaakerley@mpsvt.org</a>
Emily Carley	Literacy Interventionist	<a href="mailto:emilyc@mpsvt.org">emilyc@mpsvt.org</a>
Tracy Titchner	Physical Therapist	<a href="mailto:tracytitchner@mpsvt.org">tracytitchner@mpsvt.org</a>
Andrew Lafleur Alicia Riesterer	Occupational Therapists	<a href="mailto:andrewlafleur@mpsvt.org">andrewlafleur@mpsvt.org</a> <a href="mailto:alciariesterer@mpsvt.org">alciariesterer@mpsvt.org</a>
Abbie Eldridge Chea Snyder Paula Gervia Sarah Olson	Speech Language Pathologists	<a href="mailto:abbieeldridge@mpsvt.org">abbieeldridge@mpsvt.org</a> <a href="mailto:cheasnyder@mpsvt.org">cheasnyder@mpsvt.org</a> <a href="mailto:paulag@mpsvt.org">paulag@mpsvt.org</a> <a href="mailto:saraholson@mpsvt.org">saraholson@mpsvt.org</a>
Brenda Bolio Morgan St. John	Early Childhood Special Educators	<a href="mailto:brendab@mpsvt.org">brendab@mpsvt.org</a> <a href="mailto:morganstjohn@mpsvt.org">morganstjohn@mpsvt.org</a>
Julie Smart Dan LeFebvre Pat Collier Sarah Gardner Rachel Popoli	UES Building-Based Special Educators	<a href="mailto:juliesmart@mpsvt.org">juliesmart@mpsvt.org</a> <a href="mailto:daniell@mpsvt.org">daniell@mpsvt.org</a> <a href="mailto:patc@mpsvt.org">patc@mpsvt.org</a> <a href="mailto:sarahgardner@mpsvt.org">sarahgardner@mpsvt.org</a> <a href="mailto:rachelpopoli@mpsvt.org">rachelpopoli@mpsvt.org</a>
Ashley Dubois	MSMS Building-Based	<a href="mailto:ashleyd@mpsvt.org">ashleyd@mpsvt.org</a>

Tim Fuller Ricky Powell Jenn Bryant Mollie Dawson	Special Educators	<a href="mailto:timothyfuller@mpsvt.org">timothyfuller@mpsvt.org</a> <a href="mailto:rickypowell@mpsvt.org">rickypowell@mpsvt.org</a> <a href="mailto:jennbryant@mpsvt.org">jennbryant@mpsvt.org</a> <a href="mailto:mollied@mpsvt.org">mollied@mpsvt.org</a>
Ian Parker Bill Laidlaw Becca Gentile Kassandra (KP) Perantoni Fachi Ferachi	MHS Building-Based Special Educators	<a href="mailto:ianparker@mpsvt.org">ianparker@mpsvt.org</a> <a href="mailto:bill.laidlaw@mpsvt.org">bill.laidlaw@mpsvt.org</a> <a href="mailto:rebeccagentile@mpsvt.org">rebeccagentile@mpsvt.org</a> <a href="mailto:kassandraperantoni@mpsvt.org">kassandraperantoni@mpsvt.org</a> <a href="mailto:krisferachi@mpsvt.org">krisferachi@mpsvt.org</a>

## Referral for special education evaluation

Our schools have a federal requirement to locate, identify and evaluate any child ages 3 and up who may require special education and related services due to the impact of a disability in order to access and benefit from public education. If you are wondering about your child and if they might have a disability, here are some considerations from a resource published by the VT Agency of Education.

### **Does my child need a special education evaluation? Considerations for caregivers**

Educators are frequently asked by caregivers if and when they should request a special education evaluation for their child. *Caregivers have the right to request an evaluation at any time and the district is obligated to consider that request.* The information below is offered as a resource to help caregivers in their decision-making. Students with disabilities are the population served by special education. There may be other factors that contribute to a student falling behind in their academics, which may not be due to a disability. The Multi-Tiered Systems of Support within MRPS are in place to provide support to all students as needed.

The following lists are from the VT Agency of Education Special Education Evaluation Implementation Guide (August 2022):

### **Signs of Suspected Disability**

#### **Early Childhood (5-7 years old)**

- Delayed speech
- Trouble learning numbers, the alphabet, colors, shapes, etc.
- Has problems responding when being called from across the room, even when it involves something interesting
- Doesn't play games involving back and forth play
- Doesn't point or shows things to others
- Doesn't understand simple instructions
- Doesn't play pretend or make-believe
- Doesn't make eye contact
- Doesn't respond to people outside the family
- Shows extreme behavior (unusually fearful, aggressive, shy, or sad)

- Is unusually withdrawn and not active
- Is easily distracted, has trouble focusing on one activity for more than 5 min.
- Can't jump in place
- Has trouble scribbling
- Resists dressing, sleeping, using toilet
- Loses skills he or she once had
- Can't brush teeth, wash, and dry hands, or get undressed without help

#### Middle-Aged Children (8-12 years old)

- Poor concentration or sustaining attentions
- Difficulty following directions
- Difficulty organizing tasks or activities
- Poor memorization
- Hard time getting started with tasks
- Hyperactivity/ impulsivity
- Strange or repetitive language patterns
- Difficulty with oral language (production)
- Hard time understanding language
- Poor social skills
- Hard time making friends
- Poor spelling
- Slow, inaccurate reading skills
- Difficulty with pronunciation inability to relate to others

#### Teenagers (13 years and older)

- Slow to learn new skills
- Poor concentration or sustained attention
- Unable to master tasks
- Slow to progress or make progress
- Trouble reading
- Impulsivity/Hyperactivity
- Hard time with problem solving or logical thinking
- Poor memorization
- Aggression
- Withdrawal
- Excessive anxiety
- Self-injurious behavior

If you live in or attend a private school in Montpelier or Roxbury and would like to request an evaluation for your child, please contact Suzanne DaVia at [suzanne@mpsvt.org](mailto:suzanne@mpsvt.org). If your child is between the ages of 3-5, your request should be sent to Brenda Bolio ([brendab@mpsvt.org](mailto:brendab@mpsvt.org)). The district is required to respond to your request within 15 calendar days.

**Eligibility for special education:** There are three “gates” that must be met in order for your child to be determined to be eligible for special education: 1) Disability; 2) Adverse effect on educational performance; and 3) Need for specially designed instruction. In addition to these three gates, a team has to verify that a student’s performance is not due to a lack of appropriate instruction in reading and math and is not due to a student having limited English proficiency.

**Gate 1: Areas of disability under Special Education:**

- Developmental Delay (3-5 year olds)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Deaf-Blindness
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Loss
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability (*Dyslexia is listed as one of the conditions that falls under Specific Learning Disability*)
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment

Each of these categories have specific criteria in the Vermont Special Education Rules that must be met for a student to be eligible under them. Sometimes you may have documentation that you can share with the district that provides the information needed for this gate. Other times, the team will decide that assessments are necessary to make a determination.

**Gate 2: Adverse effect:** If it is determined that a student meets the criteria for at least one of the disability areas listed above, then the team will need to consider if that disability is having an adverse effect on educational performance in at least one basic skill area. The basic skill areas that should be considered are:

- Oral expression
- Listening Comprehension
- Written Expression
- Basic Reading Skills
- Reading Comprehension
- Math Calculation
- Math Reasoning
- Functional Skills
- Motor Skills (only for Orthopedic Impairment)

The team does not need to look at all of these areas, but should identify any areas that are a concern. The team should look at several different types of evidence in making the determination that there is an adverse effect on educational performance that can be connected to the identified disability. This can include test scores, work samples, grades, attendance

records, behavioral data, progress monitoring data, observations by school staff and/or caregivers, and other data as decided by the team. More emphasis should be placed on a student's daily classroom work than on how they performed on a test. Evidence should be able to demonstrate the specific components of the basic skill areas being considered. A student's performance when compared to other students in their grade must be at least one grade level behind what is expected, demonstrated over an extended period of time, and be linked to the disability in order to say "yes" to this gate. We use the benchmark of at least one grade level behind because we know that there is some variability within a school year of when students master a grade-level skill.

*Please note that gate 2 (adverse effect) is not required when considering Developmental Delay, Deaf-Blindness, or Specific Learning Disability. If these are the only disability categories that a student has met criteria for, the team should go right to gate 3 (need for specially designed instruction). If these are identified as one of the disability categories that a student meets the criteria for, but there are other categories as well, adverse effect will need to be looked at for those other disability areas.*

**Gate 3: Need for specially designed instruction:**

If a student has met the criteria for gates 1 (has a disability) and 2 (demonstrates an adverse effect on educational performance), then the team needs to answer the following question: *Does the student require specially designed instruction that cannot be provided through the educational support system or through the school's standard instructional conditions?*

Specially Designed Instruction is customized based on the specific needs resulting from a student's disability. The team should identify the specific skills the student does not have, which they need in order to improve their educational performance. Additionally, the team should talk about what types of accommodations the student needs in order to access the grade-level curriculum. Please note that this is not about re-teaching academic content or providing initial instruction. This is also not for students who have fallen behind for reasons that are not connected to the identified disability.

If a student meets the criteria for all three gates and the team has verified that a student's performance is not due to a lack of appropriate instruction in reading and math and is not due to a student having limited English proficiency, then they are eligible for special education services.

**What to expect when you request a special education evaluation:** The district will schedule a team meeting (which will include you) to review data about your child and consider whether or not an evaluation will happen. Prior to or at this meeting, you will be given a copy of the [Parent rights in special education \(updated Oct 2022\)](#). If the team determines that an evaluation is warranted, the team will draft an Evaluation Plan. This plan will include:

- 1) the area(s) of disability to be considered
- 2) the basic skills area(s) of educational performance that may be negatively impacted by the suspected disability(ies) (*not applicable for Developmental Delay, Deaf-Blind or Specific Learning Disability*)

- 3) any specific questions that the team would like to have answered during the evaluation
- 4) the types of assessments and data that will be completed and reviewed
- 5) the qualifications/role of the person who will complete the various evaluations

If the team determines that a special education evaluation is not warranted at this time, the district will provide you with a written notice of this decision and why it was made. Referrals may be made, as appropriate, to the Education Support Team or 504 coordinator at your child's school to consider additional support for your child.

## **Initial Special Education Evaluations**

**What to expect:** Following the evaluation planning meeting, if the team determined that they will proceed with a special education evaluation, you will receive a written copy of the Evaluation Plan with all the components listed above, a Notice of Evaluation, and a Consent for Evaluation form. If you agree to doing the evaluation, you will need to sign the consent form and return it to Suzanne DaVia. The district cannot do any testing (other than what we do with all students) without your written consent. Once the district has received your signed consent, we have 60 calendar days to complete the evaluation, convene a meeting to determine eligibility, and send you a finalized Evaluation Report. To be in compliance with this timeline, eligibility meetings will be scheduled between days 50-55 from receipt of the signed consent, whenever possible.

If there is a reason that the evaluation will not be completed in the required timeline (for example, the student is frequently absent and testing could not be completed), the district will provide you a written notice that there will be a delay in its completion and will provide you the expected timeline for its completion.

If at any time after you have signed consent, you decide that you do not want to continue with the evaluation, you should notify the district and we are required to stop any testing that we have not completed.

Prior to the eligibility meeting, you will receive information from the assessments completed and other data that will be reviewed by the team to make a decision about eligibility for special education services. This will be shared with you in a google folder, unless you request that it is shared in a different manner.

At the eligibility determination meeting, the team will review the information from the assessments that were completed and other data to make decisions about each of the three gates identified earlier in this document: disability, adverse effect on educational performance, and need for specialized instruction. At the end of the meeting, all team members will be asked to initial the cover page of the Evaluation Report indicating whether or not they agree with the decision that was made.



If your child is found to be eligible for special education, an IEP team must meet within thirty calendar days to develop an initial IEP.

If there is disagreement among the team about eligibility, the person who has been identified as the LEA Representative must make the decision. If you do not agree with the decision about eligibility, you will be provided a document to fill out to share your reasons for disagreeing. You also have the right to request an Independent Educational Evaluation.

**Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE):** If you disagree with an evaluation completed by the school district, you are entitled to one Independent Educational Evaluation for every evaluation performed by the district with which you disagree, at no cost to you. Independent educational evaluation means an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the school district or supervisory union responsible for the education of your child. Requests for an Independent Educational Evaluation should be made to Peggy-Sue Van Nostrand, Director of Student Support Services ([peggysue@mpsvt.org](mailto:peggysue@mpsvt.org)), who will share the criteria and process for obtaining an IEE. Requests must be made and approved before you initiate an evaluation in order for the district to pay for it.

Following the eligibility meeting, you will receive a copy of the finalized Evaluation Report along with a Prior Written Notice of Decision (which will outline the decision about eligibility), and a copy of meeting minutes.

## **Re-evaluations (Triennial evaluations)**

**What to expect:** We are required to complete re-evaluations every three years for students who are eligible for special education. Under the updated rule changes, the identified disability from the initial evaluation is considered to be valid and still in place unless the team believes that there is data that indicates differently. Therefore the focus of a re-evaluation should be to look at current data to determine if there are additional needs or changes to services and/or instruction that need to happen. A planning meeting should be scheduled so the team can decide what the re-evaluation will look like. Teams can decide to:

1. Ask additional questions and complete new assessments as part of the re-evaluation
2. Complete a record review of available information
3. Determine that no re-evaluation is necessary

Option 1 or 2 must be completed if a team is determining that a student is no longer eligible for special education services. If new testing will need to be completed, an evaluation plan will be developed and your written consent will be required before it can happen. Re-evaluations need to be completed by the triennial due date (rather than the 60 days of the initial evaluation). If the decision is made to do a record review, the team will meet to create the evaluation plan but your written consent is not required. If the team decides that no re-evaluation is necessary, you will be asked to sign a form indicating that you agree with the decision to not do a re-evaluation. The date that you sign the form is the date from which the next triennial evaluation will be due.

Similar to the initial evaluation process, if the team has decided options 1 or 2 from above, an eligibility meeting will be scheduled. Prior to the eligibility meeting, you will receive information

from the assessments completed and other data that will be reviewed by the team to make a decision about eligibility for special education services. This will be shared with you in a google folder, unless you request that it is shared in a different manner. At the eligibility determination meeting, the team will review the information to make decisions about each of the three gates identified earlier in this document: disability, adverse effect on educational performance, and need for specialized instruction. At the end of the meeting, all team members will be asked to initial the cover page of the Evaluation Report indicating whether or not they agree with the decision that was made.

IEPs should be updated within 30 days of a re-evaluation to include any new information. If no re-evaluation was completed, the current IEP stays in place until the annual IEP review date.

## **K-12 Special Education Delivery Model changes beginning August 2025**

Our district's decision to implement a new K-12 special education model for the 2025-26 school year stems from an analysis of current challenges and emerging opportunities completed last school year by a team of special educators from across the district. This change in approach is driven by five key factors that directly impact student outcomes, educator effectiveness, and district operations: higher quality education for students, increased compliance with state and federal regulations, reduction of teacher burnout, expanding the candidate pool in a time of teachers shortages, and alleviating space issues in some of our buildings.

In our new K-12 model, we will have professionals whose primary focus is case management and the procedural requirements of special education. There will be one case manager for students with IEPs in grades K-6 and one case manager for students with IEPs in grades 7-12 (plus a separate case manager for students who attend schools outside our district). The case manager positions are virtual ones, so they may facilitate meetings online but there will still be an option for the rest of the team to be in person if that is the preference of the caregivers. Every student with an IEP who attends an MRPS school will also have a building-based special educator (BBSE) assigned to them as a secondary case manager, whose primary focus will be on instruction and services.

Caregivers will receive a letter of introduction from your student's case manager by the first day of school, which will include the name of the BBSE assigned to your student. A follow-up letter with the names of the service providers for your child's IEP services will be sent within the first month of school.

The most significant impact that you will experience from this change as a caregiver will be in the communication structures - who you will hear from or reach out to in various situations. The chart below outlines how the communication structures will work and some of the responsibilities of each role. It is recommended that you start with the case manager when you

have a question and they can help you navigate if information is needed from someone other than them. Their contact information is at the beginning of this handbook.

<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Case Manager</b>	<b>Building-based Special Educator/Service Provider</b>
Caregiver Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Communicate with caregivers regarding IEP and other regulatory concerns</li> <li>*Provide and review parent rights</li> <li>*Communicate with caregivers regarding services, accommodations and modification concerns</li> <li>*Coordinate quarterly (or monthly) progress reports and send to caregivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Communicate with caregivers regarding specific service progress and/or concerns for services being provided by BBSEs</li> </ul>
School Team Member Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Ensure that all team members have access to the current IEP</li> <li>* Coordinate and facilitate internal school team meetings, as needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Work with classroom teachers to ensure that curriculum is accessible and re: student accommodations</li> <li>*Work with administration re: behavior and discipline issues</li> </ul>
Scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Schedule all IEP meetings</li> <li>*Schedule MAPS and CSP meetings, as needed</li> <li>*Schedule Manifestation Determination meetings, as needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Schedule all services including special education services, related services, and consultations</li> <li>*Schedule IA services</li> </ul>
Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Attend eval planning and eligibility meetings for students in grade span</li> <li>*Attend weekly meeting with building-based special educators</li> <li>* Attend weekly meetings with Student Services Director</li> <li>*Facilitate all IEP meetings</li> <li>*Facilitate Manifestation Determination meetings (in coordination with Student Services Director), as needed</li> <li>*Facilitate MAPS meetings, as appropriate</li> <li>*Facilitate Coordinated Services Plan, for students on caseload (or attend CSPs facilitated by other agencies)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Attend annual IEP review meetings</li> <li>*Attend weekly meeting with case manager</li> <li>* Attend grade-level PLC or CT meetings</li> <li>*Attend Inclusive Practices Meetings</li> </ul>

## Individualized Education Programs(IEPs)

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are developed for all students who are found to be eligible for special education and are enrolled in Montpelier Roxbury Public Schools. They must be developed within 30 days of a student being determined eligible for special education and

must be reviewed annually. Copies of IEPs are available to all district (and contracted) staff who will be working with your child and who will be responsible for implementing the accommodations in it.

**What to expect:** Prior to an IEP meeting, caregivers should expect to receive the following:

- Meeting notice
- [Copy of Parent Rights/Procedural safeguards](#)
- Copy of the current IEP (if applicable)
- Meeting agenda

Our practice does not include the development of a draft IEP prior to an annual IEP meeting because we want to ensure that caregivers do not feel like there have been decisions made without them. We recognize, however, that there are some caregivers who would prefer to have a written draft available at a meeting as a starting point for the team conversation. If a caregiver has this preference, it is requested that they make the appropriate case manager aware of this via email at least 14 calendar days prior to the scheduled meeting. Caregivers will receive the draft at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. In these cases, a draft IEP will include present levels, suggested goals, and suggested accommodations.

There are certain team members that are required to be a part of the IEP team. They are:

- Parent/Guardian/Educational Surrogate
- Student (if applicable)
- LEA Representative
- Special Education Teacher or Service Provider
- General Education Teacher
- Individual who can interpret instructional implications of evaluation results
- Others with knowledge of the student may also be invited

Sometimes an individual may serve in more than one of these roles on an IEP team. The meeting notice will indicate who will be invited by the district for each of these roles. You are welcome to invite additional people to your child's meeting, such as a community provider or a support person for yourself.

At the IEP meeting, the team will work together to develop each of the components of the IEP. Your input is an important part of this process and we will look for it throughout the meeting. The components of the IEP are as follows:

Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance: In this section, the team will discuss the following information:

- *Impact* of the disability on educational and functional performance - What is the disability and how does it impact your student's ability to access their grade-level curriculum and function during the school day
- *Strengths* - What are your student's strengths (academic, behavioral, functional)

and what are their interests?

- *Needs* - Update the academic, behavioral, functional, or developmental needs of your student based on progress from last goals and progress towards standards.
- *Medical information* - Health, vision, hearing or other medical issues
- *Parent input* - Input from you regarding your student's education.
- *Other considerations* - Is there other information that could enhance your student's education?

Goals and Objectives: In this section, the team will develop measurable annual goals and quarterly objectives to work toward those goals based on your student's needs identified in the present levels. The team should also identify what data will be used to measure progress towards the goals and objectives. Current educational and functional performance information specific to the goal area is also included here.

Accommodations: In this section, the team will identify what supports are needed to help your student access the general education curriculum and to demonstrate their learning. The team will also discuss if accommodations are necessary for your student to participate in local and state assessments and/or if your student should instead participate in an alternate state assessment.

Services: In this section, the team will determine what special education and related services are needed based on the goals that were identified for your student. Special education services are those necessary to teach the skills that your student is missing that are impacting their ability to fully participate in the general education curriculum. As a reminder, they are not for re-teaching academic content or providing initial instruction.

During this part of the IEP discussion, the team should talk about Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). We are required to have students with disabilities accessing their education with their non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible. When considering services, the team should discuss if they can be provided within the regular classroom - and if not, document the reasons why.

Extended School Year services - The team will consider whether or not your student is eligible for Extended School Year services during the summer break using data to consider the following criteria:

1. Is there a significant amount of regression in a basic skill area that the student is showing after a return from a school vacation and/or the summer? (Significant regression guideline: student does not recoup skills within 1 week of return after February or April break or within one month of the start of the school year)
2. Does the severity of the student's disability present a risk of substantial regression?
3. What are the student's transition needs that require continued programming beyond the school year?
4. Does the student require ESY in order to make progress toward reasonably written IEP goals?

5. (Related services: Is the related service required in order to access ESY services?)

For each of these, the IEP team should review relevant data to determine if there is regression. If your child's IEP meeting is early in the school year, a team may decide to wait and make this decision in the spring, so that there is recent data to review.

Transition Plan (for high school students): During the year that your student will turn 16 (and every year after until graduation), the IEP team must create a plan that identifies post-high school goals for your student and then sets annual goals to help them work toward their long-term ones. Prior to developing a transition plan, your student will be given interest and aptitude transition assessments to help them identify possible career interests. The IEP team will create transition goals in the areas of Post-Secondary Education or Training; Employment; and (if determined necessary) Independent Living Skills. These goals must be measurable (like other IEP goals) and will have a service attached to them.

Your student's voice/input is key in this process, as the team is providing instruction to set them up for what they want to do in the future, so they should attend their IEP meeting. Outside agencies that work with (or will work with) your student as they transition out of high school should be invited to the IEP meeting to provide input for this process as well. We will ask for your permission to invite them to the IEP meeting.

Parent input: While we will seek your input throughout this process, there are two formal places that you have the opportunity to provide input. One is in the Present Levels of Performance section of the IEP. Information you provide during the meeting will be written into this part of the plan. The second comes after the IEP meeting. When you receive your copy of the IEP, you will also get a form to provide feedback about the process and any information that you feel was not discussed at the meeting. This form will ask you to reflect on the following statements:

1. I was provided or offered my parental rights at the start of the meeting
2. The meeting was held at a mutually agreed upon time and place convenient to me
3. I was able to communicate easily with the IEP team
4. Was the meeting of sufficient length to cover the topics of concern?
5. I was asked for my input and feedback during the meeting
6. My input and feedback were used in developing IEP goals and services
7. My input and feedback were used in considering the least restrictive environment for my child.

If you choose to complete this it should be returned to your student's case manager within ten days of receiving the IEP. This will become a part of your child's IEP. In some cases, another IEP team meeting will need to be scheduled, if you have shared

something new for the team to consider.

#### Progress reports on IEP goals:

IEPs need to be reviewed and updated at least annually. The Special Education Regulations require that we report progress on your child's IEP goals with at least the same frequency that you receive progress on your child's performance in the general education curriculum. In MRPS, we will provide written progress reports about your child's IEP goals quarterly to align with parent conferences and report cards. IEP goals are written with quarterly objectives that break down the annual goals into steps. Each quarter, you will receive a narrative report with data about your child's progress towards each of their IEP goals as well as a progress code for the current objective. The progress codes are as follows:

- A** -Achieved goal/objective as written;
- S**- Sufficient progress on objective is being made, likely to achieve goal;
- E** - Emerging progression objective, continuing to work towards goal;
- N**-Objective/goal not yet introduced.

The progress codes for students in Early Education (ages 3-5) are:

- 1**- Skills in this area are not evidenced;
- 2**- Skills emerging but inconsistently demonstrated;
- 3**-Progressing & maintaining across some settings/adults/peers/materials;
- 4**- Mastered outcome/goal across multiple settings/adults/peers/materials.

If your child is not making the progress that the team had expected them to be making, the IEP team should meet to determine if additional support and services are necessary for them to reach their goals.

Some caregivers would like more frequent updates on how their child is progressing on their IEP goals. MRPS continues to work to provide transparency for caregivers while trying to balance the workload for our professionals so that they can prioritize their time to focus on providing high-quality targeted instruction to students. In order to provide consistent information and expectations for caregivers, we have developed a [monthly progress note](#) format that will be used when a request is made by a caregiver. These will be sent in the months that the quarterly IEP progress reports are not being sent.

#### Medicaid

The Vermont Medicaid program will reimburse school districts for services provided to students with an IEP who are enrolled in one of Vermont's Medicaid programs, with your written consent. Allowing the school district to bill Medicaid for services outlined in your child's IEP will in no way

affect your child's Medicaid benefits. If you choose not to give your consent, your child will continue to receive the same level of services required in the IEP.

The funds the school receives from billing Medicaid is used to provide additional programs for all students.

## **Additional information for high school-aged students:**

- It is important for you to know that when your child turns 18, the parental rights in special education shift to your child (unless you have gotten adult guardianship of them). At that point the district cannot share information with you about your child and their special education services or invite you to IEP meetings without written consent from your child.
- For some students, their teams agree that they need more than 4 years of high school to meet their academic and transition goals. Students are eligible for special education services until high school graduation or their 22nd birthday, whichever comes first. The IEP team makes this decision.
- Summary of Performance Report: After your student graduates from high school, they will no longer have an IEP. A Summary of Performance will be written by the case manager with input from your student and IEP team members that your child can take with them to share with colleges, employers, and anyone else they choose. The Summary of Performance will include a description of your student's strengths and challenges in academics, functional skills, transition skills and other relevant information that may be important for future employers or teachers. This [link](#) provides the outline of what the report will look like. We do not create plans for post-high school education or employment agencies. Your student will need to request accommodations directly from those institutions.

## **Discipline**

Students with disabilities are subject to the discipline policies and procedures of a school (including suspension) in the same manner as students who do not have disabilities are - up to 10 days of suspension within a school year. After ten days of suspension, there are additional protections and procedures that are in place. If your child has been suspended and the number of days of suspension is getting close to ten, the school will schedule a Manifestation Determination meeting. At this meeting, the IEP team will review information to determine if the behaviors your child has been engaging in are: 1) a result of or closely-linked to their disability; 2) the result of the school not implementing their IEP; or 3) not due to either of these factors. In making this determination, the team will consider the following questions at the meeting:

1. Was the behavior(s) a reason for the student being initially referred for special education services?
2. Does the student's IEP, Behavior Intervention Plan or Functional Behavioral Assessment contain goals, objectives or interventions which address this type of behavior?
3. Has there been an observed pattern of this type of behavior in the past with the student?



4. Is there a record of behavior incidents subject to discipline?
5. Was the behavior affected by psychosocial events unrelated to the disability?
6. Any other relevant information

If the team decides that the behaviors are the result of or closely-linked to your child's disability or due to the school's failure to implement their IEP, the team must update the behavior plan of your child (or create one if they don't have one) and return them to their current placement - unless the IEP team decides that their services/placement should change. If the team decides that the behaviors are not due to either of these factors, your child can be disciplined according to the regular policies and procedures. Your child is entitled to some special education services during any further suspensions, so an IEP team meeting will need to happen.

There are some exceptions to the above procedures. If your child causes serious bodily injury to someone, brings a weapon to school, or brings illegal drugs or controlled substances to school, they can be placed in an Interim Alternative Setting for up to 45 school days.

## **Additional Information for students turning three**

(A notice from the Early Childhood Special Education Team)

Welcome to Montpelier Roxbury Public Schools Early Childhood Special Education services. We are excited to meet you at the upcoming transition meeting to learn more about your child and what you have been working on. In this document, there is information about our Early Childhood Special Education services to help you begin to understand what changes will happen after your child turns three and begins receiving services from our school district.

### **What Do Services Look Like?**

There are a few different service delivery models that our district can provide.

1. If your child attends a childcare program, preschool, or home daycare located in Montpelier or Roxbury, with the childcare providers permission, our service providers can visit your child while they are there. These services are embedded within the child's day.
2. If your child attends preschool at Union Elementary School, services are embedded within their school day.
3. If your child is not in a childcare setting located in Montpelier or Roxbury, you can participate in drive-in therapy services. This most often takes place at Union Elementary School (UES), but in certain circumstances based on team discussion can occur within a community setting in Montpelier or Roxbury. Kellogg Hubbard Library, Good Beginnings Nest, Hubbard Park, and the College Green have all been locations we have visited with students in the past.
  - a. During drive-in services, families are welcome to stay with their child or leave and come back. This choice is based on what feels preferable to the family and the needs of the child.
4. If the child attends a childcare program outside of Montpelier or Roxbury, the team can have a discussion of what the needs of the child are to determine what their Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is, and the most supportive environment for services to

be delivered. Services provided outside of the boundary of Montpelier or Roxbury, are determined by team discussion and agreement with the LEA.

### **How is Early Childhood Special Education different from Early Intervention**

There are a few differences that occur when transitioning from Early Intervention to the school district for services. The most notable differences are the following.

- The student's plan changes from a One Plan to an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Goals are focused on student outcomes more so than family outcomes
- The IEP team meets once a year for an annual progress meeting. Teams can meet more often if necessary, but there is only a legal requirement to meet once a year.
- Services follow the school district calendar. Services occur when school is in session. Services do not occur during school vacations. If the IEP team determines that the student is at risk of loss of skill during the summer, the team can discuss extended school year services (ESY) to maintain skills.
- Unless there are extenuating circumstances, services typically no longer occur within the child's home environment and transition to an educational setting. Since the focus of goal progress becomes more specific to the child, services more often occur in settings that provide focus on student specific work happening outside of the home environment.

### **Preschool at Union Elementary School**

Preschool is not required to receive Early Childhood Special Education Services. If your child is not attending preschool, we will work together to provide a location for service delivery that feels supportive. If your child is already attending a childcare program that works for you and your child, they can remain in this setting. If you are interested in your child attending preschool at Union Elementary School (UES), the following is some information about our preschool program at UES.

The Preschool program at UES has two class sections. There is a 3 day and a 2 day program. The three day program is on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and the two day program is on Tuesday and Thursday. Our preschool program runs 8:00-1:00.

Enrollment for the preschool program opens up in mid-March. Students must be 3 years old prior to September 1st to be enrolled in the program. The program uses a lottery system for enrollment, but there are a limited number of spots reserved for students with IEPs. Each preschool classroom uses a co-teaching model and is staffed with a general education teacher, a special educator, and a classroom instructional assistant.

## **Resources**

[Parent rights in special education \(updated Oct 2022\)](#)

[VT Agency of Education - Special Education Resources for Families](#)

