

Child Find

The Williamsport Area School District recognizes that every student has unique learning needs. Identification activities are implemented to identify students who may be in need of special education and to develop meaningful educational programs based on individual strengths and needs. This process can be initiated by a request from either school staff or parents and will be completed by specially trained personnel. The Williamsport Area School District is committed to providing opportunities to all students to assist them in achieving their maximum potential. Thus, we provide a continuum of services to accommodate each individual.

Special education services are available to children who have one or more of the following disabilities:

- Autism
- Deaf/Blindness
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impairment, including Deafness
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech and Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment, including Blindness

Referral/Screening

Parents who have concerns about their child should contact the building principal to request a screening/evaluation. Screening activities are ongoing and include observations, group testing, vision and hearing screenings, speech/language screenings, review of cumulative records, report cards, and/or fine and gross motor skills. No evaluation may be conducted without written parental consent. Once written parental consent is received, the District will proceed with the evaluation process.

Evaluations are conducted by a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) to determine the child's learning ability, behavior patterns, physical abilities, communication skills, and achievement levels. Results of the evaluation are reviewed by the team to determine if the child is eligible for and in need of special/gifted education services. If special/gifted education services are recommended, the parents are expected to be a part of the team that determines the exceptionality and develops the Individual Education Program (IEP) for the child.

Evaluation

No evaluation may be conducted without written parental consent. Once written parental consent is received, the District will proceed with the evaluation process.

Evaluations are conducted by a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) to determine the child's learning ability, behavior patterns, physical abilities, communication skills, and achievement levels. The team is comprised of the parents, teacher, principal, school psychologist, and others as appropriate. Methods used in the evaluation may include review of records, observation, and individual/group assessment. Information will be gathered from school personnel, medical personnel, and parents.

Results of the evaluation are reviewed by the team to determine if the child is eligible for and in need of special education services. If special education services are recommended, the parents are expected to be a part of the team that determines the exceptionality and develops the Individual Education Program (IEP) for the child.

Independent Educational Evaluation

Parents have the right to obtain an independent educational evaluation at public expense when they disagree with an evaluation conducted by the school district. This evaluation must be completed by a qualified professional who is not an employee of the Williamsport Area School District.

Within 10 days of receipt of a written request for an independent educational evaluation, the Special Education Office shall either:

Within 10 days of receipt of a written request for an independent educational evaluation, the Special Education Office shall either:

1. Initiate a due process hearing and notify you in writing that the district has done so.
2. Issue correspondence containing:
 - a. An assurance that the district will pay for the independent evaluation provided that the evaluation consists of all assessment procedures required to determine the existence of all legally defined disabilities that evaluation provided that school staff, parents, or the evaluator reasonably suspects the child might have.
 - b. A directive that the district shall not pay for the evaluation until it receives a completed copy of the report of the evaluation directly from the evaluator.
 - c. Directions that the parent is responsible for arranging the evaluation and for ensuring that the evaluator contacts the Director of Special Education Services (570) 327-5500, 40410, to arrange for payment of the evaluation.

The Special Education Office maintains a list of qualified independent evaluators and shall make this list available for parents upon request.

Description of Special Education Programs

The Williamsport Area School District is obligated to provide appropriate special education programs, related services, and early intervention programs that are:

- Provided at no cost to the parents
- Provided under the authority of a school entity – directly, by referral, or by contract
- Individualized to meet the educational needs of the child
- Designed to yield meaningful educational benefit and progress
- Designed to implement an IEP

Special education is designed to meet the individual needs of each exceptional student. Related services available to students may include transportation, as well as developmental, corrective, or other supportive services that enable an exceptional student to benefit from his/her special education program.

Such services may include speech and language services, school health services, occupational and physical therapy, and assistive technology services.

Early Intervention services are available to children who are at least three years of age, but less than the age of five, and who have one of more of the same disabilities listed above, and/or a significant developmental delay. Early Intervention does not include gifted services.

Student Records and Confidentiality

All information gathered about your child is subject to the confidentiality provisions contained in federal and state law. The District has policies and procedures in effect governing the collection, maintenance, destruction, and disclosure to third parties of this information.

All student information is confidential and is available only to those in education working with a child and to his/her parents. Your consent, or consent of an eligible child who has reached the age of majority under state law, must be obtained before personally identifiable information is released, except as permitted under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Federal regulations give both natural parents access to their child's educational records unless there is a court order, state statute, or legally binding document prohibiting access.

Surrogate Parents

Federal legislation has established measures to ensure the rights of handicapped children, including the right to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). To ensure that this right is realized by the handicapped children whose parent or guardian is unknown or unavailable, the state requires that districts pursue a surrogate parent to represent the student. Districts must recruit, train, and select volunteer surrogate parents to aide in the identification of exceptional students and participate in the development of individualized educational programs.

Anyone interested in obtaining more information on training to become a surrogate parent should contact the Bureau of Special Education Office or the BLaST Intermediate Unit 17 at 570-323-8561.

Notice

For further information about these procedures or information regarding parent rights, due process procedures, or specific special education services, contact Dr. Amy Briggs, Director of Special Education, at (570) 327-5500, ext. 40410.