

GAINESVILLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT SPECIAL EDUCATION OPERATING PROCEDURES: CHILD FIND DUTY

The Gainesville ISD has entered into an Interlocal Agreement to cooperatively operate its special education programs under the authority of Tex. Ed. Code § 11.157. The Denton County Special Education Services Cooperative may provide for the efficient delivery of legally required special education and related services to the Gainesville’s eligible students with disabilities as set forth in the Interlocal Agreement, including the implementation of these Special Education Operating Procedures.

Gainesville ISD Board Policy along with these *Special Education Operating Procedures* constitute the Policies and Procedures of Gainesville ISD, designed to be consistent with the State policies and procedures developed pursuant to the IDEA. Gainesville ISD *Special Education Operating Procedures* are not to be for the purpose of creating a requirement that is not otherwise imposed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (“IDEA”), together with its implementing federal regulations, state statutes and rules, as they shall from time to time be amended, and shall not be construed to create a higher standard than that established by IDEA. These *Special Education Operating Procedures* will be posted on Gainesville ISD’s website. These *Special Education Operating Procedures* should be interpreted consistent with the IDEA. Gainesville ISD’s *Special Education Operating Procedures* are reviewed and updated, as needed, on at least an annual basis. Gainesville ISD will make timely changes to policies and procedures in response to IDEA amendments, regulatory or rule changes, changes to state policy, or new legal interpretation as are necessary to bring Gainesville ISD into compliance with the requirements of IDEA. Gainesville ISD maintains systems to ensure that all students with disabilities residing in the District, including students with disabilities attending non-public schools, regardless of the severity of their disabilities, and who are in need of special education and related services, are identified, located, and evaluated and provided a free appropriate public education. Gainesville ISD maintains systems to ensure that students with disabilities and their parents are afforded the procedural safeguards required under the IDEA (and its implementing federal regulations, state statutes and rules) including with respect to the confidentiality of records and personally identifiable information.

CHILD FIND

The Gainesville Independent School District (GISD or “the District”) has an obligation to identify, locate and evaluate each child, birth to age 21 inclusive, residing within the jurisdiction of the District who has a disability or is suspected of having a disability, regardless of the severity of the disability, and who is in need of special education and related services. This *Child Find* obligation—mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA or, more commonly, IDEA) and Texas special education law¹—extends to all children with disabilities, including those who are homeless, highly mobile, migrants, in foster care, homeschooled, court-involved or attending private schools within the jurisdiction of the District.²

The District annually notifies and informs the Gainesville ISD community of a student’s right to a free appropriate public education and the programs and services available to eligible students, as well as the right to request an evaluation for special education and related services. The District endeavors to distribute written information in both English and Spanish to every enrolled student’s

¹ 34 C.F.R.. § 300.111(a); Tex. Ed. Code § 29.001

² 34 C.F.R.. § 300.111(c). Homeless and highly mobile students are served via the [District’s homeless education liaison](#) as part of the District’s participation in TEA’s [Texas Education for Homeless Children and Youth \(TEHCY\)](#) program.

family regarding IDEA’s *Child Find* and free appropriate public education (FAPE) requirements, to inform them of the options and requirements for identifying students who may be suspected of having a disability and have an educational need for special education and specially designed instruction. The District’s community-wide efforts may include:

- publishing a *Child Find* notice in a local newspaper of general circulation;
- posting or linking the District’s *Child Find* notice on the District’s website; and
- placing a *Child Find* notice in locations where potentially eligible children and their parent(s) or legal guardian(s) are likely to see it, like disability-related community agencies, hospitals or daycare centers.

The District’s *Child Find* notice is available to the public and to parents in both English and Spanish on the District’s website <https://www.gainesvilleisd.org/Page/6206>. Together with the District’s annual *Child Find* notice, the District includes information indicating where members of the Gainesville ISD community can access the District’s processes and procedures for initiating a referral for special education services eligibility evaluation.³ The District also offers annual training to teachers and staff regarding the District’s responsibility to actively identify and appropriately refer for evaluation students suspected of being in need of special education and related services, consistent with these *Special Education Operating Procedures* (“Operating Procedures”).]

Who is eligible for the District’s program of special education and related services?

The District provides special education and related services to eligible students ages 3 through 21 who reside within the District.⁴ To be eligible for the District’s program of special education and related services, a student must (a) have one or more of the thirteen qualifying disabilities listed below and (b) need special education and related services—*Specially Designed Instruction* (SDI)—because of the disability.⁵ A free appropriate public education is also available to children with visual impairments or who are deaf or hard of hearing residing within the District from birth through age 21.⁶

Special education means “specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability.”⁷ *Specially Designed Instruction* (SDI) means—

- “adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible student under this part, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction-

³ Tex. Ed. Code § 29.023(b)

⁴ 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.0135(a)

⁵ 20 U.S.C. § 1402(3); 34 C.F.R. § 300.8

⁶ 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.0135(b)

⁷ 34 C.F.R. § 300.39(a)(1)

- To address the unique needs of the student that result from the student's disability; and
- To ensure access of the student to *the general curriculum*, so that the student can meet *the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children.*⁸

The general curriculum and educational standards that “apply to all children” in Gainesville ISD are the [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills \(TEKS\)](#), as well as the District’s Policy **EIE(Local)**.⁹ The state-wide assessments that determine a student’s progress toward meeting those educational standards are the [State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness \(STAAR\)](#).

Special Education or *Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)* also includes—

- speech-language pathology services;
- any other related service, if the service is considered special education rather than a related service under state standards;
- travel training; and
- vocational education.¹⁰

PRACTICE GUIDE— Some examples of SDI include delivery of a specialized reading program in a small group setting 4 days a week for 30 minutes a day; individualized social skills programs; modified curriculum; adaptive physical education; or instruction in the use of Braille or specific technology to access curricular content or to provide responses to enable effective progress monitoring and functional performance data collection.

Subject to the age limitations specified above, students may be eligible for special education and related services under these categories of disability specified under state and federal law: autism, deaf-blindness, auditory impairment, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech impairment, traumatic brain injury, visual impairment, and “noncategorical early childhood.”¹¹

Children between the ages of 3-5 who are evaluated as having an intellectual disability, an emotional disturbance, a specific learning disability or autism may be described as “noncategorical early childhood” for the purposes of special education eligibility.¹²

Consideration of eligibility for special education and related services begins with a referral for a special education evaluation—a full individual and initial evaluation.¹³

⁸ 34 C.F.R. § 300.39(b)(3)(emphasis added)

⁹ The educational standards applicable to all students in the state of Texas are also outlined in Tex. Ed. Code § 28.002 and in 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 74.1.

¹⁰ 34 C.F.R. § 300.39(a)(2)

¹¹ 34 C.F.R. § 300.8(c) ; Tex. Ed. Code § 29.003(b); 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1040(c)

¹² 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1040(c)(13)

¹³ 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1011

PRACTICE GUIDE— While the ARD committee will consider records from private providers or private evaluators, including physicians, the ARD committee is not required to adopt specific eligibilities or other recommendations from those reports. Any decisions to reject recommended eligibilities or services may be described and explained in the Prior Written Notice with reference to the District’s evaluation reports.

How does the District attempt to ensure that parents or guardians of Emergent Bilingual students are included in the District’s Child Find efforts and understand the District’s special education process?

If the parent(s), legal guardian(s) or adult student has limited English proficiency and the parent’s or guardian’s native language is Spanish, the District will provide Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee meeting notices and Prior Written Notices, as well as **TEA’s Notice of Procedural Safeguards** and other special education related documents, to the parent or guardian in **Spanish (TEA’s Aviso Sobre Procedimientos de Protección)**. If the parent or guardian is limited English proficient and the parent’s or guardian’s native language is Spanish, the District will also provide either all of the text (comparable rendition) of the written Individualized Education Program (IEP) translated into Spanish or an audio recording of the IEP translated into Spanish. The District may also audio record an ARD committee meeting at which the parent or guardian was assisted by an interpreter and offer the parent or guardian an audio recording of the meeting; however, such recording shall not substitute for a written or audio recorded translation of the IEP unless it includes an oral translation into Spanish of all of the content in the student’s IEP.¹⁴

If the parent’s, guardian’s or adult student’s native language is other than English or Spanish, the District will make a good faith effort to provide notices to the parent or guardian in the parent’s or guardian’s native language, to provide a written or audio recorded translation of the IEP in the parent’s or guardian’s native language, and to facilitate the parent’s or guardian’s participation in any ARD committee meeting, including arranging for an interpreter, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. The term “native language” when used with respect to an individual who is limited English proficient or an emergent bilingual student, means the language normally used by the individual.”¹⁵

What happens when the parent or guardian of a student attending private school or being homeschooled in the District requests a referral for a special education evaluation?

The District is responsible for identifying, locating and evaluating those students who reside within the jurisdiction of the District but who are parentally placed in private schools or homeschooled. The parent, legal guardian, or teacher of a resident student who is parentally placed in private

¹⁴ 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1050(i); Tex. Ed. Code § 29.005(d)

¹⁵ 20 U.S.C. § 1401(30); 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1050(f)

school or home instructed may refer a student suspected of having a disability and in need of special education and related services to the student's home campus for District zoning purposes.

To meet its *Child Find* obligation to students who are homeschooled or attend private schools, the District offers to meet at least annually with representatives from private schools within the District and with parents who have placed their students in a private school within the District or who home-school their students, about special education and how to refer a student for a special education evaluation, and the special education and related service options available in the event their student is eligible.

If the parent or legal guardian of a student who is home-instructed or who is placed in a private school is offered an initial evaluation by the District but does not provide consent for the evaluation, the District may not use the special education dispute resolution process to override the lack of consent.

What protections are available for students who have not been identified but may qualify for IDEA's disciplinary safeguards?

Students not yet eligible for special education and related services may be entitled to the disciplinary protections afforded eligible students, including the manifestation determination review process. The District may be obligated to provide a manifestation determination review and other disciplinary change of placement protections for a student even if the student is not yet determined to be eligible for special education and related services at the time of the violation of the District's conduct code. Disciplinary protections shall be afforded to a student if the District "had knowledge" that the student is a student with a disability prior to the behavioral incident at issue. The District is considered to have knowledge (1) if the parent or guardian expressed concern in writing to supervisory or administrative personnel, or a teacher of the student, that the student is in need of special education and related services; (2) the parent or guardian of the student requested an evaluation of the student pursuant to IDEA; or (3) the teacher of the student, or other District personnel, expressed specific concerns about a pattern of behavior demonstrated by the student directly to the director of special education or to other supervisory personnel of the District. The District does not have knowledge that the student is a student with a disability if the District sought and the parent refused to permit the student to be evaluated or declined special education and related services, or if the student was evaluated by the District and determined to be ineligible by a duly constituted Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee.¹⁶

Demonstrations of this procedure's implementation may include, but are not limited to, examples such as:

- Training material
- Posters and other media or website postings
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support or Response to Intervention Data
- Student specific data collection and monitoring
- Databases

¹⁶ 34 C.F.R. § 300.534

What about students who transfer?

If a student is in the process of being evaluated for special education eligibility by another public school district and enrolls in the District before the evaluation is completed, the District will coordinate with the student's previous school district to ensure prompt completion of the initial evaluation. If the student transfers from another public school district when an initial evaluation is pending, the timelines for conducting the evaluation apply to Gainesville ISD unless:

- the District is making sufficient progress to ensure a prompt completion of the evaluation; and
- the parent and the District agree to a specific time when the evaluation will be completed.

If a student transfers from another school district in Texas with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), the District will provide a free appropriate public education to the transfer student by providing services comparable to the services described in the student's IEP from the student's previous school district until:

- the District adopts the student's IEP from the previous school district, or
- the District develops, adopts and implements a new IEP in accordance with the procedures outlined in **the District's FAPE Composite Operating Procedure**.¹⁷

If a student transfers from another state with an IEP, the District will offer services comparable to the services described in the IEP from the sending school district until the District takes the following actions:

- conducts a new full and individual evaluation, as described in **the District's Evaluation Procedure Operating Procedure**, if the Director of Special Education determines that a new evaluation is necessary; and
- develops, adopts and implements a new IEP, if appropriate, in accordance with the procedures outlined in **the District's FAPE Composite Operating Procedure**.¹⁸

Additionally, the District will take reasonable steps to promptly obtain a transfer student's special education and general education records from the sending school district.¹⁹

Demonstrations of this procedure's implementation may include, but are not limited to, examples such as:

- Texas Record Exchange (TREX) requests
- Telephone logs of calls to prior school districts and demonstrating calls to students' parents seeking collaboration
- Records from prior schools
- Training materials
- Parent meeting documentation

¹⁷ 34 C.F.R. § 300.323(e)

¹⁸ 34 C.F.R. § 300.323(f)

¹⁹ 34 C.F.R. § 300.323(g)

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Special education means “specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability.”²³ *Specially Designed Instruction* (SDI) means—

- “adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible student under this part, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction-
 - To address the unique needs of the student that result from the student's disability; and
 - To ensure access of the student to *the general curriculum*, so that the student can meet *the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children.*”²⁴

The general curriculum and educational standards that “apply to all children” in Gainesville ISD are the [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills \(TEKS\)](#), as well as the District’s Policy **EIE(Local)**.²⁵ The state-wide assessments that determine a student’s progress toward meeting those educational standards are the [State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness \(STAAR\)](#).

Special Education or *Specially Designed Instruction* (SDI) also includes—

- speech-language pathology services;
- any other related service, if the service is considered special education rather than a related service under state standards;
- travel training; and
- vocational education.²⁶

²⁰ 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.0135(a)

²¹ 20 U.S.C. § 1402(3); 34 C.F.R. § 300.8

²² 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.0135(b)

²³ 34 C.F.R. § 300.39(a)(1)

²⁴ 34 C.F.R. § 300.39(b)(3)(emphasis added)

²⁵ The educational standards applicable to all students in the state of Texas are also outlined in Tex. Ed. Code § 28.002 and in 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 74.1.

²⁶ 34 C.F.R. § 300.39(a)(2)

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Consideration of eligibility for special education and related services begins with a referral for a special education evaluation—a full individual and initial evaluation.²⁹

PRACTICE GUIDE— While the ARD committee will consider records from private providers or private evaluators, including physicians, the ARD committee is not required to adopt specific eligibilities or other recommendations from those reports. Any decisions to reject recommended eligibilities or services may be described and explained in the Prior Written Notice with reference to the District’s evaluation reports.

Who can initiate a referral for a Full Individual and Initial Evaluation for Special Education and Related Services?

A referral for a special education evaluation may be initiated by school personnel, a student’s parent or legal guardian, or another person involved in the education or care of the student.³⁰

Should an administrator, teacher, parent or legal guardian believe that there is reason to suspect a student has a disability and is in need of special education, even if they are progressing from grade to grade, they may initiate the referral process.

The referral may be made verbally or in writing. A written request for a special education evaluation is not required by IDEA or Gainesville ISD. Written referrals should be directed to

²⁷ 34 C.F.R. § 300.8(c) ; Tex. Ed. Code § 29.003(b); 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1040(c)

²⁸ 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1040(c)(13)

²⁹ 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1011

³⁰ 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1011(a)

the District’s Director of Special Education. Any employee of the District receiving a verbal or written referral should communicate the referral to Director of Special Education. District staff should make any referrals for special education in writing to Director of Special Education.

How should the District respond when it receives a referral for special education?

Referrals should be considered by the Director of Special Education or other qualified professional, as outlined below, to determine whether there is reason to suspect that the student has a disability and is in need of special education and related services. Each campus should have a designated staff member responsible for receiving referrals from the Director of Special Education. All referrals should be forwarded to the Director of Special Education. If a parent or legal guardian makes a referral to a general education teacher, a paraprofessional or campus office staff, the parent should be directed to the Principal of the student’s campus who is responsible for receiving referrals.

If a parent, legal guardian or adult student verbally requests a special education evaluation, the District staff who received the verbal request should report the request to the Principal or the aforementioned designated staff for the student’s home campus. The Principal or designated staff should contact the requestor either by telephone or via email to gather more information about the request.

When the District receives a request for an initial evaluation, the designated campus staff, and/or administrator should promptly review the student’s record and document any consideration that has been given to alternatives to special education, including but not limited to general education academic and behavioral interventions; *RtI* data; remedial instruction; tutoring; compensatory education pursuant to Tex. Ed. Code § 29.081 (“services designed to supplement the regular education program for students identified as at risk of dropping out of school”); **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)**,³¹ and/or Dyslexia-related general education services.

PRACTICE GUIDE— When the District receives privately-completed evaluation reports or recommendations, the ARD committee should consider that information. In many instances, the student’s ARD committee will need to seek consent from the parent(s) to complete the District’s evaluation because it relies on school-based evaluation instruments and observations that incorporate special education standards.

If a student’s parent(s), legal guardian(s), or District staff submits a written request for a full individual and initial evaluation for special education and related services to the District’s Director of Special Education or to an administrative employee of the District, the personnel designated below will take the following steps:

³¹ TEA describes MTSS as a school-wide framework designed to provide varying levels of support to meet the academic, behavioral, and social/emotional needs of students and includes RTI for academics and/or behavior and other evidence-based early intervention strategies.

- **Within 15 school days of the Director of Special Education or administrative employee’s receipt of the written request for an initial special education evaluation,** a licensed specialist in school psychology (LSSP), an educational diagnostician, or other appropriately certified or licensed practitioner with experience or training in the area of the suspected disabilities designated by the Director of Special Education may, as appropriate—
 - Review the records and performance data of the student in order to determine if there is sufficient evidence to suspect a disability. Information reviewed shall include, but is not limited to, all individual and group standardized assessments, *including evaluations provided by the parent or guardian completed privately*; standards of learning test scores; school enrollment history; attendance records; student work samples; and teacher observational information.
 - Consult with the student’s general education teachers and other campus staff familiar with the student to review the general education supports and services, curricular modifications, instructional methodologies or evidence-based classroom accommodations or interventions that have been used with the student prior to referral, including the use of any **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)**, **such as Response to Intervention (RtI)**, *Leveled Literacy Interventions (LLI)*, and other evidence-based general education interventions, tutorial, remedial, compensatory and other academic or behavior support services.³²
 - Contact the parent, legal guardian or adult student to provide an overview of the District’s special education process and identify the date by which informed written consent for the evaluation may be obtained (i.e., no later than 15 school days after receiving the written request for an initial evaluation).³³

- **No later than 15 school days after the Director of Special Education or administrative employee’s receipt of the written request for an initial special education evaluation,** the Principal shall—
 - Ensure the District provides the parent(s), legal guardian and/or adult student with a copy of TEA’s most recent *Notice of Procedural Safeguards*.³⁴
 - A parent, legal guardian or adult student may choose to receive the *Notice of Procedural Safeguards*, as well as the Prior Written Notice discussed below, by email, if the District makes that option available. If the parent or legal guardian does not affirmatively elect to receive the aforementioned notices by email, the District will mail or hand-deliver the notice(s) and document the method of delivery.³⁵

³² 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1011(a)

³³ Tex. Ed. Code § 29.004; 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1011(b); 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1040(b)

³⁴ 34 C.F.R. § 300.504

³⁵ 34 C.F.R. § 300.505

- Provide Prior Written Notice of the District’s proposal to conduct a full individual and initial evaluation (*Notice of Proposed Evaluation*) and an opportunity for the parent, legal guardian or adult student to give informed written consent for the evaluation, *if there is evidence of a suspected disability and, as a result of the suspected disability, a suspicion that the student may require specially designed instruction based on the information obtained during the 15-school day period described above.*³⁶
- Prior Written Notice. The District’s *Notice of Proposed Evaluation* shall describe any evaluation procedures that the District proposes to conduct.³⁷ Please see the District’s Evaluation procedures set out in **the District’s Evaluation Procedures Operating Procedure** for additional requirements regarding the District’s *Notice of Proposed Evaluation*.
- Informed Written Consent. The District shall document that the parent, legal guardian or adult student has been fully informed of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought, in his or her native language, and the mode of communication. The District shall also document that the parent, legal guardian or adult student acknowledged understanding and agreeing in writing to the carrying out of the activity for which his or her consent is sought (e.g., a full individual and initial evaluation). The consent will describe the activity and indicate which educational records, if any, will be released and to whom those records will be released.³⁸
- Notice and Consent by Email. The District may provide prior written notice via email if the District offers and the parent elects to receive the notice via email.³⁹ The District may also obtain a parent’s or a guardian’s informed written consent for an evaluation by using a record and signature in electronic form that identifies and authenticates the person or guardian as the source of the consent and indicates the parent’s or guardian’s approval of the information contained in the electronic signature.⁴⁰
- If the parent, legal guardian or adult student does not provide consent for the initial special education evaluation, the District is relieved of its *Child Find* duty and its obligation to provide the student with a free appropriate public education pursuant to IDEA.⁴¹ However, the District reserves the right in its sole discretion to file a request for a special education due process hearing to override a lack of parental consent for such evaluation. Designated staff should provide the parent, legal guardian or adult student with a ready, willing, and

³⁶ 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1011(b)(1)

³⁷ 34 C.F.R. § 300.304(a)

³⁸ 34 C.F.R. § 300.9; Tex. Ed. Code § 29.004(a)(1)

³⁹ 34 C.F.R. § 300.505

⁴⁰ *Part B Procedural Safeguards in the COVID-19 Environment Q&A Document* (June 30, 2020). OSEP. June 30, 2020.

⁴¹ 34 C.F.R. § 300.300(a)(3)

able letter regarding the District's intent to complete the evaluation with parental consent, together with prior written notice (*Notice of Proposed Evaluation*) documenting the District's offer to evaluate and the basis for the offer to evaluate and providing the parent or guardian with a copy of **TEA's Procedural Safeguards Notice**. Please see the District's FAPE Composite Operating Procedure. Consistent with TEA's *The Dyslexia Handbook* (2021 Update) the student may be referred to the District's Section 504 Coordinator or local campus designee for a potential Section 504 evaluation.

- Provide the parent, legal guardian, or adult student with prior written notice of the District's decision not to conduct an evaluation, *if there is no evidence of a suspected disability or a suspicion that the student may require special education and related services*.
 - If appropriate, the student may be referred to the District's Section 504 Coordinator or local campus designee for a potential Section 504 evaluation
 - Prior Written Notice. The Director of Special Education will prepare the Prior Written Notice to include an explanation of why the District refuses to conduct an initial evaluation as well as a description of the information (assessments, records, reports or observations) that the District used as a basis for its refusal to evaluate.⁴² The District will provide this prior written notice by means reasonably designed to ensure that it is received by the parent, legal guardian or adult student, and document the fact that the notice was sent. This notice will be provided in a language that is understandable to the general public and also in the native language of the parent, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so.⁴³ Please see the District's Child Find Duty Operating Procedure.

DYSLEXIA SERVICES

What steps does the District take prior to an initial evaluation to ensure students are identified and evaluated for special education appropriately and in a timely manner?

Prior to referral for a full individual and initial evaluation, students experiencing difficulty in the general classroom should be considered for response to evidence-based intervention and other academic or behavior support services. "If the student continues to experience difficulty in the general classroom after the provision of interventions, District personnel must refer the student for a full individual and initial evaluation."⁴⁴ Notwithstanding this provision, these general education

⁴² 34 C.F.R. § 503(b)

⁴³ 34 C.F.R. § 300.503(c)

⁴⁴ 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 89.1011(a).

or response to intervention strategies will not be used to delay or deny the provision of an evaluation.⁴⁵

PRACTICE GUIDE—Teachers who provide instruction to students may be trained concerning the District’s referral process and informed concerning the research-based interventions available in the District. Communication between general education teachers and campus staff who attend the MTSS meeting, concerning the interventions used and the results of those interventions should occur regularly.

If parental or guardian consent is obtained for an evaluation, the District will consider and document the provision of any steps taken concurrently with the special education referral or evaluation process to address the academic or behavioral needs of the student giving rise to the referral. These steps may include the following—

- If a campus receives an initial referral for a student who is not currently receiving **evidence-based general education interventions or Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)** available to all students, a designated campus administrator should promptly convene a meeting with the parent or guardian, student (as appropriate), and at least one of the student’s general education teachers (preferably from one or more of the areas of academic and/or behavioral concern). The meeting’s purpose will be to develop a plan of evidence-based general education interventions or MTSS. This meeting may not be used to delay or deny an evaluation.
 - If the student has been receiving evidence-based general education intervention or MTSS, the Principal or designated campus administrator should promptly convene a meeting with the parent or guardian, student (as appropriate), and at least one of the student’s general education teachers (preferably from one or more of the areas of academic and/or behavioral concern) to review and revise the student’s current interventions and general education services plan, as appropriate. Such meetings should recur at regular, reasonable intervals throughout the pendency of the referral and/or evaluation process.
- IDEA does not prohibit a local campus within the District from “**screening**” a student to collect data that may be considered when determining whether the student is suspected of having a disability. Parental consent is not required before a campus-based committee reviews existing data as part of the special education referral process. Likewise, parental permission is not required before administering screenings or other assessments that are administered to all students generally without the requirement of parental consent. Written notice will be provided to parents of the scheduled screening or assessment; however, a campus will not use screening procedures to delay or deny the provision of a full individual and initial evaluation.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Lisa M. v. Leander Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 924 F.3d 205, 209 n.4 (5th Cir. 2019); *Spring Branch Independent School District v. O.W. by Hannah W.*, 961 F.3d 781(5th Cir. June 12, 2020)

⁴⁶ *Letter to Mills* (OSEP 05/02/19).

- Students suspected of having a disability under Section 504 should be referred for an evaluation by a **Campus Section 504 Committee** and, if needed, the development by that Committee of an accommodation plan under Section 504. These referrals should be directed to the student’s Campus Section 504 Coordinator. If a student’s Section 504 Committee determines that the student has a disability that may require specialized instruction to make progress in the general curriculum, or if the student continues to experience difficulty in the general education classroom even with the supports specified in a 504 accommodation plan, the Section 504 Committee should refer the student to the Director of Special Education or designee to determine whether a full individual and initial evaluation is appropriate under the circumstances.
- For students who transfer to the District from a residential facility or other private school, the Director of Special Education should obtain written consent from the student’s parent or guardian to communicate with and request records from the residential facility or other private school and convene a meeting to discuss whether a referral for special education and related services is appropriate.

PRACTICE GUIDE—Review enrollment records to determine whether the student previously accessed special education and related services while in attendance at a public school.

- Students suspected to have **dyslexia and related disorders** should be referred for an initial evaluation for special education and related services in accordance with TEA’s *The Dyslexia Handbook* (2021 Update).⁴⁷

PRACTICE GUIDE—If the results of reading instruments administered by general education teachers (to students in kindergarten through 2nd Grade) indicate a risk for dyslexia or other reading difficulties, the results may be shared with the student’s evaluation team for referral consideration.⁸

How does the District notify parents of services and options available to eligible students with dyslexia under IDEA and Section 504?

Gainesville ISD notifies parents of services and options available to eligible students with dyslexia including general education interventions under response to intervention and multi-tiered systems of support models.⁴⁸ The Director of Special Education ensures that the Gainesville ISD Parent Student Handbook that is provided to every enrolled student’s family includes written information regarding IDEA’s Child Find and free appropriate public education (FAPE) requirements as well as the options and requirements for helping students who have learning difficulties or who need, or may need, special education services.

⁴⁷ TEA’s *The Dyslexia Handbook (2021 Update)* is available at <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/dyslexia/>.

⁴⁸ Tex. Ed. Code § 26.0081(d); 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE. § 74.28(h)

Gainesville ISD also provides a parent education program for parents/guardians of students with dyslexia and related disorders.⁴⁹ The Director of Special Education ensures that the program includes:

- Information related to awareness and characteristics of dyslexia and related disorders;
- information on testing and diagnosis of dyslexia and related disorders;
- information on effective strategies for teaching students with dyslexia and related disorders;
- information on qualifications of those delivering services to students with dyslexia and related disorders;
- awareness of information on accommodations and modifications, especially those allowed for standardized testing;
- information on eligibility, evaluation requests, and services available under IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act, §504, and information on the response to intervention process; and
- contact information for the relevant regional and/or school specialists.

Additional notification is provided by The Director of Special Education in English or the parent's native language, when practicable, when a student begins to receive the assistance for that school year. This written notification includes:

- A description of the assistance that may be provided to the student, including any intervention strategies that may be used;
- the information collected regarding any intervention in the base tier of a multi-tiered system of supports that has previously been used with the student;
- an estimate of the duration for which the assistance, including through the use of intervention strategies, will be provided; and
- the estimated time frames within which a report on the student's progress with the assistance, including any intervention strategies used, will be provided to the parent.

Finally, information concerning services available under IDEA is provided to parents through the "Parent's Guide to the Admission, Review, and Dismissal Process" prior to a student's first ARD committee meeting by The Director of Special Education and upon parent request.

Demonstrations of this procedure's implementation may include, but are not limited to, examples such as:

- Training material
- Parent education program
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support or Response to Intervention Data
- Student specific data collection and monitoring, including screening results
- Databases

⁴⁹ 19 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 74.28(1)

What happens when the parent or guardian of a student attending private school or being homeschooled in the District requests a referral for a special education evaluation?

The District is responsible for identifying, locating and evaluating those students who reside within the jurisdiction of the District but who are parentally placed in private schools or homeschooled. The parent, legal guardian, or teacher of a resident student who is parentally placed in private school or home instructed may refer a student suspected of having a disability and in need of special education and related services to the student's home campus for District zoning purposes.

To meet its *Child Find* obligation to students who are homeschooled or attend private schools, the District offers to meet at least annually with representatives from private schools within the District and with parents who have placed their students in a private school within the District or who home-school their students, about special education and how to refer a student for a special education evaluation, and the special education and related service options available in the event their student is eligible.

If the parent or legal guardian of a student who is home-instructed or who is placed in a private school is offered an initial evaluation by the District but does not provide consent for the evaluation, the District may not use the special education dispute resolution process to override the lack of consent.

What about students who transfer?

If a student is in the process of being evaluated for special education eligibility by another public school district and enrolls in the District before the evaluation is completed, the District will coordinate with the student's previous school district to ensure prompt completion of the initial evaluation. If the student transfers from another public school district when an initial evaluation is pending, the timelines for conducting the evaluation apply to Gainesville ISD unless:

- the District is making sufficient progress to ensure a prompt completion of the evaluation; and
- the parent and the District agree to a specific time when the evaluation will be completed.

If a student transfers from another school district in Texas with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), the District will provide a free appropriate public education to the transfer student by providing services comparable to the services described in the student's IEP from the student's previous school district until:

- the District adopts the student's IEP from the previous school district, or

- the District develops, adopts and implements a new IEP in accordance with the procedures outlined in **the District’s FAPE Composite Operating Procedure**.⁵⁰

If a student transfers from another state with an IEP, the District will offer services comparable to the services described in the IEP from the sending school district until the District takes the following actions:

- conducts a new full and individual evaluation, as described in **the District’s Evaluation Procedure Operating Procedure**, if the Director of Special Education determines that a new evaluation is necessary; and
- develops, adopts and implements a new IEP, if appropriate, in accordance with the procedures outlined in **the District’s FAPE Composite Operating Procedure**.⁵¹

Additionally, the District will take reasonable steps to promptly obtain a transfer student’s special education and general education records from the sending school district.⁵²

What protections are available for students who have not been identified but may qualify for IDEA’s disciplinary safeguards?

Students not yet eligible for special education and related services may be entitled to the disciplinary protections afforded eligible students, including the manifestation determination review process. The District may be obligated to provide a manifestation determination review and other disciplinary change of placement protections for a student even if the student is not yet determined to be eligible for special education and related services at the time of the violation of the District’s conduct code. Disciplinary protections shall be afforded to a student if the District “had knowledge” that the student is a student with a disability prior to the behavioral incident at issue. The District is considered to have knowledge (1) if the parent or guardian expressed concern in writing to supervisory or administrative personnel, or a teacher of the student, that the student is in need of special education and related services; (2) the parent or guardian of the student requested an evaluation of the student pursuant to IDEA; or (3) the teacher of the student, or other District personnel, expressed specific concerns about a pattern of behavior demonstrated by the student directly to the director of special education or to other supervisory personnel of the District. The District does not have knowledge that the student is a student with a disability if the District sought and the parent refused to permit the student to be evaluated or declined special education and related services, or if the student was evaluated by the District and determined to be ineligible by a duly constituted Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee.⁵³

Demonstrations of this procedure’s implementation may include, but are not limited to, examples such as:

⁵⁰ 34 C.F.R. § 300.323(e)

⁵¹ 34 C.F.R. § 300.323(f)

⁵² 34 C.F.R. § 300.323(g)

⁵³ 34 C.F.R. § 300.534

- Training material
- Posters and other media or website postings
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support or Response to Intervention Data
- Student specific data collection and monitoring
- Databases
- Texas Record Exchange (TREX) requests
- Telephone logs of calls to prior school districts and demonstrating calls to students' parents seeking collaboration
- Records from prior schools
- Notices of evaluation
- Documents seeking consent for evaluation

What are the Gainesville's obligations to children transitioning from IDEA Part C Early Intervention Services (EIS) to IDEA Part B Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)?

Gainesville ISD coordinates with [Texas Health and Human Services Commission \(THHSC\)](#)⁵⁴ or its local designees—the Early Intervention Agency—to notify parents or guardians of children in the Gainesville who are at least 3 years of age but younger than 6 years of age and who are potentially eligible for enrollment in Gainesville ISD's IDEA Part B Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) program of the availability of the program.⁵⁵ Additionally, at least 90 days before the 3rd birthday of a child with a disability under Part C EIS, who may be eligible for preschool special education and related services under Part B, the Early Intervention Agency—must notify the Gainesville that the child will shortly reach the age of eligibility for Gainesville ISD's ECSE program.⁵⁶ The Director of Special Education is an appropriate contact to receive such notice.

If a child is potentially eligible for Gainesville ISD's ECSE program, with family approval, a transition conference will be convened by the Early Intervention Agency, with an invitation to the Gainesville, not fewer than 90 days and not more than 9 months before the child's 3rd birthday, to discuss any potential special education and related services the child could receive from the Gainesville.

If the Early Intervention Agency determines that the child is eligible for [Early Intervention Services \(EIS\)](#) more than 45 but less than 90 days before the child's 3rd birthday and if that child may be eligible for ECSE services under Part B, the Early Intervention Agency, as soon as possible after determining the child's eligibility, must notify Gainesville ISD that the child on his 3rd birthday will reach the age of eligibility for the Gainesville's ECSE program.⁵⁷ The Director of Special Education is an appropriate contact to receive such notice.

⁵⁴ 34 C.F.R. § 303.22

⁵⁵ Tex. Ed. Code § 29.009

⁵⁶ 34 C.F.R. § 303.209(b)(1)(i); [Early Childhood Transition FAQs](#) (OSEP 2009).

⁵⁷ 34 C.F.R. § 303.209 (b)(1)(ii).

The Director of Special Education shall ensure that an IEP is in effect for an IDEA B eligible child with a disability who had previously received IDEA Part C services by the child's 3rd birthday while complying with the procedures in **the Gainesville's Evaluation Procedure Operating Procedure**. If a child's 3rd birthday occurs during the summer, the student's ARD committee shall determine the date when services will begin.⁵⁸

If Gainesville ISD knows that a child served in Part C via an *Individualized Family Service Plan* (IFSP) developed by the Early Intervention Agency and referred to IDEA Part B will turn 3 over the summer and that appropriate Gainesville ISD personnel won't be available to conduct evaluations and hold ARD committee meetings during the summer, The Director of Special Education] shall ensure that required activities such as conducting the evaluations, and convening the ARD committee meeting occurs before the end of the school year.⁵⁹

When the Early Intervention Agency provides notification to Gainesville ISD of a potentially eligible child fewer than 90 days before the student's 3rd birthday, the Early Intervention Agency must provide a written explanation to the Gainesville stating the reason for the delay. The Director of Special Education] is an appropriate contact to receive such notice. If notification is given between 45-89 days before the student's 3rd birthday, The Director of Special Education] shall ensure that eligibility is determined as soon as possible.

If a student with a disability was served under IDEA Part C via an *IFSP*, the student's IFSP may serve as the IEP of a child with a disability aged 3 through 5 (or, at the discretion of the state educational agency, a 2-year-old child with a disability who will turn age 3 during the school year), if the IFSP was developed in accordance with ARD committee procedures, is consistent with state policy, and agreed to by Gainesville ISD and the student's parents or guardians.⁶⁰

If a student's IFSP was incorrectly developed by the Early Intervention Agency and Gainesville ISD and the parent or guardian agree to use the IFSP in lieu of an IEP, Gainesville ISD shall modify the IFSP so that it meets the requirements for an IEP.⁶¹

While IDEA Part B requires coordination to assure the continuity of services, it does not compel Gainesville ISD to provide all the same services in an IEP that were in a student's IFSP.

Demonstrations of this procedure's implementation may include, but are not limited to, examples such as:

- Forms
- IFSP meetings reports
- ARD committee meeting reports
- Transition plans
- TEAL-related documents

⁵⁸ 34 C.F.R. § 300.101

⁵⁹ [Early Childhood Transition FAQs](#) (OSEP 2009)

⁶⁰ 34 C.F.R. § 300.323 (b)(1); 20 USC § 1414 (d)(2)

⁶¹ 34 C.F.R. § 300.323 (b); U.S. Department of Education, 71 Fed. Reg. 46679 (2006)