

Questions and Answers On Serving Children with Disabilities Placed by Their Parents at Private Schools

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is responsible for locating, identifying, and evaluating all students with disabilities who are enrolled by their parents in private, including religious, elementary schools and secondary schools located within Fairfax County. This includes children who live in Fairfax County and do not attend public school, but attend a private school in Fairfax County. This also includes children who do not live in Fairfax County and whose parents have enrolled them in private schools located in Fairfax County. Parents of students who are Fairfax County residents seeking these child find services should contact their base school. Parents of students who do not reside in Fairfax County should contact the Fairfax County Public School closest to the private school their child attends. The public school will conduct the child find process, determine eligibility, and offer appropriate services.

1. How can private schools and parents obtain information regarding the special education and related services that may be available for their students with disabilities?

General information regarding the provision of services for parentally-placed private school students with disabilities is available through the FCPS Office of Special Education Parent Resource Center; phone 703-204-3941. The web site for the Parent Resource Center is <http://www.fcps.edu/ss/prc>

2. Is Child Find for pre-school age children? How does Child Find work for older children when found eligible?

Fairfax County Public Schools must identify, locate, and evaluate those children from birth through age 21 years, inclusive, who are in need of special education and related services. Child Find refers to the active and continuing efforts of the school division to identify, locate, and evaluate any child who resides within the jurisdiction of Fairfax County and is suspected of being a child with a disability. This includes resident children who do not attend public school, but attend private schools in Fairfax county and non-resident children who are parentally paced in private schools in Fairfax County.

3. How do private school parents initiate the process when they believe that a student needs special education assistance?

A referral for screening should be made to the FCPS school closest to the private school for students who do not reside in Fairfax County or at the FCPS base (neighborhood) school for students who reside in Fairfax County. Parents would need to register their child at a FCPS school before initiating the screening process for special education.

4. Where would a student be served if the family resides in Fairfax County and he/she is parentally placed in a private school in Fairfax County?

Registration, screening, and any provision of special education services would take place at the student's neighborhood Fairfax County Public School. This school is also referred to as the base school. If you do not know your child's base school, school boundary information is available at 703-246-6930 or on the FCPS website at www.fcps.edu

5. Where would a student receive services if the family resides outside Fairfax County but the student is parentally placed in a private school located within Fairfax County?

A non-resident student who is eligible for special education services or who is suspected of having a disability and may require special education service could seek assistance from the FCPS school located closest to the private school. Questions regarding which school is closest to the private school should be directed to the monitoring and compliance office at 571-423-4210.

6. Where would a student be screened, and if found eligible for special education, receive services if the family resides in Fairfax County, but the student is parentally placed in a private school outside Fairfax County?

The private school student would be screened and receive services through the school district where the private school is located.

7. What is the difference between enrolling and registering? How does a student who does not currently attend a Fairfax County Public School register?

Registering is a process used to secure a FCPS identification number. This number is needed for data entry purposes. Enrolling involves proceeding to plan classes and teacher assignments.

8. Why doesn't the public school come to the private school to do the 60 day screening? Can you consider sending the speech and language clinician to the private school?

FCPS has determined that screenings and speech/language services will be provided within a FCPS school. This decision is made taking into consideration the number of schools, staffing issues, and the time required to serve students.

9. Will transportation be provided?

FCPS provides transportation for parentally placed private school students when it is determined that the student requires transportation in order to benefit from FCPS special education services.

10. If federal funding allotted for the purpose of serving private school students is used for transportation, will services to the student be reduced?

The cost of transportation for parentally-placed private school students with disabilities may be included in calculating whether FCPS has met the requirements for funding. If transportation is factored in, this may affect the other services available to students.

11. What is the difference between an ISP (Individualized Services Plan) and an IEP (individualized Education Program)?

The IEP is a written statement that specifies the individual needs of the child and what special education and related services are necessary to meet those needs. The services are provided through the public schools. The ISP indicates the service(s) the student may receive when the student attends a parentally-placed private school. The ISP does not provide the same level of service the student would receive if enrolled in a public school.

12. How long does it take to find a student eligible for special education services?

Once an FCPS school receives a student referral the identified school must convene a screening committee within 10 business days to determine whether or not to evaluate for special education. If it is determined that assessments are required, the school must complete the assessments and hold an eligibility meeting during a time not to exceed 65 business days from the date of the initial referral.

13. Can a student receive the same amount of special education service through an ISP as he or she would receive through an IEP?

No, a parentally-placed private school student with a disability has an individual right to receive some or all of the special education and related services that the student would receive if enrolled in a public school. FCPS makes the final decisions regarding the services to be provided to eligible private school students.

14. What services are available to parentally placed private school ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students with a disability?

If the student has been found eligible for special education services, they may be entitled to an ISP (Individualized Services Plan). ESOL is not considered a special education service.

15. Is it possible for a private school student to receive services from more than one service provider?

Yes. After the ISP goals are written, a determination is made regarding which service providers will address the goal(s).

16. If a student cancels sessions, do the sessions have to be made up for a student being served under an ISP?

Given the limitations placed on ISP services, sessions canceled by the student are not automatically rescheduled.

17. Can I bring my child to a Fairfax County Public School to learn to use technology which may be available at the private school?

Fairfax county private school teachers may participate in trainings related to the use of specific technologies on a space available basis.

18. Can private school staff attend FCPS workshops/classes?

Private school personnel may access FCPS workshops and classes based on space available. Should the private school require specific training they should contact the special education office and/or the parent resource center to see if related topics are available.

19. How can private school students access FCPS summer programs?

Students of Fairfax County residents enrolled in private schools, and students of non-Fairfax county residents may enroll in FCPS summer programs by providing proof of residency (for Fairfax County residents), birth certificate, current report card or official transcript, current record of physical examination, and proof of immunizations. For additional information call 703-227-8460.

20. If a private school student is determined to be eligible for special education services and the parents reject services, what is the process if the parent later requests support?

For resident students, the parents would make a request for services by contacting the neighborhood or base school. The IEP/ISP team would convene to determine whether updated information is needed, and what, if any, services the student would receive. If the student returns to the public school an IEP would be offered. If the student continues to attend the private school an ISP may be offered. For non-resident students attending a private school located within Fairfax County, the parent would contact the school closest to the private school and request an ISP meeting. If the parent is interested in an IEP, the parent would contact their home school district.

21. Can consent for evaluations be withdrawn before testing is completed and restarted at a later date?

Consent for evaluations may be withdrawn but does not remove anything that has already been done. A parent may make a referral to restart the testing at any time in the future. The LSC (Local Screening Committee) will review the referral and determine whether testing is warranted.

22. Which school division is responsible for ensuring that a reevaluation of each parentally placed private school child with a disability is conducted at least once every three years?

The school division that provides the services is generally responsible for the reevaluation.

23. Who is responsible for conducting the reevaluation and managing special education services for parentally placed private school student with an ISP? The reevaluation should take place in the LEA (Local Education Agency) where the student is receiving special education services. The school providing services manages the student's ISP.

24. Can a student receive services if the student has been evaluated privately?

Private evaluations presented by parents during the screening and eligibility process must be considered, along with other information, in determining whether a student qualifies for special education and related services.

25. Does FCPS track the number of students found eligible but who do not access services? Yes, data is maintained on how many students are found eligible but do not access services.

26. How long are special services files maintained?

Special education and special services files are maintain for 5 years following graduation or withdrawal. Special education files include records of access/disclosure of student records, referrals, local screening committee forms, permission to test, eligibility committee decisions and evaluation and assessments. Special services files include 504 plans, ESOL assessment information and gifted and talented

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