

THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROCESS IN THE C.O.O.R.

INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT

A HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS

A TEAM APPROACH

Planning, Coordinating, and Providing Services to Students with  
Disabilities

## Purpose of This Handbook

The purpose of this Handbook is to acquaint parents with the procedures used to provide special education programs and services to children with disabilities. The Handbook contains descriptions of procedures used to determine whether children have disabilities, descriptions of special education programs and services, and a list of educational rights afforded to parents under federal and state laws. It also contains a list of organizations parents may contact for assistance, a list of definitions of terms used in special education, and a list of abbreviations used by special education teachers and staff. We hope that the Handbook helps you understand the programs and services available in the C.O.O.R. ISD area.

## C.O.O.R. Intermediate School District Programs and Services

The Intermediates School District provides several special education programs, services, and functions to the local school districts. Services can include professionals providing school social work services, school psychological services, and behavioral therapy. Access to these services is made via the IEP Team process in your local school district. Some of the C.O.O.R. ISD professionals can be contacted through the Intermediate School District and some of them have offices in local school buildings. If you have any concerns with these professional staff, contact your local building principal.

The Intermediate School District also runs several programs for students with Severe and Moderate Cognitive Impairments. Students are placed in these programs via the IEP Team process. Contact the Supervisor of C.E.C. Programs and Services at 275-9555 for additional information.

The Early On® Coordinator for the District is located in the Intermediate School District. Early On® are services for children with impairments or at risk for developmental delay between the ages of birth and three. Services are provided in the home, at a monthly playgroup, or in a nursery/preschool. Contact the Early On® Coordinator at 275-9537.

The Intermediate School District provides many other services including assisting local school districts with school improvement planning, teacher professional development, early childhood services, career and technical instruction, and special education technical assistance.

### Working Together

Providing educational services to children with disabilities is a task that cannot be accomplished by the school district or by the parents alone. Working together, we can provide effective instruction and therapy to children with disabilities and assist them in reaching their potential.

Your student's teacher is the first professional you should talk to if you have concerns regarding any learning problems with your child. If your child is in a preschool, contact the preschool director. If your child is between the ages of birth and three years of age, contact the Early On® coordinator at 989-275-9537.

If your student is in a public school, the building principal is generally the professional responsible for special education in that building. If your student is in a private school, contact the director of that school for information. If you feel your concerns were not met by talking with your child's teacher, you should contact the building principal.

These are the first professionals you should contact if you have concerns regarding your child's learning. It is important to work closely and cooperatively with them to ensure that the school district and you are doing all that you can to help your child learn.

### Children With Disabilities

Some children have conditions that cause them to have difficulty learning. The severity of that difficulty can be mild or severe. If a student has a mild disability, it is possible to modify and adapt the general education classroom to accommodate their difficulties. If a student has a moderate-to-severe disability, he/she may need

teachers with specialized training to work with a child with a disability. As much as possible, those services will be provided in the general education classroom. However, some services may need to be provided in a separate classroom. Part of the job of the parent/school team is to determine how much time, if any, your child will need to be placed outside of the general education classroom.

Disabilities can influence a child throughout his or her life. The purpose of special education is to teach children to apply their individual skills more effectively so that they may learn to adapt their learning style to grow, develop, and learn more effectively. The material your school-aged child with a disability will learn is linked to the general education curriculum.

Disabilities can be grouped into emotional, mental, social, or physical conditions that make learning difficult. As an example, a disability may result in a student not effectively learning material in an auditory mode, rather is more efficient learning visually. In this example, the student may need to learn how to modify auditory material into visual material. It would be the special education teacher's responsibility to work with this student to learn how to do this.

It is important to remember that regardless of the disability, all students can be taught to apply their skills more effectively. Learning to apply skills more effectively is the primary goal of special education programs.

## Educational Disabilities in Michigan

Michigan has been a leader in the nation in providing special education programs and services to children with disabilities. In Michigan, students can be eligible for special education programs and services from birth through age 25 or until the student graduates with a diploma from high school. Michigan has developed a comprehensive list of disability conditions:

Cognitive Impairment  
Severe Multiple Impairment  
Physical Impairment  
Other Health Impairment  
Specific Learning Disability  
Speech and Language Impairment  
Emotional Impairment  
Hearing Impairment  
Visual Impairment  
Early Childhood Developmental Delay  
Autism Spectrum Disorder  
Traumatic Brain Injury  
Deaf-Blindness Impaired

In order to be eligible for special education programs and services, a student must have one of those disability conditions *and* that disability must affect the child to the extent that special education services are necessary for the student to progress in the general education curriculum. For preschool children, the condition must significantly effect normal development.

## Referral for Special Education Eligibility

Providing special education services (including the evaluation services) to your child cannot be done without you initially providing "informed consent" to the district. The school district schedules an initial Review of Existing Evaluation Data and Individual Education Planning Team meetings to gain your informed consent. After you have provided you informed consent, the district will give you notice

prior to holding further Individualized Education Planning Team meetings. The school district has the responsibility to schedule those meetings when it is convenient for both you and the school district. It is important for you to attend those meetings and work with the school team.

The process of obtaining services for children with disabilities may seem long and complicated. However, the process is controlled by federal and state laws to ensure that children are appropriately placed in special education.

The process of placing children with disabilities in special education programs begins when someone makes a referral. Parents often make referrals when they notice their child is having difficulty learning or, in the case of pre-school age children, participating in appropriate activities. Referrals are made by contacting the school's principal in writing indicating that you want to make a referral to special education for your child. Other individuals such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, and other school staff may also make referrals but the evaluation cannot start without your written informed consent.

After receiving your written request or informed consent, the school district has 10 days to set up a meeting called a "Review of Existing Evaluation Data". You will be invited to this meeting, as well as your child's teacher, the building administrator, and several other professional who may be evaluating your child.

The team will discuss your child's current and past school functioning levels. They will review report cards, teacher comments, test scores and will ask you for additional information how your child is at home. Based on this information, the team will determine which tests need to be given to your child to find out whether your child is a student with a disability.

Prior to the meeting, you should receive a pamphlet entitled "Procedural Safeguards Notice". It is a lengthy pamphlet, and a professional should be able at least to summarize the points you need to know prior to finishing this meeting. At the end of the

meeting, you will be asked to sign a form summarizing the discussion and detailing which evaluations will be given to your child. By signing the form, you are giving your informed consent for the school district to evaluate your child.

At this meeting, as at all steps of the way, it is important for you to ask questions if you do not understand what is said at any of the meetings. If you wish, you may be accompanied by a relative, family member, or friend to help you. You may also ask for additional time to think about what you have heard or talk with your spouse before signing any forms. If you choose to do this, return the form to the school as soon as possible to avoid delaying the process, because the school is unable to begin the evaluation until you give your written consent.

After you sign the "Review of Existing Evaluation Data", the school district has 30 school days to complete the evaluation. The school district may ask you for a reasonable extension of that timeline. If the referral was not made until late in the school year, the evaluation may not be completed until the beginning of next school year.

A member of the Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (the MET) must contact you sometime within those thirty school days to review the testing data. They will tell you whether the Team will recommend that your child is eligible for special education services, but those services cannot start until you give your informed consent at the initial Individualized Education Planning Team Meeting.

You may choose to disagree with the Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team's decision. If you disagree, you may ask for an Independent Education Evaluation ("IEE"), which will be conducted by an evaluation team not employed by your district. This will be provided to you at no expense. If you choose to have an Independent Education Evaluation, the school district must *consider* that information, but not necessarily follow the recommendations. Again, no special education services can be provided to your child until you give your consent for those services.

## Response to Intervention

As mentioned before, if your child has a mild disability, he/she may be successful in the general education classroom with the implementation of modifications or accommodations. At the elementary level, these changes might include increased time in a specific instruction such as reading, or using different methods to teach the subject. The classroom teacher then takes data (test scores, etc) to determine if those changes were successful.

These changes are not special education. A special educator may be involved with the process (for example, the school psychologist might be in charge of analyzing the test data), but these alternative educational methods are not special education.

An evaluation for special education eligibility may be asked for if those alternative educational methods are not successful in remediating your child's difficulties. Additional evaluations will be requested, although the information gained through the Response To Intervention process can be used to help determine eligibility for special education services. At any time in the Response to Intervention process you may request an evaluation to determine whether your child is eligible for special education, and the Response to Intervention model may not be used to delay that evaluation.

Your local school district website must detail the specific buildings and grade levels where Response to Intervention is used. You may also contact your local building administrator for additional information.

## Initial Individual Education Planning Team

After testing is completed with your child, the school must hold an initial Individual Education Planning Team Meeting ("IEPT"). You must be invited to all IEPT Meetings held regarding your child, and that meeting must be held at a time and place convenient to you and the school district. You must receive reasonable notice prior to the meeting so that you can arrange your schedule and attend.



Special education programs and services (except evaluation services) cannot be provided to your child prior to the initial IEPT Meeting.

The main purposes of the initial IEPT Meeting are:

- 1) To review the recommendations of the MET regarding whether your child is eligible for special education services or programs.
- 2) To agree or disagree with that recommendation and determine whether your child is eligible or not eligible. If the IEP Team determines that your child is not eligible for special education, no special education programs or services will be provided and the meeting may then look at modifications and accommodations provided in the general education classroom only.
- 3) To review current academic, social, and/or daily living skills and determine how those levels affect your child's progress through the general education curriculum (or effect his/her development).
- 4) To develop a plan to assist your child in his/her progress through the general education curriculum by:
  - a) Detailing which special education programs and services are necessary
  - b) Detailing where and when those programs or services will be done
  - c) Detailing measurable goals and objectives tied to the general education curriculum that the student can obtain within one year.
- 5) To gain your informed consent for those recommended programs and services.

Possible programs that the IEP Team can recommend include:

Resource Room: This program can be provided in a separate room from the general education classroom (the special education classroom) or in the general education classroom ("inclusion" or "team teaching"). It is usually provided for less than 50% of the school day.

Categorical Room: This program is usually a special education classroom set up separate from the general education classroom in which the student is placed for more

than 50% of the school day. It is labeled with the certification of the teacher (for example, a categorical classroom for students with Cognitive Impairments is designed for student with that disability and the teacher's certification is in that area).

Categorical rooms can be further sub-divided by where the program is located. In the C.O.O.R. ISD, most categorical programs are located in the same building as your child would be attending if he/she were not disabled, but the ISD also runs categorical programs for student with Moderate and Severe Disabilities which is not connected with any general education school building.

Because each child with a disability has unique educational needs, the IEP Team is charged with developing an individual educational program that is geared to meet each child's needs. Sometimes, non-academic needs affect a child's learning. In these cases, ancillary or support services can be recommended by the IEP Team to address those needs. These services include speech and language therapy, school social work services, occupational and physical therapy, and behavior therapy. In addition, teacher consultants are available to provide teachers with specialized techniques in teaching students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Hearing Impairments, etc.

At the end of the IEPT meeting, you will be asked if you understand everything that has been discussed and recommended. If you do, then you will be asked to sign the IEP document. Until you sign that document, the recommended programs and services will not be delivered. You should be provided with a written copy of the IEP document before you leave the meeting.

It is at the initial IEP Team meeting that you may disagree with the results of the initial evaluation and request an Individual Education Evaluation. If you agree with the results of the evaluation, but disagree with the results of the IEP (for example, the amount or type of the special education programs/services recommended), you may ask for mediation or a Due Process Hearing, both of which are explained later in this pamphlet.

## Annual Individual Education Planning Team Meetings

An annual IEPT meeting must be held no later than a year after the initial IEPT meeting and every year thereafter. The purpose of this meeting is to review the student's progress toward the goals and objectives and adjust programming or services if necessary. New goals and objectives will replace those goals and objectives your child has obtained.

IEPT meetings can be held before a year has gone by. A request for an IEP Team meeting can be made by you or a school district. This is done if significant changes need to be made to the IEP. Examples of such changes include a student's poor progress toward the goals and objectives, change in eligibility, adding additional services, etc. If you agree, changes also can be made to a student's IEP using an addendum to the IEP. The law allows relatively minor changes to be made to an IEP without convening a formal IEP meeting. The addendum still needs to be approved by you, but you do not have to go to the school for the formal meeting. You can refuse to make the changes to the IEP using an addendum and request a full IEP Team meeting. An addendum to the IEP does not "restart the clock" for an IEP-a full IEP Team meeting still must be held within one year of the previous IEP regardless of the number of addendums.

## Tri-annual Review of Existing Evaluation Data

Every three years, a Review of Existing Evaluation Data meeting must be held. The Review of Existing Evaluation meeting will be conducted much like the initial Review meeting. Your child's educational progress will be reviewed, an opportunity will be given to you to update the school on the situation at home, and a plan will be made to do additional evaluations. Generally speaking, the tri-annual evaluation process requires much less testing than for the initial evaluation. The tri-annual Review must answer two basic questions: is there a need for additional evaluation information to determine continued eligibility for special education, and; is there a need for additional evaluation information to change the school's programming or get a better picture of the student's progress. Many times, school

professionals do not need additional information-whether the student has a disability or not has been established and the school has been evaluating your child on an on-going basis and does not need additional information. If you wish to have additional testing done with your child, this is the time to discuss it with school officials.

### Terminating Special Education Services

In Michigan, students are eligible for special education services until they graduate from high school with a diploma or turn 26 years of age. Based on the data collected by a Review of Existing Evaluation, an IEP Team may also determine a student is no longer eligible for special education services.

If a student does not complete the requirements for a high school diploma, the IEP Team must develop a plan to continue appropriate services until the student is determined ineligible for special education or turns 26 years of age. These services may or may not include continued high school attendance.

At any time, you may refuse services for your child. If your child is being evaluated for the first time, you may stop the evaluation. You may refuse services at the initial IEP. Once your child is receiving services, upon your request, the school district will provide you with a "Revocation of Parental Consent for Special Education in addition to the "Prior Written Notice" form. These forms will immediately stop *all* special education services and due process protections to your child. If you wish those services to begin again, the process has to begin at the very beginning. If you wish to stop only *some* special education services, you need to request that the school district hold an IEP Team Meeting.

### Transition Services

At the Individual Education Planning Team meeting before your child will turn 16, the services necessary to help your child transition from high school to post-school career or college will be discussed. These services may range from continuing in the high school schedule to

beginning career exploration. Additional professionals employed by community services, such as Community Mental Health may be invited. If such a professional needs to be invited, a form will be provided to you so that you can give your permission for that person to be present at the Individualize Education Planning Team meeting.

### Discipline

A student with a disability has several rights and procedural safeguards that students without disabilities do not have. A simple explanation of those differences is that a student with a disability cannot be removed from school for more than 10 days in a school year if the behavior(s) that resulted in discipline is the direct result of his/her disability or is the result of the school district not following the Individualize Education Program. A student with a disability also cannot be disciplined with a punishment that is more stringent than a student without a disability would get for the same behavior. Under most cases, a student with a disability continues to receive a Free and Appropriate Education even if they have been removed from school. To complicate matters, there are different rules and regulations if a student has been suspended from school for drugs, dangerous behavior, or weapons. For a complete explanation, review your "Procedural Safeguards "pamphlet or contact the ISD.

*This does not mean that a student with a disability cannot be disciplined.* Rather, the Federal Government has ensured that students with disabilities are not discriminated against because of their disability and that, if they are removed from school for a long period of time, they can continue to receive special education services.

### Dealing with Problems

As mentioned earlier, the first person to contact if you have any questions is your child's teacher. If you are having a problem with a specific service, such as speech and language services, contact the provider of those services. If you continue to have problems, contact the building principal. If you continue to have problems, contact the

district superintendent.

You may contact the Intermediate School District if you continue to have problems. Contact the Coordinator of Planning, Monitoring and Data Collection or the Director of Special Education at 275-9555.

When you contact the ISD, the first step may be to have the ISD personnel see if the problem can be solved informally. The ISD personnel may call the building principal and see if he/she can help solve the problem. If this approach is not successful, the ISD personnel will suggest several options including a meeting between you and the principal facilitated by ISD personnel to attempt to mediate the problem.

If these If the issue is that the school district is not providing the services promised in the IEP document, the ISD personnel will assist you in making a Part 8 complaint. You may file for a Part 8 complaint at any time if your child is not receiving the IEP services; you do not have to accept the mediation option.

If you do not agree with your child's IEP document, the ISD personnel will assist you in setting up mediation with an outside mediator, or advise you to file for a Due Process Hearing.

The advantage of trying to solve the problem locally is that the resolution may happen quickly. The Department of Education has 60 days to investigate and complete a Part 8 Complaint. A Due Process Hearing is a legal process wherein the school district and parent usually hire lawyers to present their case in front of an administrative law judge.

A Due Process Hearing may take several months, and your child's current IEP is implemented until the Hearing is completed.

### Procedural Safeguards

Federal and state special education laws include procedural safeguards that govern activities related to placing students with

disabilities in special education programs. Procedural safeguards provide a sense of balance to the activities and provide ways of resolving disagreements. Procedural safeguards are also known as parental rights.

The following version is a list of important points in the Procedural Safeguards. A more expanded version is given out not less than yearly at your child's IEP. A full, unabridged version is available from your school or the MDE website at

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/March08-  
ProceduralSafeguardsNotice\\_229223\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/March08-ProceduralSafeguardsNotice_229223_7.pdf)

As a parent, you have the right to:

#### NOTICE

1. Be notified before the school district initiates, changes or refuses to change the identification, evaluation, program, or placement of your child.
2. Have the notice describe the proposed action, why it is proposed, describe the options considered and explain why those options were rejected.
3. Have the notice in writing, in your native language or other principal method of communication, at a level understood by the general public.
4. Be notified of each evaluation, procedure, test record or report the agency will use as a basis for any proposed action.
5. Be notified of the reason(s) and nature for an evaluation.

#### CONSENT

6. Consent before an evaluation is conducted and before initial placement in special education.
7. To know that the school district may proceed (in the absence of consent) to a hearing to determine if your child should be initially evaluated or initially placed in special education.
8. Revoke consent for an evaluation or initial placement in special education.

9. Protest, at a hearing, an action in the absence of consent.

## EVALUATION PROCEDURES

10. Have a full and individualized evaluation of your child's educational needs.
11. Be assured that testing does not discriminate based on language, culture, or race.
12. Have tests sensitive to children with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills.
13. Have more than one test used to determine appropriate educational programs for your child.
14. Have the evaluation performed by a multidisciplinary team, including a person knowledgeable in the area of suspected disability.
15. Have your child assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability.
16. Have a re-evaluation every three years or more frequently if conditions warrant.
17. Have additional diagnostic services at no expense to you if determined appropriate by the IEP Team.
18. Present information to the evaluation team.
19. Have a vocational evaluation before your child receives vocational education.

## INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

20. An independent educational evaluation.
21. Be informed that a hearing officer may order an independent evaluation at public expense.
22. Be informed of the criteria under which an independent evaluation is obtained, including the location of the evaluation and qualifications of the examiner, which shall be the same as the criteria used by the school district when it performs an evaluation.
23. Have the local school district pay for the evaluation if a hearing officer decides the evaluation performed by the local school district was not appropriate.



24. Be told where an independent evaluation may be obtained at public expense.
25. Have the results of the independent educational evaluation considered in any decision made concerning the provision of services to your child.

#### INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATIONAL PLANNING TEAM MEETING

26. Request an IEP Team meeting at any time you believe a change in your child's plan is necessary.
27. Participate in every meeting of the IEP Team.
28. Bring anyone you wish to the IEP Team meeting.
29. Have the initial IEP Team meeting scheduled within 30 school days after the school district receives written consent for evaluation.
30. Inspect and review your child's records concerning identification, evaluation, program, educational placement, and the provision of a free, appropriate, public education.

#### LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT

31. Have a child with disabilities removed from the regular education environment only after supplementary aids and services were tried and found to be unsatisfactory.
32. Have a child with disabilities educated with children without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate.
33. Have supplementary services or other support services in an attempt to make it possible for the child to remain in the regular education classroom.
34. Have a continuum of alternative placements so that placement will be in the least restrictive environment.
35. Have the special education placement in the school your child would attend if not disabled unless the individualized education plan requires some other arrangement
36. Have a child with disabilities participate with children without disabilities in non-academic activities such as meals, recess, counseling, clubs, athletics, and special interest groups.

## HEARING

37. Be told of any available free or low cost legal and other relevant services.
38. During the hearing, the right to be accompanied and advised by an attorney and individuals with special knowledge or training in difficulties of the disabled.
39. Have the hearing conducted by a person not employed by either the local or intermediate school district.
40. Have the hearing conducted by the school district directly responsible for providing the child's education
41. Request an impartial due process hearing to question the school district's identification, evaluation, placement, or the provision of a free and appropriate education
42. Receive a statement of the qualifications of the hearing officer.
43. Prohibit the introduction of any evidence at the hearing that has not been disclosed at least five days before the hearing.
44. Present evidence, confront, cross-examine, and compel the attendance of witnesses.
45. Have the hearing open to the public.
46. Have the student present at the hearing.
47. Have the student remain in his/her present educational placement during the hearing unless the parent and school district agree otherwise.
48. Have a written or electronic verbatim record of the hearing.
49. Appeal to the Michigan Department of Education and receive their decision within 30 days of the filing.
50. Appeal a decision from the Michigan Department of Education to the civil court(s).
51. Obtain written findings of fact and a written decision within 45 days after the agency received the initial request for the hearing.

## RECORDS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

52. Inspect and review your child's records concerning identification, evaluation, program, educational placement, and the provision of a free, appropriate, public education.
53. Restrict access to your child's records by withholding consent to disclose records.
54. Ask for an amendment to any record on the grounds that it is inaccurate, misleading, or violates the privacy rights of you or your child.
55. A hearing on the issues if the school district refuses to make a requested amendment.
56. Be told to whom information has been disclosed and the nature of the information
57. Ask for an explanation of any item in the record.
58. Receive a list of all types and locations of records being collected, maintained, or used by your child's school district.
59. Request copies of the records, paying only for the cost of reproduction.
60. Have your representative inspect and review your child's records.

#### DESTRUCTION OF INFORMATION

61. Be informed when information in your child's file is no longer needed to provide educational services and the school district wishes to destroy the information.
62. Consent before educational information about your child is destroyed

#### SURROGATE PARENTS

It is the responsibility of the local school district if that, after reasonable efforts, it cannot identify or discover the whereabouts of a parent or legal guardian, to notify the court of jurisdiction and request that the court take action to assure that the student has legal representation. It is the responsibility of the school district to appoint someone to act as a surrogate parent if the parent cannot be identified. It is the responsibility of the local school district to assure that children with disabilities under the

age of 18 have a parent or legal guardian to represent them.

## COMPLAINTS

Anyone may file a complaint if they believe that a school district is violating, misinterpreting, or misapplying a law, administrative rule, the Intermediate School District Special Education Plan, or the State of Michigan Special Education Plan. A complaint is a specific and signed allegation by an agency, individual, or organization stating that there is an uncorrected violation. Parents have the right to receive assistance in filing a complaint.

If you suspect a violation is occurring, you should contact the C.O.O.R. Intermediate School District Coordinator of Planning, Monitoring and Data Collection (989) 257-9555. This person may try to resolve the issue informally. However, this person must tell you of your right to file a formal complaint. This person will also assist you in writing your complaint and provide you with a copy of the special education rules concerning complaints. Parents also have the right to appeal to the Michigan Department of Education if they do not agree with the complaint investigation performed by the intermediate school district.

## Parent Resources

There are many advantages to living in the beautiful C.O.O.R.-area. Unfortunately, there are also some disadvantages. There are significantly fewer parental resources available in Northern Michigan compared to urban and suburban areas and we have to drive further to access them. In the C.O.O.R.-area, school districts provide many, if not most, of the educational and psychological services available to children who live in the District. While school-based services are provided at no cost to families, their purpose is to intervene in your child's educational difficulties and not necessarily address other difficulties that may occur outside of school.

If you need more help than the school district can give you, your child's therapist or teacher may know of some outside agency to help

you. Your family doctor may also have a list of agencies or doctors that can help. What follows is a partial list of resources available in the area to assist you.

You know your child the best and can serve as the best advocate for your child's rights. Reading this Handbook, talking to other parents, and frequently talking with (and listening to) the school professionals working with your child is the best way to advocate for your child. Sometimes, it can feel overwhelming to deal with your child's problems. This is a perfectly normal feeling, but such feelings can make listening and understanding difficult. Remember, it is perfectly acceptable to bring a friend or relative to a meeting to help you understand what is happening. Professionals from other agencies that might be working with your family are also welcome to meetings (contact the school prior to the meeting to arrange for professionals to be invited).

Some parents feel that they are entering a "new world" when they attend school meetings. Since school professionals live in this "new world" everyday, they sometimes may forget that parents do not understand what they are saying or doing. Do not be afraid to ask questions or have the professionals explain new terms. Being assertive without being aggressive is the key to holding your own during the meetings. Everyone at the meeting wants what's best for your child.

You may electronically record a meeting. You should arrange for this prior to the meeting, and you may be asked to provide a copy of the recording to the school district.

There are several state organizations developed to assist you during your meetings. Many times they are available through a conference call, so arrange that with the school district prior to the meeting. Realize that the organization does not know your child or the school system, but that they can assist you in understanding your rights and which procedures need to be in place. They are also useful in helping you determine whether your, or the school district's proposal, is reasonable.

The ISD Director of Special Education or Coordinator of Planning, Monitoring, and Data Collection can assist you by answering questions you may have or by mediating differences between you and the school.

Regardless of who assists you in an advocacy role, remember that you remain the person who knows your child the best and you are the person who will be giving consent to the school district to provide services.

C.O.O.R. Intermediate School District  
P.O. Box 827  
11051 North Cut Road Roscommon, MI. 48653  
(989) 275-9555  
Contacts: Director of Special Education and  
Coordinator of Planning, Monitoring and Data Collection

Crawford-AuSable School District  
403 Michigan Avenue Grayling, MI. 49738  
(989) 348-7641

Fairview Area Schools  
1800 East Miller Road Fairview, MI. 48621  
(989) 848-2480

Roscommon Area Public Schools  
814 Lake Street Roscommon, MI. 48653  
(989) 275-5800

Houghton Lake Community Schools  
6001 West Houghton Lake Drive Houghton Lake, MI. 48629  
(989) 366-5376

Mio AuSable Schools  
P.O. Drawer 909 Mio, MI. 48647  
(989) 826-3225

West Branch-Rose City Area Schools  
P.O. Box 308 West Branch, MI 48661  
515 Harrington Street  
Rose City, MI 48654  
(989) 345-5320

Charlton Heston Academy  
1350 N. St. Helen Rd.  
St. Helen, MI 48656  
(989) 632-3390

Project Find  
C.O.O.R. Intermediate School District 11051 North Cut Road  
Roscommon, MI. 48653  
(989) 275-9555

Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Michigan  
Department of Education  
P.O. Box 30008 Lansing, MI. 48909

Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service 106 West Allegan, Suite  
300 Lansing, MI. 48933-1706 800-288-5923

Citizens Alliance to Uphold Special Education 3303 West Saginaw  
Lansing, MI. 48917  
517-886-9167

Michigan Association for Children with Emotional Disorders  
15920 West Twelve Mile Road Southfield, MI. 48706  
(248) 552-0044

Michigan Speech, Language, and Hearing Association  
855 Grove Street East Lansing, MI. 48823  
(517) 332-5691

Michigan Department of Vocational Rehabilitation 1665 West M – 32  
Gaylord, MI. 49735

(989) 732-6433

Head Start for Roscommon County Northwest Michigan Human  
Services Agency Traverse City, MI. 49684  
(231) 947-3780

Head Start for Crawford, Ogemaw, and Oscoda Counties  
Alpena, MI. 49707  
(989) 356-3474

Crawford County Health Department  
Grayling, MI. 49738  
(989) 348-7800

District Health Department #2 Ogemaw County Building  
West Branch, MI. 48661  
(989) 345-5020  
Roscommon County Judge of Probate  
Roscommon, MI. 48653 (989)  
275-5221

Association for Retarded Citizens Ogemaw County  
(989) 345-5571

Lawyer Referral Service  
306 Townsend Lansing, MI. 48909  
(517) 482-8816

Oscoda County Health Department  
Mio, MI. 48647  
(989) 826-3970

Roscommon County Health Department  
500 Lake Street Roscommon, MI. 48653  
(989) 275-5107

North Central Community Mental Health Serving Crawford and  
Roscommon Counties



2715 Townline Road  
Houghton Lake, MI. 48629 (989) 366-8550

Roscommon County Family Independence Agency  
Roscommon, MI. 48653  
(989) 275-5193

AuSable Valley Community Mental Health Serving Ogemaw and  
Oscoda Counties  
511 Griffin West Branch, MI. 48661  
(989) 345-5571

Crawford County Family Independence Agency  
Grayling, MI. 49738  
(989) 348-7691

Ogemaw County Family Independence Agency  
806 West Houghton West Branch, MI. 48661  
(989) 345-5135  
Crawford County Judge of Probate  
200 West Michigan Avenue Grayling, MI. 49738  
(989) 348-2481

Ogemaw County Judge of Probate  
West Branch, MI. 48661  
(989) 345-0145

Michigan Alliance for Families: <http://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/>

Early On: <http://1800earlyon.org/>

## Glossary

**Ancillary Services:** Special Education services especially designed to meet unique needs of an individual from birth to 25 years of age. Ancillary services include audiology, medical, psychiatric, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, recreational therapy,

music therapy, orientation and mobility, transportation, school psychology, and school social work.

**Annual Goal:** A set of general statements which represent expected achievement over a one-year period of time for individuals with disabilities enrolled in special education programs and services.

**Comprehensive Evaluation:** An evaluation conducted for the purposes of determining present level of educational performance, and eligibility for special education programs and services.

**Child With Disabilities:** A person determined by an individualized educational planning team to have a characteristic or set of characteristics as defined in the following list of disabilities: autistic, emotionally impaired, hearing impaired, cognitive impaired, physically health impaired, other health impairment, severely multiply impaired, learning disabled, speech and language impaired, traumatic brain injury, and visually impaired.

**Consent:** A written agreement of all information concerning the activity to perform an activity after being fully informed in one's native language or mode of communication. Consent is voluntary, and may be revoked at any time.

**Independent Educational Evaluation:** An evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the school district responsible for the education of the student.

**Complaint:** A written and signed allegation that there has been a specific violation, misinterpretation, or misapplication of any provision of special education rules.

**Individualized Educational Program:** A program containing long-term goals, short-term objectives, and special education programs and services developed by an Individualized Educational Planning Team. The program shall be reviewed at least annually.

**Individualized Educational Planning Team:** Individuals

appointed and invited by the superintendent to determine eligibility for special education programs and services. If the person is found to be eligible and in need of special education programs and services, the committee must develop an Individualized Educational Program.

**Normal Course of Study:** The regular education curriculum leading to a high school diploma.

**Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team:** A team consisting of a minimum of two individuals responsible for evaluating students suspected of having a disability. The team also reevaluates students with disabilities at least once every 36 months.

**Parent:** The father, mother, or legally designated guardian of an individual with disabilities. Parent also applies to the individual with disabilities when that person reaches 18 years of age if a legal guardian has not been appointed by appropriate court action.

**Parent Handbook:** This document provides parents/guardians of children with disabilities from birth through 26 years of age an overview of their rights concerning special education.

**Public Expense:** An activity paid entirely by a public agency. Activities typically paid at public expense include evaluations, programs and services, and transportation.

**Short-Term Objectives:** Statements written in measurable terms which relate to annual goals developed for individuals with disabilities. Short-term objectives represent expected achievement levels over several weeks or months, but not more than one year.

**Special Education:** Specifically designed instruction, provided at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of an individual with disabilities. Special education includes classroom instruction, instruction in physical education, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions.

**Parent Advisory Committee:** A committee of parents of students with disabilities in an intermediate school district. Parents are

appointed to serve on the committee by intermediate and local school district boards of education.

## **Helpful Hints**

### How to Prepare for the IEP Team Meeting

Obtain as much information as you can before the meeting. Speak with your child's teachers, the individuals who evaluated your child, and read your child's educational records.

Consider contacting organizations listed in this Handbook. Write your questions and concerns on a piece of paper before the meeting.

If at all possible, arrange for both parents to attend the meetings. If you are having communication difficulties with the school district, maintain your own records regarding your child. Keep a copy of all letters you send. If you make a telephone call, keep a record of what was discussed, and follow the call with a letter.

Keep in mind that the views of other team members may vary. Some members see your child alone. Some see your child in large or small groups. It is the responsibility of team members to discuss how they see your child in the educational area they represent.

Team members will respect your right not to discuss personal family matters. Provide as much information as you believe is best. Then let them know that you do not feel comfortable sharing additional information.

Report anything you believe has been overlooked

Meet with your child's teacher. If at all possible, observe your child in the classroom situation.

Help other team members at the meeting understand your child by telling them how he/she behaves at home.

Ask for explanations of things you do not understand.

Be sure you understand your child's Individualized Educational Plan before you sign it.

Find out how you can best help your child's education at home  
Identify your child's strengths. Use your child's strengths to develop skills in which he/she has difficulty

### How to Obtain Information About the Evaluation of Your Child's Progress in School

Get to know the person most involved with your child's education, and keep in touch with them. If your child is in middle school or high school, contact the school counselor.

Familiarize yourself with the terminology used in education. Many of the terms are included in this Handbook.

Your child's case manager, who is identified on the IEP document, is responsible to report your child's progress toward his/her goals and objectives at least as often as a non-disabled child. This means that, shortly after the school district's reports cards come out, you should be receiving in the mail a "Progress Report" talking about overall progress and whether your child is progressing in an expected manner. If your child receives multiple services, it is the responsibility of the case manager to ensure that you receive progress reports from all your child's providers. If you do not receive these reports, contact your building administrator.

### **Medicaid Reimbursement**

The C.O.O.R. Intermediate School District and local school districts bill Medical Services Administration for services provided to eligible students. Parents occasionally receive letters from the Medical Services Administration indicating that claims for services have been

paid. Please be assured that the practice of school districts billing Medical Services Administration has been approved by the Michigan Department of Education. Please also be assured that school districts billing Medical Services Administration will in no way reduce benefits to children.