

Formal Child Study

The operational guidelines in this section pertain to the general child study process for all students and the specific operational guidelines for identifying students suspected to have disabling conditions that adversely affect educational performance. A flow chart of the process may be viewed in Figure 1 (p. 13, end of Section 6). In Figure 2 (p. 14, end of Section 6), timelines for the complete special education process are summarized.

I. Purposes of the Child Study Process

The formal child study process is a screening activity to identify children and youth experiencing learning and adjustment problems. Primarily, the process involves administrative, instructional, and support personnel in providing alternatives and interventions within the regular education setting. Every effort should be made to accommodate students in regular education programs. The child study process includes the following objectives:

- A. Analyze the student's learning and behavioral characteristics and needs.
- B. Assess aspects of the curriculum, teaching methods and materials, and school and home environmental factors that influence the student's learning and adjustment.
- C. Develop, implement, and monitor written instructional modifications in the regular education program to improve the student's performance. Examples of modifications include individualized programming within classes, changing class placement, assigning the student to alternative or compensatory programs involving building specialists, and rescheduling subjects.
- D. Determine and justify the need for formal assessment, with documentation of unsuccessful results of the Child Study Action Plans, implemented systematically in the regular program.

II. Referral to the Child Study Committee

File SE-1 Request for
Education Assistance

A teacher, parent, guardian, student, or others including the SEA or a state agency may initiate a referral to the Child Study Committee. A child may also be referred as a result of poor performance on the initial screening. In most instances, the classroom teacher(s) will submit the Request for Educational Assistance (SE-1) to the principal. However, parents, other school personnel, representatives of community agencies, or others may request that the principal of the school where the student is enrolled initiate a referral to the Child Study Committee. When a student has more than one teacher, the principal/designee shall obtain existing and current information from all possible sources so that complete information is available to the Child Study Committee. Formal assessment components needed for special education eligibility determination shall not be initiated or collected before referral to the Supervisor of Referrals and Assessments has been made and signed parental consent for evaluation has been obtained. (SE-5)

III. Parent Notification

File Notification
Sample Letter #1
to Parent file.

The principal/designee shall notify the student's parent/surrogate parent/ legal guardian of the request for educational assistance. While parent permission is not required to initiate the child study process, parents shall be invited and encouraged to participate in the child study process.

Parents must be notified in their native language if they are not fluent in English, or in another mode of communication if the parents are not able to read. If assistance is needed in writing a letter or translating forms in a language other than English, the principal/designee shall contact the Supervisor of Referrals and Assessments located in the administration building. If a sign language interpreter is required, the principal/designee shall contact the Special Education Supervisor for Speech/Language And Hearing Impaired.

IV. Scheduling Child Study Committee Meetings

A Child Study Committee meeting must be held within 10 business days from the date of the Request for Educational Assistance (SE-1).

The principal/designee maintains the child study referrals and minutes in the student's educational record, Part I.

V. Child Study Committee Participants

The Child Study Committee shall consist of at least three persons, including:

- A. The principal/designee who schedules and conducts meetings and maintains records of committee actions.
- B. Teacher(s): Usually the student's classroom teacher participates, but may include personnel who have conducted school entry screenings.
- C. Specialists in the problem area stated in the Request for Educational Assistance (SE-1); i.e., reading specialist, audiologist, school nurse, physical education teacher, psychologist, social worker, speech/language pathologist, special education teacher.

1. Personnel from the Special Education Assessment Team may/may not participate in the child study process as members of the Child Study Committee. However, when the Child Study Committee believes it has exhausted all in-school options available, a member of the Special Education and Assessment Team should be invited to attend the Child Study Committee.
 2. Instructional supervisors or specialists in the subject content areas may provide consultative assistance upon request of the principal.
- D. Referring source as appropriate (except when referring source would breach confidentiality of the student).
- E. Parent(s) shall be provided an opportunity to attend the meeting at a mutually agreed upon date and time and share observations and information about their child. When the parent is the referring source and an evaluation is requested, he/she must be invited and encouraged to attend to share information/observation about the child. A record of notices and contacts informing the parent of the meeting must be maintained.

VI. Steps in the Child Study Process

- A. Gather background information.

Review records and other performance evidence of student referred through the pre-referral process or other referral source, such as:

1. School entry or more recent screening data;
2. Cumulative educational records, including academic achievement and related developmental needs;

3. Test scores, including both local and state assessments;
 4. Health records (conduct vision and hearing screenings, if appropriate, and investigate certain health concerns that appear to impact on learning or adjustment);
 5. Available confidential reports;
 6. Attendance records;
 7. Work samples, anecdotal records, classroom observation reports;
 8. Written reports of intervention implemented by school staff; or
 9. Classroom-based observations.
 10. A teacher or specialist may screen a student for the purposes of determining appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation. This screening should not be considered an evaluation for eligibility for special education and related services and does not require parental consent.
- B. Identify the previous or current alternative instructional programs or services provided to the student, and the student's progress in these programs; e.g., Reading Recovery, Title I, and alternative programs through the Equity and Accountability Department.
- C. Involve parents/guardians in supplying information about the student's development, learning and personal characteristics, and in providing suggestions for educational planning.
- D. Discuss the student's current academic functioning.
1. Identify how the student learns best and the types of learning tasks and situations that enhance or inhibit the student's learning.

2. Identify skill areas in which the student's performance is strong or weak.
 3. Investigate the student's relationship to other students and adults in and out of the classroom.
 4. Investigate health factors which may influence the student's performance or adjustment. Certain conditions such as vision or hearing problems may be addressed during the child study process. Vision/hearing screenings should be combined as a part of school-wide screening and only after parental permission has been obtained.
- E. Identify resources within the school or community and generate a list of options which may enable the student to achieve satisfactorily in the regular classroom program.

File SE-2 Child Study Action Plan

- F. Develop a written Child Study Action Plan (SE-2) that considers background information, the student's academic functioning, and the instructional options, to include the following components:
1. Identify learning and/or behavioral problems;
 2. Identify the appropriate strategies and materials to assist the learner to make satisfactory progress in academic and/or behavior;
 3. Identify the personnel responsible for implementing the strategies;
 4. Establish the methods of evaluating the effect of the strategies on the student's achievement and/or adjustment;
 5. Establish the timelines for monitoring and adjusting the educational program;
 6. Indicate the signatures of Child Study Committee members; and

7. Identify a date to review and evaluate results of the Child Study Action Plan.
There is no timeline for concluding the child study process. Steps E through F may be repeated as often as necessary.

G. Complete the child study process when:

1. The student is responding to strategies and modifications and is not suspected to be disabled. Continue in-school modifications.
2. The student is not responsive to modifications and is suspected of having a disabling condition. Request a formal assessment and determine components needed to determine the educational needs of the child. (See next section.)

SE-3 Student Referral for Special Education Assessments

3. The student exhibits a severe problem or constitutes a threat to self or others. An emergency referral for formal assessment may be initiated immediately. Indicate EMERGENCY on SE-3 and send all copies of the SE-3 form to the attention of the Supervisor of Referrals and Assessments following the operational guidelines described in the next section.

H. Prior Written Notice

1. The Notice of Intent form must be completed and presented to the parent prior to the Permission to Evaluate form and signed by the parent and the case manager.
 - a. The written forms indicate that an evaluation to consider the student's need for special education and related services is being proposed.

I. When the referring source asks for an evaluation prior to a child study referral due to a suspected disability:

1. The timeline for evaluation begins on the date of the request;
2. A Child Study Committee should be convened as soon as possible;
3. If the Child Study Committee agrees that an evaluation is appropriate, it should:
 - a. Complete sections G and H above, indicating the referral date as the date of the initial request for evaluation;
4. If the Child Study Committee does not agree that an evaluation is appropriate, it should:
 - a. Continue with the development of a Child Study Action Plan; and
 - b. Provide written notice on the Notice of Intent form to the referral source, indicating that the evaluation is being denied.
 - 1) This stops the evaluation timeline; however, child study activities must not be used as a tool to delay a child's Referral for Evaluation.