

Education Services for Young Children with Delays

There are several public education programs that children and youth with special needs may qualify for. These are federally mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and include:

Ages 0-3

Early Intervention (Birth-3) Programs

This is a program for young children with disabilities or developmental delays. Children who qualify receive services including family resource coordination and therapy to address the child's needs. This is mandated by IDEA Part C and is known as Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) in Washington State. In Whatcom County, the school districts work with the Opportunity Council as the Local Lead Agency for ESIT services.

How do I determine if my child is eligible for these services?

Call Single Entry Access to Services (SEAS) at 715-7485

If your child is under 3 SEAS, is the point of entry into early intervention services. Tell the SEAS navigator that you have concerns about your child's development and want them evaluated for eligibility for early intervention (ESIT) services.

Ages 3-5

Developmental Preschool Programs (Ages 3-5)

Children with disabilities and developmental delays are also entitled to preschool services from the local school districts under IDEA Part B. This program provides preschool classes for children that qualify and typically includes specialized therapy services (e.g., speech or occupational therapy). The family, school staff, and other professionals work together to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each child enrolled. Progress towards the IEP goals are tracked for each child and the IEP is revised at least once a year in light of this progress.

How do I determine if my child is eligible for these services?

Call Single Entry Access to Services (SEAS) at 715-7485

If your child is 3 or older, it is also a good idea to call the SEAS line even though you will also have to request an evaluation from your local school district. The SEAS navigator can connect you with other services that might be helpful for your child and help walk you through the process of requesting an evaluation from the school district.

Contact your Local School District to Request an Evaluation

Even if your child is not yet in school, you should contact the special education office in your local school district using the information on the next page to make your request.

How Do I Make a Referral?

Do It in Writing

You must make a written referral, unless the person making the referral is unable to write. It can be simple and handwritten or via email. Make sure to date it and keep a copy for your records. Please see the [Sample Evaluation Letter](#) on the Taking Action [Handouts Webpage](#) for an example. Send it to your school contact person (see table below).

Don't Worry About It Being Perfect

Do worry about getting it done as soon as possible. Nothing will happen until a referral is made, and the date that the district receives the referral triggers the timelines within which the district must act.

Be Specific About What Type of Issues You Think Your Child Has

Districts are required to test in all areas related to a student's suspected disability, so make sure you describe all of the areas of concern. For example, if you think your child has difficulty reading and has emotional issues that need to be addressed, ask that both areas be evaluated.

Use Examples

Include your own observations to describe why you think your child may have a disability. If you have them, provide documents such as letters from doctors or mental health providers that indicate that your child may have an impairment.

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School District Contact Information

<p>Bellingham Schools: 360-676-6458 Special Education Office specialeducation@bellingshamschools.org 1306 Dupont St, Bellingham, 98225</p>	<p>Blaine School District: 360-332-0722 Federal & Special Programs Randy Elsbree, Director 770 Mitchell Avenue, Blaine, WA 98230</p>
<p>Ferndale School District: 360-383-9212 Student Services Department http://ferndalesd.org/special-services/ PO Box 698, 6041 Vista Dr, Ferndale 98248</p>	<p>Lynden School District: 360-354-2893 Special Programs Office Tim Metz, Director metzt@lynden.wednet.edu 205 S. BC Ave. Suite 115, Lynden, WA 98264</p>
<p>Meridian School District: 360-398-9898 Special Programs Carolyn Jenkins, Director x 2155 214 W. Laurel Road, Bellingham, WA 98226</p>	<p>Mt. Baker School District: 360-383-2012 Special Programs Ian Linterman, Director PO Box 95, Deming, WA 98244</p>
<p>Nooksack Valley School District: 360-988-4754 Special Services Carol Lagasse, Administrative Assistant x 5296 3326 E. Badger Road, Everson, WA, 98247</p>	<p>Lummi Nation School: 360-758-4300 Special Education Department Willetta Gorge, Special Ed. Director x 4319 2334 Lummi View Dr., Bellingham, WA 98226</p>

¹ Parts of this handout are excerpted from the Office of the Education Ombuds Guide: *Protecting the Educational Rights of Students with Disabilities in Public Schools*. This guide has much more detail and can be found at http://oeo.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/manual_students_with_disabilities.pdf.

What Happens When I Request a School District Evaluation?

To conduct a special education evaluation, the district must decide whether to evaluate a student, and then get permission or consent from the student's parent or guardian to perform the evaluation. School districts must evaluate a student in every area related to his or her suspected disability. The evaluation must be done at no cost to the student or family. There are three basic steps to make an evaluation happen:

Step 1: Someone makes a request that the student be evaluated.

Under Washington law, the following people or entities can refer a student for evaluation:

- Anyone who meets the definition of parent
- School district
- Others persons knowledgeable about the child
- Another public agency

Step 2: The district decides if an evaluation is necessary.

The district has 25 school days to decide whether to evaluate a student. In making its decision to evaluate, the district must review any existing educational and medical records in the school files or provided by a parent or caretaker.

Once the district has made a decision about whether to evaluate, the district must send the parent or guardian a written notification of the decision. If the district decides not to evaluate, you can challenge the decision.

Step 3: The parent gives the district consent to evaluate.

The parent needs to give consent before the evaluation can begin. Once consent has been given, the school has 35 days to evaluate the student and determine whether they have a disability and need special education services. * "Parents" can include legal guardians or others such as grandparents, stepparents with whom the child lives, or a person who is legally responsible for the child's welfare.

The School District Evaluation

The district may evaluate a child in the following areas:

- Health (physical and mental health)
- General intelligence
- Vision
- Communication, speech, and language
- Academic performance
- Hearing
- Social and emotional health
- Motor abilities

The district must evaluate a child in ALL areas in which a disability is suspected. The special education evaluation has two purposes: 1) to determine eligibility for services, and 2) to identify the needs and strengths of the student so that an individualized education program can be developed. You want to make sure that your child is evaluated in all areas where you think s/he might have challenges in order to get the most appropriate services and education plan for your child. Typically the consent form you sign indicates the areas which they are planning to evaluate. Look over this list and ask the district to include any important areas that are missing.