



How to Access Services for Children from Three to Five Years of Age

Preschool special education programs and/or services are available to children aged 3 to 5 years, by direct referral to the local school district's Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE). Each school district employs a professional who serves in an administrative role, called the "CPSE Chairperson". He or she is available to assist parents through the process of referral, evaluation, eligibility determination, and delivery of services. He or she will lead all of the meetings of the "Committee". The rest of the Committee will be made up of other participants involved in either the evaluations or the delivery of potential services to the child and family. The child's parent(s) are included as equal members.

First, a parent must provide a written request to the school district for a Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation (MDE), including a brief explanation of the reason for concern about the child's development. This letter counts as the "referral." In response, the school district will provide the parent with a list of New York State Education Department-approved evaluation sites, as well as a copy of their due process or legal rights, and a consent form. The parent writes the name of their chosen site on the consent form, along with a signature, which counts as legal "consent" for the MDE to be done. After the evaluations have been done and written evaluation reports have been returned to the Chairperson, the full CPSE will be scheduled to meet.

Together, the Committee determines the child's eligibility for CPSE services. Eligibility for CPSE services is based on whether a preschool student's delay or disability meets the legal criteria and has a negative impact on his or her ability to learn or to participate in age-appropriate activities. Any eligible preschool-aged child will simply be classified as a "preschool student with a disability." No additional medical or educational diagnosis is required for preschool students to receive CPSE services. CPSE services are scheduled according to the local school district calendar year, on a 10-month basis. A legal document called an Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be written, which lists the services to be provided and the student's individual learning goals. Summer or "Extended School Year" services are discussed later in this document.

The services available to serve an eligible preschool student with a disability fall along a continuum. The aim is to provide services to every child in his or her Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). This means that for all children, appropriate services are to be provided in a setting with his or her typically developing peers as much as possible, while meeting his or her individual learning needs.

These services are further explained on the next pages.



LEAST RESTRICTIVE



- A. Related Services only
- B. Special Education Itinerant Teacher Services (SEIT) only
- C. SEIT in combination with Related Services
- D. Special Class in an Integrated Setting (SCIS)
- E. Special Class (SC)
- F. Residential Program

MOST RESTRICTIVE

Continuum of CPSE Services

- A. **Related Services:** These are developmental, corrective, and other supportive services provided to assist a student with a disability. Services may include speech, occupational, or physical therapy; counseling; orientation and mobility services; parent counseling and training; school health services; school social work; and assistive technology. If two or more related services are recommended, the CPSE designates one of the related service providers as the Coordinator.
- B. **Special Education Itinerant Teacher Services (SEIT):** Services are provided by a NYS certified special education teacher, who travels to the location of the child's regular education class or program. S/he provides specially designed, individualized or group instruction to meet the unique needs of the student(s) so s/he may benefit from his/her regular early childhood education program. A SEIT may provide "direct services" to the child, and/or "indirect services," like a consultant, to his or her regular classroom teacher(s). S/he may make suggestions regarding how to adjust the learning environment and/or modify instructional methods or materials to meet the individual needs of a student with a disability who attends an early childhood program. SEIT services must be provided at least two hours per week.
- C. **SEIT in combination with Related Services:** A preschool child may receive a combination of the services above in order to meet his or her special learning needs. They may all be provided at a location including, but not limited to: an approved or licensed pre-kindergarten, Head Start program, child care setting, nursery school, therapist's office, or in the child's home. When a child attends a mainstream early childhood program, it is the parent's responsibility to locate it, enroll the child, and pay any fees or tuition. The Special Education teacher is designated by the CPSE to serve as a Coordinator.
- D. **Special Class in an Integrated Setting (SCIS):** A special education program that has been approved by the NY State Education Department, which consists of a class made up by children with and without identified special needs. It requires at least one special education teacher, in addition to a general education teacher and/or a paraprofessional. Each class lasts for a minimum of 2½ hours per day (half-day class) or up to a maximum of five (5) hours (full-day class). Children approved for a



SCIS may also receive related services. Transportation options will be discussed upon eligibility determination.

- E. **Special Class:** A State Education Department-approved preschool special education program provides this classroom, in which every child enrolled in this class is classified as a “preschool student with a disability” by his or her school district. Classes may have up to a maximum of twelve (12) children. The classes are staffed by at least one special education teacher and one paraprofessional. Each class lasts for a minimum of 2½ hours per day (half-day class) or up to a maximum of five (5) hours (full-day class). Children approved for a special class may also receive related services. Transportation options will be discussed upon eligibility determination.
- F. **Residential Program:** Special education services are provided for a minimum of five (5) hours per day, five (5) days per week. Placement in a residential program must be approved by the State Education Department Commissioner. Children approved for a residential program may also receive related services.

Transportation

Typical children who attend regular early childhood programs are transported back and forth by or with their parents or caretakers. In developing its recommendation for a preschool student with a disability to receive programs and services, the CPSE must identify transportation options for the student. When a preschool student with a disability is approved to attend a half- or full-day program (either a SCIS or a SC), parents are encouraged to transport their own child by car or by public transportation. Parents may submit documentation for mileage reimbursement or other transportation expenses to their county of residence. When a parent cannot provide any means of transportation, it is possible for the CPSE Chairperson to arrange for the child to receive busing to and/or from the program.

About Extended School Year (ESY) Programming or "Summer Services"

Extended school year services may be appropriate for some preschool students with disabilities. Summer services may be provided only for children with the most significant management needs due to their disability and/or who have exhibited substantial regression in the past. Extended School Year services or programs are not intended to keep regression from occurring. Children are expected to show some regression when, for example, they do not receive education services over the summer break between school years. Thus, some regression is considered to be normal or typical.

Substantial regression means a student's inability to maintain levels of previously acquired skills or knowledge due to a loss of services over an extended break, required an *even longer* period



educate . innovate . advocate

Westchester Institute for Human Development
Cedarwood Hall, Valhalla, NY 10595
914.493.8202 . www.wihd.org

of time to relearn or review than what would be considered typical. A longer review period would indicate that substantial regression had occurred, as observed and documented by professional service providers, and therefore the student may be considered eligible to receive summer services.

The CPSE is responsible for determining a student's eligibility for an Extended School Year program and for recommending the appropriate special education program and/or related services needed to prevent substantial regression. Thus, a student's IEP for the summer may not be exactly the same as the IEP in place during the school year. The individual's needs will be considered by the Committee in order to determine the appropriate IEP goals, and therefore services. Extended School Year Services are provided for 30 days or six weeks in July and August.

Contact the Lower Hudson Early Childhood Direction Center for Assistance

Please contact us for a copy of the timeline and more detail about the CPSE process and services. If you have access to the internet, you can locate a flow chart at www.wihd.org/ecdc.

You may also ask us for the name and contact information for a school district's CPSE Chairperson.

Give us a phone call at (914) 493-2902 or email us at: ecdc@wihd.org.