



Working with Committees on Preschool Special Education: Guidelines for Parents

Committees on Preschool Special Education: What Are They?

- CPSEs are groups of people appointed by the Board of Education in each school district in New York State to identify and evaluate three and four year old children who have special educational needs.
- CPSEs have **mandated members**:
 - the child's parent(s);
 - an appropriate professional employed by the district (CPSE Chairperson);
 - a certified general education teacher, who can help consider the educational expectations in the general education setting and the child's ability to be educated with mainstream peers;
 - a certified special education teacher or related service provider, who can help consider the child's needs within that domain, and his/her ability to be educated with mainstream peers;
 - a professional charged with the responsibility for the child in the Early Intervention Program (at the request of the child's parent) may be a service provider, including Service Coordinator;
 - a certified or licensed professional who participated in the evaluation of the child;
With 72 hours' prior written request:
 - a parent of a child with a disability who resides in the same school district, who is not employed by the district or municipality (Parent Member);
 - school physician
- Each CPSE office must first provide parents of a preschool child suspected of having a disability with a list of New York State Education Department (NYSED) approved evaluation sites.
- Upon receipt of the parent's consent, the CPSE office arranges for the evaluation site, which the parent has selected, to conduct an evaluation.
- Within 60 calendar days after receiving the parents' consent for evaluation, if the child is determined to be eligible for services, s/he is classified as a "preschool student with a disability";
- A full CPSE develops an appropriate Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the child; the CPSE office forwards the recommendations to the school district's Board of Education, to officially implement appropriate programs and services. Service providers are chosen from the NYSED list of approved pre-school special education providers.
- Within 30 days of the recommendation, the child should begin to receive services.

Preparing for a Committee Meeting: Steps to Take Before You Open the Door

- Know your child's legal rights to a free, appropriate public education and know your rights in the evaluation and placement process.
- Review your child's preschool and evaluation records (if any).
- Talk with your child's preschool teacher (if any).
- Make a list of your child's strengths and weaknesses. Use your list to decide what you want to tell the CPSE about your child's educational needs.



- Practice your "presentation" in front of someone you trust to give you some constructive feedback.

Opening the Door to the Committee Meeting: The Parent's Role

- Bring your records and any relevant materials you have collected. Organize them so that you can easily find items you may need. Use placemarks, if necessary.
- Bring someone along with you who knows you and your child, has helped you prepare for the meeting, and will help you express your concerns during the meeting. Inform your school district ahead of time that you will be bringing someone with you.
- When you enter the meeting room, introduce yourself and anyone accompanying you to the Committee members. Ask them to introduce themselves to you.
- If the Chairperson does not do so, ask one of the members to explain what the order of business will be (Who will talk first? When will you have an opportunity to ask questions? When will you present your concerns?).
- When evaluation reports are referred to or described, ask questions if you don't understand terms or concepts. Get clear specific explanations for how evaluation information is being used.
- Take your time. If things are happening too fast for you, ask the Chairperson to slow the process down. Question any of the members about what they have said.
- State your concerns and ideas for your child's educational program and offer examples of why you have come to these conclusions. Use your records or materials, if necessary. Share the list of your child's strengths and weaknesses, if appropriate.
- Listen to the responses of the Committee members. If the members disagree with you, give yourself time to hear and digest their points of view, even if it means coming back for another meeting.

Following Up on the CPSE Meeting: Never Close the Door

- As soon after the meeting as possible, write down your impressions of what happened during the meeting. These notes will help you if you to refer back to the process by which the recommendations were made for your child.
- When you receive the Committee's recommendation notice, review it carefully to see if it meets your child's needs and reflects the details of what was discussed at the meeting. Contact the CPSE office if you are not certain it describes an educational program that is as appropriate as possible for your child, or that matches your recollection of what would be included in your child's IEP.
- Your last follow-up activity will be to request a conference with service providers to develop the steps that will take place on a daily basis to make the IEP a reality. All of the work you have done with the CPSE will make your preparation for and involvement in the conference easier.
- Remember that you may request another meeting of the CPSE at any time throughout the year if you believe there is a need to revise your child's IEP.