



Statewide Parent
Advocacy Network

Empowering families,
professionals, and others
interested in the well-being
and education of children
and youth

In this fact sheet:

- *Continue to stay on top of your child's progress at school*
- *Work with your child at home*
- *Talk with your child's doctor*
- *Find out more about your child's suspected disability*
- *Learn your rights and get support; reach out to SPAN!*

{and more}

SPAN

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Don't wait until your child's eligibility for special education has been determined before taking steps to learn about the special education process, your child's disability and needs, and how to help your child Learn!

What to Do While You are Waiting for the Results of your Child's Evaluation

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and New Jersey's Special Education Code, your child's school district has 90 days from the date that you sign consent for evaluation to complete the evaluation, determine your child's eligibility for special education and related services, develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for your child, and implement your child's IEP. You can take action now to help your child; you don't have to wait for those 90 days! Here are five things you can do while you wait!

#1. Continue to stay on top of your child's progress at school

Ask your child to show you his or her school work, and note the grades and comments by the teacher(s). Check report cards carefully. Ask your child's teacher(s) for other kinds of information about your child's performance and what the teacher is doing to help your child. What interventions have they already tried? What were the results of those interventions? Share your ideas about what other approaches might work. Attend regular parent-teacher conferences and bring any questions or concerns, and ask for a special meeting if necessary. Regular phone calls and notes are also a good way to increase the information shared between you and your child's teacher(s). Plan with your child's teacher(s) how you can work together to help your child be more successful. Talk with your child about school and his/her concerns. Start saving and organizing classwork performance samples that provide concrete examples of your child's strengths and needs.

#2. Work with your child at home

Help your child use positive self-talk. For example, if s/he has anxiety over taking a science test, have them imagine their doing well. Have him/her identify a goal and tell him/herself that they can accomplish it. For example, "In an hour, I will have learned twenty words to spell, and tomorrow I will do well on the test." Make sure your child does their homework including studying. Before commencing an assignment, see to it that your child goes over the directions. Make certain that s/he knows what is expected and exactly what must occur to complete the assignment. After your child has completed studying, have them review and ask themselves key questions. If your child can't do this, you review the material and ask them questions. Categorizing and grouping will help your child remember a larger amount of information. Your child may benefit from keeping a study notebook where they keep notes from class and readings, previous assignments, and a calendar to keep track of due dates. Help them make charts or lists of main ideas, facts, dates, key vocabulary words, names and important concepts. They can use this to complete homework and or review for tests.



#3. Talk with your child's doctor

Share your concerns about your child's development, health, mental health, etc. with your child's doctor. Ask them if they have done a periodic screening to identify developmental delays, mental health challenges, etc. Did they use a validated screening tool? What were the results? Have they noticed anything about your child's development, language, behavior, etc. that makes them concerned? If they share your concerns, or have additional concerns, request a referral to an appropriate medical specialist. Periodic screenings of your child to identify developmental, behavioral, and other concerns are required to be covered by health insurers under the Affordable Care Act with no co-pay by you, and are also included under Medicaid's Early Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) provisions. Be sure to follow up with any referral! If you have problems accessing screening, or healthcare financing resources, contact SPAN's Family to Family Health Information Center at 800-654-SPAN (7726).

#4. Find out more about your child's suspected disability

If your child has a disability, it is important that you find out all you can about that disability as well as the types of services and supports that might help your child. The National Center for Parent Information and Resources (www.parentcenterhub.org) has fact sheets about all of the disabilities that are eligible for services under IDEA (www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/specific-disabilities), as well as information on disability organizations in New Jersey (www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/stateagencies).

#5. Learn your rights and get support; reach out to SPAN!

If you have concerns about how your child is doing in school, you are naturally worried. It is important that you share your concerns with people in your life who can help you, like your spouse/significant other, extended family members, clergy, etc. You can also contact SPAN's Parent to Parent program to be matched with a trained Support Parent who can provide a listening ear and information on resources. Call 800-654-SPAN (7726) and ask for *Parent to Parent*. Now is also a good time to find out about your rights as a parent in the special education process. Don't wait until the eligibility or IEP meeting to learn about the special education process, timelines, your rights and responsibilities, how you can be effectively involved, and what to do if you and your child's school district disagree about eligibility or the IEP. Call SPAN's *Parent Training and Information Center* (PTI) at 800-654-7726 and talk to a trained parent who has direct experience with the special education process. You can also access information about the special education process, recorded workshops, and information about workshops in your area, on our website at www.spanadvocacy.org. You can read the Parents Rights in Special Education (PRISE) booklet from the New Jersey Department of Education at www.nj.gov/education/specialed/form/.

Remember:

you can take important steps *today* to prepare you for the special education process ahead!

- When parents suspect that their child might have a disability, they may experience many emotions. This article from a parent describes some common emotions as well as tips for parents. Read the article at <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/notalone/>.

- Many other resources that can help parents prepare for the results of the evaluation and the IEP process that follows determination of eligibility can be found at www.parentcenterhub.org, the website of the National Center for Parent Information and Resources.

- You can find information about getting parent to parent support at <http://www.p2pusa.org/p2pusa/sitepages/p2p-support.aspx>, the website of Parent to Parent USA, and at <http://www.spanadvocacy.org/content/nj-statewide-parent-parent>, the webpage for SPAN's Statewide Parent to Parent program.

Learn more:

Federal regulations governing special evaluation and timelines can be found at <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/partb-subpartd/>.

New Jersey State regulations governing special education evaluation and timelines can be found at <http://www.state.nj.us/education/code/current/title6a/chap14.pdf>.

The Parental Rights in Special Education booklet (PRISE) from the NJ Department of Education has information about evaluation and eligibility in "plain language" at <http://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/form/prise/prise.pdf>.



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