

## Requesting Assistance for My Child Who May Need Special Services Frequently Asked Questions for Parents

### ***What is the First Step in Getting Help for My Child?***

If you are concerned about problems your child may be having in reading, math, writing or behavior, your **first and primary contact is your child's teacher**. The teacher will, in collaboration with you, develop a Progress Monitoring Plan (PMP) to address academic concerns. If after the PMP is implemented, your child continues to experience difficulties, you may request assistance from the School Support Team (SST).

### ***What if My Child Attends a Private School?***

You should first confer with your child's teacher. If, after collaboration, there is a need for more assistance, contact the public school your child would be assigned were he/she not attending private school and request a SST meeting.

### ***What is the School Support Team (SST)?***

It is a problem-solving team and a resource for assisting teachers and parents with providing interventions for children.

### ***Who Do I Contact to Request a SST Meeting?***

You should contact your child's school and ask to speak with the SST Coordinator.

### ***How Can the SST Help My Child?***

The team will provide teachers with resources and support in developing and putting into action interventions within your child's classroom according to your child's needs. Your child's progress will be monitored in order to determine how your child is responding to the intervention(s).

### ***What if My Child Continues to Present an Academic and/or Behavioral Difficulty after a SST meeting?***

Schools and parents should work together to resolve a student's learning and/or behavioral difficulties within the general education classroom prior to requesting an evaluation. However, if the SST determines that the interventions prescribed and implemented for your child need additional support, a request for a Multidisciplinary-Team (M-Team) evaluation may be requested. Classroom-based interventions will continue as a support for your child's learning needs.

### ***What Is a Multidisciplinary Team (M-Team) Evaluation?***

A M-Team evaluation is the process for gathering additional information to assist in program planning for your child and to determine if a child has a disability, needs special education and/or related services. A M-Team evaluation must be completed before special education or related services can be provided to a child with a disability.

### ***What Activities Must Be Completed Prior to a Request for an M-Team Evaluation?***

If an evaluation is deemed necessary by the SST, several activities are required **prior** to a request for an M-Team evaluation:

Conferences are to be held with you and your child's teacher concerning your child's academic and/or behavioral problems

A thorough review of school and attendance records

Behavioral observations should be conducted by at least two professionals

Hearing and vision screenings to rule out sensory deficits that may interfere with your child's progress

### ***When Is Parental Consent Required?***

Parental consent is not needed for activities that are used with all students. Parental consent must be obtained prior to administering a M-Team evaluation. It is important to keep in mind that the classroom-based intervention activities are to be conducted prior to or concurrent with the request for an M-Team evaluation.

### ***How Long Does the Evaluation Process Take?***

The evaluation process should take a total of no more than 60 calendar days with the inclusion of vacation breaks, national holidays and summer recess.

### ***What Is Used To Evaluate Whether My Child Has a Disability?***

School psychologists use many different tests to evaluate your child. The law requires certain procedures to be conducted in order to determine if or what kind of disability your child has (e.g., learning and/or behavioral). Evaluation procedures generally fall into the following four categories:

**Intellectual:** Measures a child's potential for learning as well as his/her learning style

**Achievement:** Measures what a child has already learned in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics

**Processing:** Evaluates the ability to store and recall information; the ability to identify, discriminate, and organize visual information; the ability to identify, discriminate, and organize auditory information; and listening comprehension and oral expression skills

**Personality:** Assesses social, behavioral, and emotional functioning as well as the ability to relate to others, to express and modulate emotions, and to show a range of emotions

### ***How Are Evaluation Results Used?***

After your child's evaluation is completed, you will meet with a group of school professionals to discuss the results and determine what changes in your child's educational program planning are needed and/or whether your child has a disability.

You will be given a copy of the psycho-educational report and a written determination of eligibility or ineligibility. **The staffing, which is the Eligibility/Individual Educational Plan conference, must not be scheduled before both the M-Team evaluation and interventions are completed. This meeting will occur no more than 30 days following the completion of the evaluation.**

If the Eligibility/Individual Educational Plan team determines, based on the evaluation results, that your child is eligible, an IEP is developed that relates directly to the strengths and weaknesses that were identified as part of the evaluation.

### ***What Questions Should I Ask When My Child is Considered for an Evaluation?***

What interventions have been put into action to address my child's learning needs?

How has my child responded to the interventions?

Do the interventions need to be revised?

Is my child's behavior impacting his ability to learn?

Who has been monitoring my child's progress?

How can I help support the intervention activities at home?

What kinds of tests and other evaluation materials will be administered?

Will a translator or an interpreter be available if my child needs one? Testing must be done in a child's native language or including sign language, if needed and available.

What kind of information will the school psychologist ask me to contribute to the evaluation?

**What If My Infant, Toddler, and/or Preschooler Needs Help?**

The first step is to speak with your child’s pediatrician or medical doctor. If the medical doctor indicates significant developmental delays in your child or you continue to be concerned, your child should be referred to Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System – South (FDLRS-S) Child Find department at 305-274-3501.

**What is Section 504?**

Section 504 is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities. Section 504 insures that the child with a disability has equal access to an education.

**What If I Think My Child is Gifted?**

If you and your child’s teacher feel your child is demonstrating exceptional abilities, you or your child’s teacher can request assistance from the CST/SST/SDT to determine if further testing is needed.

**What If My Child Does Not Speak English?**

You may request the Limited English Proficient (LEP) Committee to review your child’s English for Speakers of Other Languages Program, and to develop appropriate instructional interventions.

**Who to Talk to When My Child Needs Help**

Step 1	Teacher, Counselor/School Psychologist, SST Coordinator, Assistant Principal, Principal
Step 2	ESE Center Instructional Supervisor, District Division of Psychological Services, District Office of the Administrative Director of the Department of Exceptional Student Education