

D64 Parent Resource Guide

Information About the Special
Education Process with D64 and
the Private Schools

The Special Education Process

The first thing parents want to know if they think their child has special education needs is “What is the special education process?” “What am I supposed to do?” An overview of the process will help you to understand how it works.

It is important to note the special education process for developing services in the D64 public schools is very different than the private schools. This will be addressed at the end of this document. Please read this information carefully because it will give you an understanding of what the process entails.

Step One: Initial Referral

Step Two: Domain

Step Three: Evaluation / Eligibility Determination

Step Four: Development of Service Plan

Step Five: Annual Review

Step Six: Three Year Reevaluation

Before the referral process begins, it is important to document a child has received research-based interventions in the school setting. If you and the school have noticed that your child’s performance falls below appropriate expectations, the school should institute interventions prior to a referral being made. Interventions are strategies, supports and /or adaptations for the child in the area of difficulty (i.e. academic, behavior, social). It is the responsibility of the private school and parent(s) to make sure interventions occur along with data to determine the effectiveness of the intervention prior to an initial referral meeting. Check with the administration of the private school for lists of interventions that are currently provided.

If a referral is made, the participants at each meeting will include you, teachers and an administrator(s) from the private school and D64 team members. In some cases a social

worker, speech pathologist and resource teacher from D64 may be involved in the meeting depending on the needs of the student. The parent is an integral part of the team, and no decisions will be made without parent input and approval.

Step One: Initial Referral

A referral is a formal request that your child be evaluated for special education. A parent, teacher or administrator at the private school can submit a referral. If you have a concern and would like to submit a referral, contact the administrators at your child's school. They will inform you of how to begin the process.

After you submit a referral, it is faxed to the administrative office of D64. When the District receives the information, you will be contacted and informed of a meeting date and time to review the referral information. The private school team meets on Friday mornings to support the four private schools in Park Ridge. Although we understand this limited schedule might be difficult for parents, the private school team has responsibilities to service students in both the public and private schools.

During this first meeting, the D64 team, private school providers and parents will review the information presented in the referral and problem solve, as a team, to determine how to meet the needs of the student.

The Initial Referral meeting is typically about 40 minutes in length. The agenda for the meeting will be as follows: introductions, description of meeting purpose, brief summary of written referral, additional information from parent, current classroom progress, questions about the student from the team, discussion of options (i.e. interventions, accommodations), decision regarding referral request and closure of the meeting.

Because each child's circumstances are different, a variety of outcomes can occur after the team reviews the referral information. Sometimes an evaluation is not warranted for a variety of reasons. If the team determines an evaluation is warranted, then step two will occur.

Step Two: Domain Meeting

A domain meeting is the collection of information from formal and informal testing and assessments of the student, review of records and a discussion of student's needs. This information is used to make key educational decisions for your child in the future.

The domain meeting is typically about 20-30 minutes in length. The purpose of the meeting is to determine what information needs to be collected about your child and is short in duration. The agenda for the meeting is as follows: introductions, purpose of meeting, overview of current classroom performance, discussion of domains and what information needs to be gathered, parent comments or questions, explanation of parent permission for evaluation along with parent signature and meeting closure.

During the domain meeting, the team begins by looking at information already available about your child (i.e formal assessments, classroom work, standardized tests). More information is collected only if needed. If the group decides additional assessments are needed, parents must give written permission before the D64 team can collect the information. The domains are academic achievement, functional behavior (i.e social/emotional and behavioral), cognitive abilities (i.e. ability), communication, health, hearing and vision and social emotional status and motor.

Once parents give consent to complete the evaluation, the D64 team must complete the evaluation within 60 school days. School days are based on the D64 calendar of when students are in attendance. If you have consulted with outside professionals, it will be important to share that information with the D64 team so they can gain a thorough understanding of your child.

Your child will be evaluated by D64 service providers during the school day (within 60 days). D64 works with the private school to select the best times to administer the tests. You will want to discuss testing with your child to ensure they are comfortable with the process.

Step Three: Evaluation / Eligibility Determination

The evaluation meeting is typically about one hour in length. This includes the development of a Service Plan if a child is eligible for special education services. The agenda for the meeting is as follows: introductions, purpose of meeting, overview of student's current class performance, review of domain findings with reports for each domain area, eligibility determination, parent comments and questions.

The eligibility meeting occurs when the evaluation is complete and all the necessary information documented on the domain sheet is collected. At the meeting, each domain will be reported (i.e. academic, functional behavior, cognitive, speech and language, health, vision/hearing, social/emotional, motor). It is the legal responsibility of D64 to present all the data to the parent. The data presented determines if a child is eligible for special education services in accordance with special education laws.

After all the information is reported from each domain, the team decides if your child has a disability as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). If the reports determine your child has a disability, the disability must impact the child's school performance in order to qualify for special education. Not every disability qualifies a child for D64 special education services.

If the report indicates your child does not have a disability, then it is the responsibility of the private school to administer interventions and strategies to your child. The parent(s) and private school may need to set up an additional conference to implement and finalize a plan. *D64 does not monitor or oversee the implementation of this plan.*

Step Four: Development of Service Plan

A Service Plan is an individual education plan in the private school setting. The Service Plan contains a description of your child's educational needs.

The agenda for this meeting will be the following: introductions, purpose of meeting, summary of child's current classroom performance, parent questions or comments, service minutes for each area your child is qualified for (i.e. social work, speech and language, academic), accommodations, parent questions and comments, meeting closure.

Accommodations will be suggested for the private school to implement. Accommodations are strategies to ensure your child has success in school and include a wide range of areas (i.e. preferential seating, guided notes, visual schedules, behavior plans). It is the responsibility of the private school and parent to monitor the progress and implementation of the accommodations. The D64 team only serves as a resource to the private schools.

Step Five: Annual Review

An annual review is held once per year to discuss your child's progress with the Service Plan.

The length of this meeting is typically about 40 minutes. The agenda will include the following: introductions, purpose of meeting, summary of child's current classroom performance, parent questions or comments, service minutes for each area your child is qualified for (i.e. social work, speech and language, academic), accommodations, parent questions and comments, meeting closure.

As your child is continually monitored and the Service Plan is kept up-to-date, needs may be developed. The Service Plan may be reviewed at any time, but it must be reviewed at

least annually.

The agenda for this meeting will be the following: introductions, purpose of meeting, summary of child's current classroom performance, parent questions or comments, service minutes for each area your child is qualified for (i.e. social work, speech and language, academic), accommodations, parent questions and comments, meeting closure.

Step Six: Reevaluation

A reevaluation occurs at least every three years. The team must reevaluate your child to determine whether your child continues to qualify for special education and related services.

The reevaluation is similar to the initial evaluation in terms of the process, your involvement and the agenda.

Dismissal From Special Education / D64 Services

A child can be dismissed at any time throughout the special education process; an evaluation is required at that time.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is eligible for special education services?

A child who displays deficits in any of the domain areas which impact his/her educational performance in the school setting.

What is considered average academic performance?

A student who performs between the 25th and 75th national percentile is in the average range.

What happens if I change my mind about my child receiving special education and related services?

If you change your mind, you may withdraw your consent in writing for your child to discontinue special education and related services.

How will I be informed of upcoming meetings with D64 staff?

You will receive a phone call, email or mailed an invitation which will inform you of the date, time and location of the meeting.

How are service minutes provided in the private school?

This decision is made annually for the upcoming school year.

When will my child receive services?

D64 service providers are in multiple private and public schools throughout the district and services will be provided to students according to the D64 staff's availability. Although we attempt to create a schedule that is best for the students, we are limited to specific days and times.

What is the difference between an IEP and Service Plan?

An IEP is only provided in a public school setting. A service plan provides limited services to students in the private schools.

What should I do if I have concerns about my child's accommodations in the private school?

The parent should contact their child's classroom teacher. D64 is not responsible for implementing accommodations with integrity on a service plan, but can serve as a resource to the private school.

Are there any other times for the private team to meet except Fridays?

No. The private school team has D64 commitments on other days.

If my child does not qualify for a Service Plan, but I am still worried about their future performance, what should I do?

If your child does not qualify for a Service Plan, contact your child's classroom teacher and administrator to determine the possibility of a plan specific to your child's school.

Can my child get a 504 plan in the private schools?

D64 does not provide 504 plans in the private schools. Private schools have the option of providing a 504 plan or other accommodation plan.

Can I share any outside information and testing with the D64 staff and private school?

The D64 team encourages you to share outside information so we can best meet the needs of your child. To do this, you may give the information directly to a D64 staff member. The private schools can not share information with D64 staff without your written consent.

Are there any services available to my child from the district when my child has some social/emotional needs, but not significant enough to warrant full evaluation/Service Plan?

Yes, you or your child's teacher can contact the D64 Social Worker assigned to your school to assess their eligibility for short term skill training groups (i.e. self esteem/social skills/frustration management). These interventions normally last between 6-8 weeks. The social worker is also available to help your child's teacher brainstorm intervention strategies related to social/emotional issues and concerns. In addition, you can contact the Social Worker to request private referrals to address personal social/emotional/behavioral issues your child is experiencing at home.

If my child graduates 8th grade with a Service Plan, does the public high school always translate it to an IEP?

D64 does NOT take part in any private student transition to the high school unless the child currently has a Service Plan and will be attending Maine South. Service Plans can not be developed for the sole purpose of receiving services in high school.

If my child is evaluated by D64, where will the testing take place?

Testing for St. Paul and Mary Seat of Wisdom will be conducted at the school during the school day. Students testing from Embers or St. Andrews are tested at Jefferson School.

How long will testing take?

D64 legally has 60 school days to complete testing before a meeting is scheduled to review the results and eligibility for a Service Plan.

If my child is eligible for a Service Plan, when would services begin?

Parents have the option of waiting 10 days to begin services to determine if they agree with the recommendations. Parents may also waive the 10 day option, and services can begin when D64 and the private schools work out a schedule for services.

How often do I meet with District 64?

D64 will set up an annual review of your child's Service Plan. A parent can request a meeting at any time, but must have a specific purpose for the meeting that relates to the services provided by D64. If a parent has concerns that relate specifically to the private school (i.e. accommodations, classroom instruction, behavior plans); then the parent should request a meeting with the private classroom teacher and administrator.

How does a child qualify for a Service Plan, OR how are they dismissed from a Service Plan?

The Illinois State Board of Education defines thirteen disability categories. In order to qualify for a Service Plan, the disability must have an educational impact on the student and their performance is highly discrepant from their peers.

What if my child does not qualify for a Service Plan, and I disagree with D64's recommendation?

D64 always has the student's best interest in mind. The team must follow the state laws dictated for special education eligibility. The goal is for every student to be in the least restrictive environment, which might require classroom interventions for a child to be successful. A parent does not have due process rights in the private schools as they would in the public schools.

What information will be provided at an evaluation or eligibility meeting?

The team is required to go through all the evaluation results which are comprised of a variety of data and test scores. This might seem excessive to others, but the team is required to objectively determine whether a child qualifies for a Service Plan or not.

How do I address questions I have for the private school at a D64 meeting (i.e. homework, parent/teacher communication)?

Since D64 is required to present specific information, questions and issues specific to the private school may be discussed if time allows. D64 must present all of its information as dictated by the Illinois State Board of Education. If time does not allow for these conversations, the private school and parents can set-up a later meeting date.

What types of speech and language disorders affect school-age children?

www.asha.org

Children may experience one or more of the following disorders:

Speech sound disorders - difficulty pronouncing sounds

Language disorders - difficulty understanding what they hear as well as expressing themselves with words

Cognitive-communication disorders - difficulty with thinking skills including perception, memory, awareness, reasoning, judgment, intellect and imagination

Stuttering (fluency) disorders - interruption of the flow of speech that may include hesitations, repetitions, prolongations of sounds or words

Voice disorders - quality of voice that may include hoarseness, nasality, volume (too loud or soft)

How does a speech-language disorder adversely affect educational performance?

Children with communication disorders frequently do not perform at grade level. They may struggle with reading, have difficulty understanding and expressing language, misunderstand social cues, avoid attending school, show poor judgment, and have difficulty with tests. Difficulty in learning to listen, speak, read, or write can result from problems in language development. Problems can occur in the production, comprehension, and awareness of language sounds, syllables, words, sentences, and conversation. Individuals with reading and writing problems also may have trouble using language to communicate, think, and learn. www.asha.org

My child qualifies for speech-language services at a private clinic and my doctor wrote me a prescription for therapy. When will my child start receiving therapy at school?

School-based therapists and private practice therapists often have different qualification procedures. A prescription from a doctor does not guarantee a child will receive speech-language services in the educational setting. The state will not allow a child to be removed from their classroom for therapy unless their speech-language disorder is adversely impacting their educational performance in the classroom.

I have concerns regarding my child's speech-language skills. What are the next steps? If you have concerns regarding your child's speech-language skills, please consult with your child's classroom teacher regarding your specific concerns. If teachers indicate similar concerns, they can obtain a speech screening referral form from their school. Teachers should complete the screening referral form and send it home for parents to review. Parents should send a signed form back to their child's school if they give consent for a screening. Once the District 64 Speech Language Pathologist receives a signed screening form, she will complete a brief onsite screening during school hours at Mary Seat of Wisdom and St. Paul of the Cross. Parents of children who attend St. Andrews and Embers must bring their child for a screening to Jefferson School. The Speech Language Pathologist will discuss the results of the screening with the parents and make recommendations. A child's speech-language disorder must adversely affect their educational performance to qualify for District 64 services. An adverse affect is determined per teacher observations, informal assessments (rating scales and classroom observation), and/or scores on formal assessments.

What happens after my child receives a speech-language screening?

If the child's speech-language skills are adversely impacting their educational performance, the District 64 Speech Language Pathologist will initiate a short-term

intervention program (Response-to-Intervention) to target specific areas of weakness. Following the short-term intervention, the Speech Language Pathologist will consult with the classroom teacher and contact the child's parents to discuss if the child will be exited from services due to progress or if a formal speech-language evaluation should be conducted. A comprehensive speech-language evaluation is necessary to determine if a child would qualify for ongoing services with District 64.

A child will not qualify for speech-language services if their skills are considered developmental, or age-appropriate. If specific weaknesses are observed in the areas of speech-language, but these weaknesses are not adversely impacting a child's educational performance, the District 64 Speech Language Pathologist may provide some strategies for the classroom teacher and resources for parents to ensure that the child is successful in the classroom. The Speech Language Pathologist can also assist parents with finding a certified Speech Language Pathologist, should they decide to pursue a private evaluation. Some students may not qualify for services in the educational setting, yet they may qualify for private services outside the school setting.

