



BLAIRSVILLE-SALTSBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT

Annual Public Notice of Special Education Services and Programs

Services for School Age Children with Disabilities

It is the responsibility of the Pennsylvania Department of Education to insure that all children with disabilities residing in the Commonwealth (including children with disabilities attending private schools, regardless of the severity of their disabilities), and who are in need of special education or related services, are identified, located, and evaluated. This responsibility is required by a federal law called the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**, Amendments of 2004 *(IDEA '04)

Blairsville-Saltsburg School District provides a **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)** to children with disabilities who need special education and related services. Pennsylvania has adopted state laws, which conform to IDEA '04 and which school districts must follow. FAPE is provided to students who need specially designed instruction and have one or more of the following physical or mental disabilities:

- Autism
- Deaf-blindness
- Deafness
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impairment
- Mental Retardation
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment including Blindness

Early Intervention

The IDEA '04 also requires the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education to children with disabilities between three years of age and the school district's age of beginners. In Pennsylvania, a child between three years of age and the school district's age of beginners who has a developmental delay or one or more of the physical or mental disabilities listed in the first section may be identified as an "eligible young child." Eligible young children are afforded the rights of school age children with disabilities, including screening, evaluation, individualized education program planning, and provision of appropriate programs and services. The Pennsylvania Department of Education is responsible for providing programs and services to eligible young children under Act 212 of 1990, The Early Intervention Services System Act. The ARIN Intermediate Unit provides programs and services to eligible young children on behalf of the Pennsylvania Department of Education. For more information, contact the ARIN Early Intervention Service Coordinator at (724-463-5300, ext. 1216)

Screening

Blairsville-Saltsburg School District has established and implemented procedures to locate, identify, and evaluate children suspected of having disabilities. These procedures involve screening activities which include, but are not limited to: yearly review of group-based ability and achievement test scores, cumulative records, enrollment records, health records, and report cards; hearing screening (in Kindergarten, first, second, third, seventh, and eleventh grades and in life skills support; vision screening (every grade level); motor screening; and speech and language screening in kindergarten, second grade, and individually as referred.

Except as indicated above or otherwise announced publicly; screening activities take place in an on-going fashion throughout the school year. Screening is conducted in the child's home school unless other arrangements are necessary.

Evaluation

When screening indicates that a child may be a child with disabilities, Blairsville-Saltsburg School District will seek parental consent to conduct an evaluation.

"Evaluation" means procedures used in the determination of whether a child has a disability and the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs. The term means procedures used selectively with an individual child and is not limited to tests administered to or procedures used with all children.

In Pennsylvania, this evaluation is conducted by a group of qualified professionals and the parent. The group of qualified professionals shall include a certified school psychologist when evaluating a child for autism, emotional disturbance, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, other health impairments, specific learning disability, or traumatic brain injury. The evaluation process must be completed no later than sixty school days after the district receives written parental consent and must include "protection-in-evaluation procedures," (for example, tests and procedures used as part of the multidisciplinary evaluation process may not be racially or culturally biased.) Upon completion of the administration of tests and the collection of other evaluation materials, a group of qualified professionals and the parent of the child will determine whether the child is a child with a disability and what the educational needs are of the child. Information obtained from a variety of sources, including aptitude and achievement tests, parent input, teacher recommendations, physical condition, social or cultural background, and adaptive behavior will be documented and considered carefully. If a determination is made that a child has a disability and needs special education and related services an Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be developed for the child.

Identification Activities

Parents who think their child has a disability may request, at any time, that the school district conduct a multidisciplinary evaluation. This request should be made in writing to the Building Principal. If a parent makes an oral request for a multidisciplinary evaluation, the school district shall provide the parent with a form for that written request.

Parents also have the right to obtain an independent educational evaluation, if they disagree with the school district's evaluation. Blairsville-Saltsburg School District will provide to parents on request, information about where an independent educational evaluation may be obtained.

Educational Placement

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) describes the child's present levels of educational performance, including how the child's disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum; a statement of measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives, to enable the child to be involved and progress in the general curriculum; a statement of special education related services and supplementary services to be provided to the child; an explanation of the extent to which the child will not participate with non-disabled children in the regular class; any modifications in the administration of assessments; the projected date for beginning services and modification; and how progress toward annual goals will be measured. For each child with a disability, beginning at age fourteen or younger, a statement of transition service needs will be included. For each child, beginning at age sixteen, a statement of need for transition services for the student, including as appropriate, a statement of interagency responsibilities or needed linkages.

In determining student placement, consideration will be given to ensure that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are non-disabled. Classes and services that involve removal of children with disabilities from the regular environment will occur only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes, with the use of supplementary aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Services for Handicapped Students

Students who are not eligible to receive special education programs and services may qualify as protected handicapped students and, therefore, be protected by other federal and state laws intended to prevent discrimination. The school district must insure that protected handicapped students have an equal opportunity to participate in the school program and extracurricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate for each individual student.

In compliance with state and federal law, the school district will provide to each protected handicapped student, without discrimination or cost to the student or family, those related aids, services or accommodations which are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extracurricular activities, to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's abilities. In order to qualify as a protected handicapped student, the child must be of school-age with a physical or mental disability which substantially limits or prohibits participation in, or access to, an aspect of the school program.

These services and protections for “protected handicapped students” may be distinct from those applicable to exceptional or thought -to-be exceptional students. The school district or the parent may initiate an evaluation if it is believed a student is a protected handicapped student.

For further information on the evaluation procedures and provision of services for protected handicapped students, parents should call the Director of Education of Blairsville-Saltsburg School District. (Please note that this is a regular education service and not one required by IDEA or Chapter 14.)

Services for Students Who are Gifted

Blairsville-Saltsburg School District utilizes a system to locate and identify all students within the district who are thought to be gifted and in need of specially-designed instruction. For more information, please contact the Building Principal.

Confidentiality

Each school district protects the confidentiality of personally identifiable information regarding children with disabilities, children thought to have disabilities, protected handicapped students (if not protected by IDEA '04 or Pennsylvania's Special Education Regulations) and children who are identified as gifted, in accordance with the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act** of 1974 (FERPA) and other applicable federal and state laws, policies, and regulations.

“Education Records” means those records that are directly related to the student, including on computer, through media, and on videotape, which are maintained by an educational agency or a party acting for the agency. “Educational Agency,” for purposes of this notice means the local school district, and/or the ARIN Intermediate Unit. For all students, the educational agency maintains education records which include but are not limited to:

- *Personally Identifiable Information*--Confidential information that includes, but is not limited to the student's name, name of parents and other family members, the address of the student or student's family, and personal information or personal characteristics which would make the student's identity easily traceable.
- *Directory Information*--Information contained in an education record of a student which would not generally be considered harmful or an invasion of privacy, if disclosed. It includes, but is not limited to, the student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, major field of study (secondary students), participation in officially-recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, degrees and awards received, and the name of the most previous educational agency or institution attended.

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords to parents and to students over 18 years of age, certain rights with respect to the students' education records. They are:

1. Parents (or students over 18 years of age) have the right to inspect and review the student's education record. The school district will comply with the request to inspect and review education records without unnecessary delay and before any meeting regarding an IEP or due process hearing, but in no case more than 45 days after the request has been made. Requests should be submitted in writing (indicating the records the parents wish to inspect) to the school Principal or other appropriate school official. Parents have the right to a response from the school district to a reasonable request for explanations and interpretations of the records. Parents have the right to request copies of the records. While the district cannot charge a fee to search for or to retrieve information, it may charge a copying fee, as long as it does not effectively prevent the parents from exercising their right to inspect and review the records. Parents have the right to appoint a representative to inspect and review their child's records. If any education record contains information on more than one child, parents (or students over 18 years of age) have the right only to inspect and review the information relating to the specific child.
2. If parents (or student over 18 years of age) think(s) information in an education record is inaccurate, misleading, or violates the privacy or other rights of the child, an amendment of the record may be requested. Requests should be made in writing and clearly identify the part of the record to be changed, and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. The school district will decide whether or not to amend the record and will notify the parents (or students over 18), in writing, of its decision. If the school district refuses to amend a record, it will notify the parents (or students over 18) of their right to a hearing to challenge the disputed information. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parents or student (if 18 or older) when notified of the right to a hearing.
3. The school district will inform parents (or students over 18) when personally identifiable information is no longer needed to provide educational services to a child. Such information must be destroyed at the request of the parents (or students over 18). Parents (or students over 18) have a right to receive a copy of the material to be destroyed; however, a permanent record of the student's name, address, and telephone number, his or her grades, attendance record, classes attended, grade level completed, and year completed may be maintained without time limitation. "Destruction" of records means physical destruction or removal of personal identifiers from information, so that the information is no longer personally identifiable. The school district will provide, upon request, a listing of the types and locations of education records maintained, the school officials responsible for these records, and the school personnel authorized to see personally identifiable information. Such personnel receive training and instruction regarding confidentiality. The school district keeps a record of parties obtaining access to

education records, including the name of the party, the date access was given, and the purpose for which the party is authorized to use the records.

4. Parents (or students over 18) have the right to consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. "Consent" means: the parent(s) (or students over 18) have/has been fully informed regarding the activity requiring consent, in the native language or other mode of communication; they understand and agree in writing to the activities; and, they understand that the consent is voluntary and may be revoked at any time. Information may be disclosed without consent to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the district as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (Including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); person or company with whom the district has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or, a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his/her professional responsibility. Directory information, as defined above, may be released without parent consent. Parents have the right to refuse to let an agency designate any or all of the above information as directory information. *Upon request, the district discloses education records to officials of another school district, in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.*
5. Parent(s) (or students over 18) have a right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the district to comply with the requirements of FERPA.

Mode of Communication

The content of this notice had been written in straightforward simple language. If a person does not understand any of this notice, he or she should contact Mrs. Patricia K. Olson, Supervisor of Special Education, and request an explanation. The school district will arrange for an interpreter for parents with limited English proficiency. If a parent is deaf or blind or has no written language, the school district will arrange for communication of this notice in the mode normally used by the parent (e.g., sign language, Braille, or oral communication).

Complaints may be filed with the Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W. ,Washington, DC 20202-4605.