

Department of Special Education

Family Support Center 1400 Nalley Terrace Landover, Maryland 20785



Special Education Family Toolkit



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Special Education in PGCPS



Welcome to the Special Education Toolkit for Families of Students with Disabilities

Annually, Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) has an enrollment that exceeds 133,000 students. Of the students enrolled, approximately 10.4% are students with disabilities who are served under an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The Department of Special Education is committed to serving and meeting the needs of each student in our District. Our mission is clear. We will provide specially designed instruction and related services through a continuum of services to children and students with disabilities from birth to age 21 to ensure that the rights of students with disabilities are protected and that federal and State regulatory requirements are met and to provide resources to parents, guardians, and families of children and students with disabilities.

Educators understand that families and caregivers are central to their child's academic success. In this regard, the Department of Special Education has created a Special Education Toolkit for Parents. This toolkit is designed with you in mind. It will provide easily accessible information on special education policies, procedures, and resources. In addition, you will find information and external links to laws (Federal/State), regulations, PGCPS policies, and Administrative Procedures.

The Department of Special Education's website, which hosts a wealth of additional information and resources, is linked for your convenience. Click below to learn more about special education in PGCPS (PGCPS Department of Special Education). On the site, you will also find information on special education support programs and related services (PGCPS Related Services). These programs and related services address specific student needs through pre- referral consultations, assessments, interventions, and support to school teams for program planning. Support programs and related services provide strategies, accommodations, technical support, and monitoring and maintenance of any equipment to enhance the student's ability to access and participate in his/her educational program.

After using the toolkit, if you have questions regarding your child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), contact your child's IEP case manager or the **Family Support Center**

at 301-431-5675 for assistance. We hope that you find the information in the toolkit helpful.



Frequently Called Contacts The Department of Special Education



Department or Office	Contact Number	Website Link
Department of Special Education	301-618-8355	Department of Special Education
Child Find Infants and Toddlers (Birth- 35 months)	301-925-6627	<u>Infants and Toddlers</u>
Compliance Office	301-618-8330	<u>Dispute Resolution</u>
Early Childhood Special Education	301-925-1985 301-925-6654	Early Childhood
Family Support Center	301-431-5675	Family Support Center
K-12 Special Education	301-702-2890	<u>K-12</u>
Non-Public Office	301-618-8360	Non-Public Office
Pre-School Child Find (35 months- 5 years)	301-925-6600	Preschool Child Find
Private, Religious, and Home School Students Child Find (Ages 5-21)	301-618-8355	Private, Religious, and Home School
Support Programs and Related Services	301-618-8355	Support Programs and Related Services
Secondary Transition	301-702-2890	Secondary Transition

The Department of Special Education has also created a comprehensive list of resolution team contacts for the school year 2024-2025, <u>click here</u> to access the list.

PGCPS Special Education Staffing Plan



Staffing Plan School Year 2024-2025

The Department of Education Staffing Plan is consistent with the procedures provided by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) for documenting the process that each jurisdiction uses to determine the numbers and types of service providers to ensure the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to each student with a disability in the least restrictive environment (LRE). It includes:

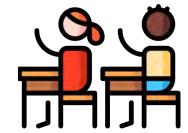
- Evidence of public input.
- Evidence of maintenance of effort within the meaning of 34 CFR §300.231, Maintenance of Effort, and COMAR 13A.02.05, Maintenance of Effort.
- Staffing patterns and the types of providers needed; and
- Description of how state regulatory requirements will be met.

Public agencies must submit a staffing plan to MSDE with their annual Local Application for Federal Funds. The plan documents the data input procedures used by the school system to determine the numbers and types of service providers needed to ensure the provision of FAPE to each student with a disability in the LRE. It describes the process that schools use to meet the special education service needs of students in the upcoming school year. The staffing plan provides a procedural framework to ensure that MSDE requirements are met, including any Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) related to the provision of services for students with disabilities. The staffing plan varies by school type (i.e., elementary, secondary K-8, Specialty) or special education program (i.e., autism, early childhood).

Program Locations

To meet the needs of students as indicated by the staffing plan, PGCPS has a variety of programs throughout the district. To ensure FAPE, some students may require special program placements that are determined by their IEP teams. The chart below identifies those special education programs by type and location.

Special Education Programs By Location



What is Special Education?



Overview of Special Education

The <u>Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA)</u> is the law that ensures that children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Prince George's County Public Schools is committed to ensuring that students with disabilities receive FAPE and specially designed special instruction. In addition, Maryland also has <u>Code of Maryland Regulations</u> (COMAR) that govern special education processes and procedures.

Your child's special education program provides specialized instruction and related services designed to provide access to the state curriculum in their least restrictive environments to the maximum extent appropriate. Special education services are provided as part of a written IEP. Special education is a service, not a place. It is designed based on the unique needs of the student. Special education provides all eligible children with disabilities a FAPE designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for post-secondary outcomes and independent living.

A child becomes eligible for special education when the IEP team identifies the child as having a disability that requires specialized instruction. The disability must have an educational impact. Students from age 3 to age 21 are eligible to receive special education and must be evaluated and determined eligible to receive services based on one of the following categories:

- Autism
- Deaf-Blindness
- Deafness
- Developmental Delay
- Emotional Disability
- Hearing Impairment
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities

- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment*
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment, including blindness

^{*}For additional information, refer to Appendix B.



Native Language



What does the law say about native language?

Parents of students with disabilities have the right to receive information in the language that provides the best understanding and access to special education-related information. The IDEA does require schools to provide assessments in a student's native language during the evaluation process.

When an individual identifies as Limited English Proficiency (LEP), native language means the following:

- The language normally used in the home by the family.
- The language normally used by the child in the home or learning environment.
- For a person with deafness, blindness, or no written language, the mode of communication is what the person normally uses (such as sign language, Braille, or oral communication).

Parents may request their child's completed Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or IEP to be translated into the parent's native language if the language is spoken by more than one percent (1%) of the student population. Under these circumstances, the translated document will be provided to the parents within 30 days after the date of the request. In PGCPS, the languages that currently exceed the 1% requirement are French and Spanish. Contact your child's IEP Case Manager for more information.

<u>Parental Rights-English</u> <u>Parental Rights-Spanish</u> <u>Parental Rights-French</u>, Special Education 2 Revised January 2021 FINAL Effective January 27, 2021



Child Find



What Is Child Find?

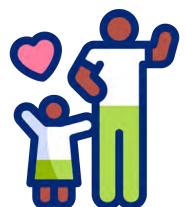
Prince George's County Public Schools, as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act attempts to locate, identify, and evaluate all children and students from birth through age 21 with and suspected of having a disability. PGCPS' obligation extends to elementary and secondary school students who are parentally placed in private, religious, or home school environments that are geographically located within Prince George's County.

The Infants and Toddlers Program provides services for families of children who are birth to 3 years of age with developmental delays or disabilities. Early intervention services focus on supporting families as they learn additional ways to help their children develop through everyday activities.

The Preschool Program provides services for children from 3 to 5 years old who qualify for special education services due to developmental delays. Services provided are based on the unique needs of each child.

Private, Religious, and Home School - Parents seeking Child Find, or Special Education Services for a child who attends a private, religious, homeschool, or parochial school geographically located in Prince George's County should contact the **Child Find Office for Private, Religious, and Home School Students (Ages 5-21) at 301-618-8355**. Parents/Guardians can schedule an appointment to complete registration and receive the referral form packet.

Eligibility for services is determined through the IEP process conducted at the boundary school. The student's boundary school is based on the home address or the address of the parochial school if the student's home address is outside of Prince George's County. The Child Find Office uses the Prince George's County Public Schools School Finder Tool to identify boundary schools.





What Do I Do If I Suspect My Child Needs Special Education Services Through Child Find?

If you are concerned about your child's speech, learning, behavior, or development, please contact one of the programs listed below to initiate a referral.



Contact the appropriate Child Find Office







301-925-6627





301-925-6600





301-618-8355



After referring your child, you will be contacted to schedule a meeting. In the meeting, the team will review all information about your child, including any information you give them from doctors, childcare providers, or teachers.



When evaluations/assessments are complete, the team (including you) will meet to discuss the results of the assessments/evaluations and decide your child's eligibility for special education and related services. If your child meets the eligibility criteria, the team will schedule a subsequent meeting to create an IFSP or IEP.

Note: A child does not automatically qualify for special education services solely because of a disability diagnosis/identification. The legal requirement is to determine if the child needs special education and related services to make meaningful educational progress.

For more information, visit the **Special Education Parent's Page** or the **Child Find Page**.

Surrogate Parent



What is a Surrogate Parent?

A surrogate parent is a person appointed by the Local Education Agency (LEA) to act in the place of a student's parent in the educational decision-making process. The mandated involvement of a parent of a student with a disability necessitates the appointment of a parent surrogate when the legal guardian is a public agency, the parents are deceased, the parental educational rights have been placed with the State, or if the parent is unknown or unavailable to participate in the special education process. A surrogate parent appointed by the LEA represents a student with a disability in matters relating to identification, evaluation, and placement in special education.

The local lead agency, the local school system, or, in some instances, a judge may assign a surrogate parent to represent an eligible child if:

- The parent cannot be identified.
- The public agency, after reasonable efforts, cannot find the child's parent; or
- The child is a ward of the State of Maryland.

The lead agency must make reasonable efforts to ensure the assignment of a surrogate parent is not more than 30 days after a public agency determines that the child needs a surrogate parent.

Criteria for Surrogate Parents:

- No conflict with the interests of the child
- Has knowledge and skills that ensure adequate representation of the child
- Not an employee of the State or an employee of any service provider involved in the provision of early intervention or other services to the child or the child's family

Rights of the Surrogate Parent in the IEP Process:

Once appointed as a Surrogate Parent, the Surrogate Parent has the same rights as a parent for all purposes.

Surrogate Parent



A surrogate parent may represent a child in all matters relating to the following:

- Evaluation and assessment of the child;
- Development and implementation of the child's IFSP, including annual evaluations and periodic reviews;
- Development, review, and revision of a child's IEP;
- Ongoing provision of early intervention services to children and families through the IFSP; or
- Provision of special education and related services to a child through the IEP.

<u>Parental Rights-English Parental Rights-Spanish Parental Rights-French</u>, *Preschool Special Education*, *Special Education 11 Revised May 2021_FINAL Effective July 1, 2021*

Volunteer to Be an Educational Surrogate Parent!

A volunteer surrogate parent is appointed for certain children who do not have an adult in their lives who can make decisions regarding their special education needs. Educational surrogate parents are most often appointed for children who are in foster care, are homeless without a parent, or for whom a parent is otherwise unable to be identified or located.

If you want to become a volunteer surrogate parent, complete the form linked below or contact us at jhflc.familysupport@pgcps.org or 301-431-5675.

Volunteer Form: https://forms.gle/XHEN62YaM298KPut9

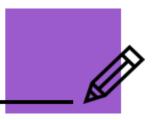
Surrogate Parent Office

Address:

1400 Nalley Terrace Landover, Maryland 20785

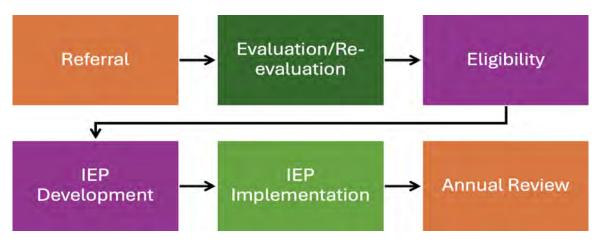
Phone: 301-431-5675 **Fax:** 301-637-4448





What is the Individualized Education Program Process?

When a parent or guardian suspects their child may have a disability requiring special education services, they can initiate the IEP referral process along with school staff. This process involves a series of formal steps that must be completed to determine eligibility. By following this process, IEP teams adhere to the procedural requirements of IDEA. The formal steps for this process are briefly outlined below.



Referral

Anyone who knows the student can refer for special education services.
 Parents/Guardians can submit a written request for evaluations to their child's IEP team, case manager, school-based administrator, or teacher. Once the request has been received, an IEP meeting will be scheduled to discuss the concerns and any pertinent information.

Evaluation/Re-evaluation

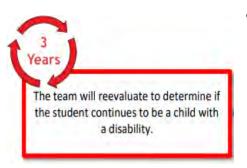
 Special Education laws require the child to have an initial evaluation to determine eligibility for Special Education services.



• An evaluation is a careful look at a child's abilities, strengths, and weaknesses by a team, including the child's parents, teachers, and specialists.



- An evaluation is based on a review of assessment data, information from parents, teacher observations, and classroom-based, local, and state assessments to determine whether a child has a disability and requires special education instruction and related services.
- **Consent** Before your child may be evaluated by the school system, the parent/ guardian must agree in writing.



• Re-evaluation - At least every three (3) years, the IEP team must decide if your child is still eligible for special education services. They will also want to ensure they have the most current information about your child's needs and strengths. Parents and school staff can request assessments sooner if additional concerns arise or new information is needed.

Eligibility

- A child becomes eligible for special education when the IEP team identifies the child as having a disability and needing specialized instruction. The disability must have an educational impact. In this context, "educational impact" refers to how a disability affects a student's ability to learn and participate in instructional activities within the school environment.
- Students from ages 3 to 21 are eligible to receive special education and must be evaluated and determined eligible based on one of the following categories:
 - Autism
 - Deaf-blindness
 - Deafness
 - Developmental Delay
 - Emotional Disability
 - Hearing Impairment
 - Intellectual Disability
 - Multiple Disabilities

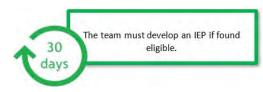
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment*
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment, including blindness

^{*}For additional information, refer to Appendix B: Disabilities by Definition.



IEP Development

 Once your child is found eligible for an IEP, the team will hold a meeting where observations, assessment results, classroom data, and progress notes are presented and discussed



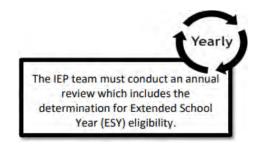
by the IEP team. The team will use the information from this meeting to develop your child's specially designed instruction that will be implemented through their IEP. The IEP will contain goals that are specifically written for your child. Your input in developing this document is crucial to your child's success. The IEP will be developed within 30 days of the initial eligibility determination.

IEP Implementation

- An IEP is like a contract. The terms must be honored; therefore, they must be clearly understood.
- The school staff will work with your child on their goals and objectives. All your child's teachers will be given information relevant to the IEP, including any accommodations they must use in the classroom. School staff will collect data on progress toward the goals and objectives.
- You will receive a progress report each quarter, as stated in the IEP. If your child is not making progress, there must be an IEP meeting to discuss what changes to the IEP may be needed.

Annual Review

 The IEP team must meet at least once annually to review your child's progress and revise the IEP.





• It is necessary to ensure that the IEP goals and objectives meet your child's needs as they progress from grade to grade.

Receive a copy of all documents that the IEP team will discuss at the meeting.

All documents and assessments the team plans to discuss at the meeting will be sent home five (5) days before the IEP meeting. If documents are not sent five (5) days before the meeting, you can request to postpone until you have had a chance to review them. A draft IEP may be sent home. Keep in mind that a draft IEP is a starting place for discussion. The drafts that are sent home can be changed during the meeting.

The **Maryland Procedural Safeguards - Parental Rights** document contains information for parents on their rights that applies to children with disabilities and families under the federal law, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Parental Rights-English Parental Rights-Spanish Parental Rights-French

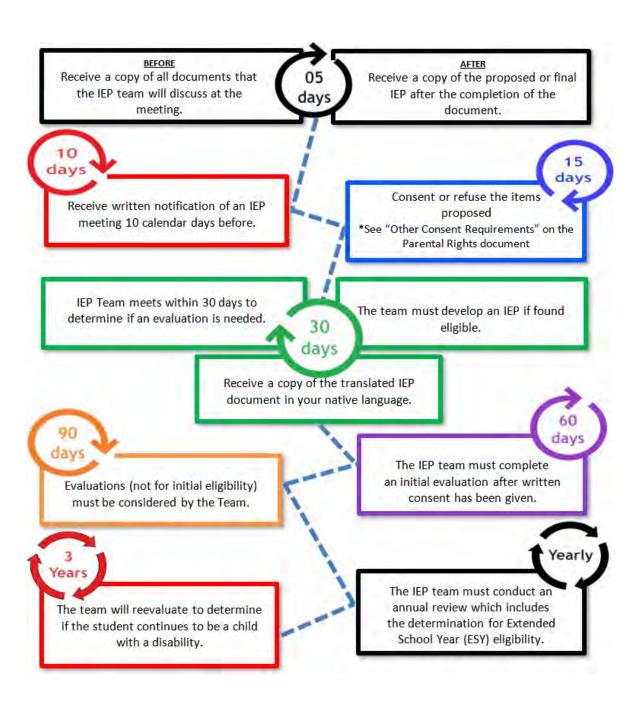
Please see A Parent's Quick Guide to Special Education Timelines on pages 15-16 for the information at a glance.



A Parent's Quick Guide to Special Education Timelines



Quick Guide to Special Education Timelines



A Parent's Quick Guide to Special Education Timelines



PROCESS	TIME ALLOWANCE
Receive a copy of all documents that the IEP team will discuss at the meeting.	At least 5 business days before the meeting
Receive a copy of the proposed or final IEP after the completion of the document.	Within 5 business days after the meeting
Receive written notification of an IEP meeting.	At least 10 calendar days before the meeting
*Obtaining parental consent for enrolling in an Alternative Education Program (AEP); Identifying a child for the Alternative Assessments; or Using Restraints and Seclusion (see pages 6-7) "Other Consent Requirements" in the Parental Rights Document. Parental Rights-English Parental Rights-Spanish Parental Rights-French	15 Business days from the IEP meeting
The IEP team meets to determine if an evaluation is needed.	Within 30 days of the formal request
The team must develop an IEP.	Within 30 days from when the initial eligibility evaluation meeting occurred
Receive a copy of the translated IEP document in your native language.	Within 30 days of the formal request
The IEP team must complete an initial evaluation.	Within 60 days from the date of parental consent
Results of re-evaluations must be reviewed, and IEP revised if necessary.	Within 90 days from the date the IEP team decides the student needs updated evaluations
The IEP team must conduct an annual review which includes the discussion and determination for Extended School Year (ESY) eligibility.	At least once per year
The team will reevaluate to determine if the student continues to be a child with a disability.	At least once every three years



Overview of the Parts of an IEP

This graphic is an overview of the sections of the IEP. Each section represents a component of your child's IEP. Take time to familiarize yourself with each part by reviewing the following pages.





What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

An IEP is a written, individualized plan that supports and directs your child's education through a team-driven process. It is a written document that outlines the "who," "what," "when," "why," "where," and "how" of instruction and related services that are provided for students with disabilities.

Prince George's County IEP documents are divided into <u>six (6) sections</u>. Below is a brief overview of each section.

Section I: Meeting and Identifying Information

The section contains information and important dates on the initial and continuing eligibility. It also has information on the projected exit category, a plan for participation in district-wide assessments, and your child's English language proficiency summary.

Section II: Present Level of Academic Performance

Describes how the child is currently doing in school and how the child's disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general curriculum. Present levels are reviewed at least annually, and this is an opportunity for the team to determine if the student is making appropriate progress.

Section III: Special Considerations and Accommodations

This section documents several components of a child's educational program including communication, assistive technology, services for students who are blind or visually impaired, services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, behavioral needs, and services for students who are English learners. It details "how" instruction will be delivered with the use of accommodations and modifications.

- Where will the instruction happen?
- How will it be presented?
- What staff supports are needed?
- What environmental, social/behavioral supports are required?



Annual goals are established based on the individualized needs of the student. Using multiple sources of data and the student's present level of academic achievement and functional performance, the team determines IEP goals. Annual goals describe what the child is reasonably expected to do or learn within 12 months.

Section IV: Goals

This section identifies the services that your child is eligible to receive. It is important to note the following when reviewing your child's services:

- ❖ Nature of the service (i.e., classroom instruction, physical education, speech/language, or travel training)
- **Description** of the service (i.e., number of sessions, length of time, and frequency)
- Location(s) of the service
- Provider(s) of the service

Section V: Services

A student with a disability is not removed from general education in an age-appropriate instructional setting solely because of needed modifications to the general curriculum. Each public agency must ensure that:

• To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled and

Section VI: Placement Data

 Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes using supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. 34 CFR § 300.114

With this regulation as the foundation, your child's IEP team will determine where your child will receive special education services.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)



What is the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, a federal law, requires school districts to educate students with disabilities in the "least restrictive environment" with appropriate aids and support. The LRE mandate of IDEA is intended to ensure that students with disabilities are educated with students without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate.

- LRE refers to the location of educational services.
- LRE information tells how much time a youth is in the general education and special education setting
- Appropriate efforts will be made to keep the child in the general education setting.

Inside the General Education Environment

Students are receiving services in the same environment as their non-disabled peers.

Outside of the General Education Environment

Students are receiving services outside of the environment of their non-disabled peers.

What factors are considered when determining a student's LRE?

- The student must be educated in the school that he or she would attend if not disabled unless the IEP requires another placement.
- The IEP team must consider placement closest to the student's home if the student is not in the school he or she would attend if not disabled.
- LRE is based on the child's IEP goals and objectives and must be made AFTER the goals and objectives of the IEP are developed.
- Goals, objectives, and the types or amounts of service hours to be provided may NEVER be developed to "fit" the placement.



The student's placement is:

- determined at least annually
- based on the IEP
- as close as possible to the child's home
- the school that he or she would attend if non-disabled if the IEP can be implemented
- based upon the specific needs of the child and made by the IEP team. A student's LRE could change from one LRE to another during the school year.

LRE Placement Environments

PLACEMENT	DESCRIPTION
Infants/Toddlers	Services are typically provided in the home setting. A primary provider will coach and work with the parent to find ways to help their child practice skills every day in the home, childcare center, or in other community places.
Preschool Special Education	Preschool Special Education Services provides specially designed instruction and related services, such as speech-language therapy, and physical and occupational therapy, to young children, ages three through five, determined eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and by state regulations for special education.
Inside General Education Setting 80% of the time or more	Students receive instruction in the general education classroom. Instructional support, differentiated instruction, and/or related services are provided in the classroom. Students receive specially designed instruction, including appropriate adaptations, accommodations, and modifications made to the instruction and other classroom activities, as identified by the IEP team.
Inside General Education Setting between 40% to 79%	Students receive a combination of instruction inside the general education and outside general education environments. Instructional support or related services are provided in small groups or one-on-one in a separate setting. Students receive specially designed instruction, including appropriate adaptations, accommodations, and modifications made to the instruction and other classroom activities, as identified by the IEP team.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

PLACEMENT	DESCRIPTION	
Inside General Education Setting less than 40%	Students receive special education instruction in separate classes, outside of the general education environment.	
Public Separate Day School	This is a special education program in a comprehensive school or separate public special education school. PGCPS provides specially designed instruction for students with significant cognitive disabilities who require specialized instruction based on alternate academic achievement standards.	
Private Separate Day School (Non-Public Schools)	Students with intensive needs that cannot be met by the local public school may be enrolled in a non-public special education school. Schools are publicly funded and hold a Certificate of Approval issued by the Maryland State Department of Education on behalf of the State Board of Education.	
Residential Schools	A residential school placement is due to behavioral, educational, developmental, or mental health disabilities. If a student cannot achieve educational benefits without residential therapeutic support, the school district may determine the necessity of a residential placement.	
Home and Hospital	Home and Hospital Teaching is temporary instructional support (not to exceed 60 calendar days) to medically qualified schoolaged students. Medical verification for physical conditions must be completed by a licensed physician or certified nurse practitioner and emotional conditions must be completed by a licensed psychiatrist or psychologist.	

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting



Preparing for Your IEP Meeting

The IEP meeting is the most significant venue for parents to exercise their right to participate in decision-making. You, the school staff, and any other parties attending the meeting will review and discuss information about your child to plan the IEP.

It provides an excellent opportunity to ask questions and share important insights about your child, whom you know better than anyone else. The school needs to know what your child is like at home and in the community and their interests.

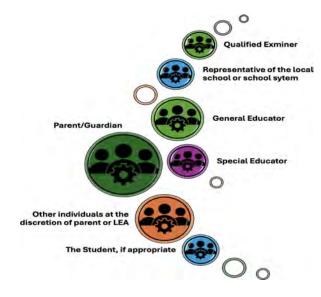
It is important to note that the IEP team reviews the child's IEP as needed, but not less than annually, to:

- Determine whether the annual goals for the child are being achieved, and
- Revise the IEP, as appropriate, to address:
 - Any lack of expected progress toward the annual goals and in the general education curriculum, if appropriate;
 - The results of any reevaluation;
 - Information about the child provided to, or by, the parents;
 - The child's anticipated needs; or
 - Other matters relevant to the child's program.

(Maryland State Department of Education-Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services, 2024)

Who Are the IEP Team Members?

- The parent, guardian, or surrogate
- Not less than one special education teacher
- Not less than one general education teacher
- A representative of the local school or local school system
- An individual who can interpret evaluation results
- Other individuals, at the discretion of the parent or local school system, who have knowledge or expertise
- The student, if appropriate



The Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting



Prepare for the IEP Meeting

Below, you will find some suggested things to consider before, during, and after your child's IEP meeting:

Before

- Be clear about the purpose of the meeting (i.e., annual review, re-evaluation, ESY eligibility)
- Write down any questions or concerns that you may have
- Gather all documents that will be relevant to the meeting (progress reports, report cards, previous assessments, outside assessments, new medical reports, and notes)
- Make sure that you have received and reviewed important documents that are related to the meeting
- Invite individuals to attend the meeting with you for support, if necessary
- Review of your Parental Rights document

During

- Introduce yourself to the team and take note of the individuals who are present during the meeting
- Take notes or designate someone that you have invited to the meeting to do so
- Provide input and suggestions your voice is invaluable
- Ask questions and share any concerns that you may have
- Ask the team to clarify anything you don't understand (acronyms, assessment results, services, etc.)
- Provide updated information to the team regarding your child
- Be open to feedback and suggestions from the team

<u>After</u>

- Review any documents that you may have received
- Write down any additional follow-up questions that you may now have (forward them to the appropriate team member)
- Schedule a follow-up meeting, if necessary
- Continue to monitor your child's progress
- Begin collecting information for your next meeting

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)



What is Specially Designed Instruction?

Specially designed instruction (SDI) is the teaching that is provided to students with disabilities who receive services that are documented on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). SDI is the "special" in special education. SDI increases your child's access to the curriculum received by their non-disabled peers. SDI practices are implemented by the adults involved in your child's education.

It is the process by which educators make adjustments to the presentation of content, methods, and/or their system of instructional delivery to address the unique needs of students that help them master IEP goals and objectives. Unlike differentiated instruction, SDI supports the unique needs that are specifically related to your child's disability. It is an addition to differentiated instruction.

What does SDI look like in the classroom?

The SDI methods used in the classroom are designed to help your child achieve the goals listed in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). SDI is what the teacher does to provide ongoing instruction, assessments, and re-teaching practices for your child. Most SDIs should be applied across all environments, not just one class or classroom. They are adaptations or modifications to the regular curriculum.

How does SDI help my child?

Students with disabilities have their own specially designed instruction incorporated into their IEPs. The following are some examples of IEP accommodations and supplementary aids. Your child may require similar or additional support to provide greater access to the general education curriculum.



- Extended time
- Text to speech
- Break down assignments into smaller units
- Cue cards with problem-solving strategies, definitions, examples, models, flow charts, process steps
- Modified tests/assignments
- Graphic organizers

IEP Accommodations



What are Accommodations?

Accommodations are practices and procedures that mitigate the effects of a student's disability but do not reduce learning or performance expectations. Accommodations address barriers in the following areas:

- How information is presented (Presentation)
- How students are asked to respond (Response)
- The characteristics of the setting (Setting)
- The timing and scheduling (Timing and Scheduling)

Source: IRIS Center

https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/acc/cresource/q1/p01/#content



Accommodations:

- Enable students to participate more fully in instruction and assessments
- Enable students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills
- Are based on student's individual needs
- Should be routinely used in instruction and testing
- Are necessities for access



Accommodations are NOT:

- A reduction in learning expectations
- A change in curriculum
- A change in what is being assessed
- Assigned to every student
- Assigned globally based on disability category, least restrictive environment, or program
- Introduced during testing
- A reason to exempt students from testing

IEP Accommodations



How are accommodations selected?

The selection of accommodations is finalized during an IEP team meeting. Each participant has a specific role in contributing to the selection of a student's accommodations.

IEP Team Member	Role: Provides knowledge and input on the following
Administrator	 District policy on equal access to instructional and assessment programs Ensuring implementation of all assessments based on the student's IEP Emergency policies should an emergency accommodation be needed
General Education Teacher	 Grade level curriculum The purpose of classroom, district, and statewide assessments Implementation of accommodations in the general education classroom
Special Education Teacher	 Appropriate instructional accommodations used in the classroom How the student can demonstrate his/her knowledge and skills without being limited or unfairly restricted by his/her disability.
Related Service Providers	Their respective disciplines help the team select appropriate accommodation(s).
Student	 Information on their strengths How the accommodations they use for instruction are working.
Parent(s) and Families	 The strengths and needs of their child Strategies their child uses to complete homework assignments and other tasks around the home

IEP Accommodations



As IEP teams select appropriate features and accommodations for the student, some questions can help guide the conversation:

- What are the student's learning strengths and areas of further improvement?
- How do the student's learning needs affect the achievement of grade-level content standards?
- What accommodations will increase the student's access to instruction and assessment by addressing the student's learning needs and reducing the effect of the student's disability? These may be new accommodations or accommodations the student is currently using.
- What accommodations does the student regularly use during instruction and assessments?
- What are the results for assignments and assessments when accommodations were used and not used?
- What is the student's perception of how well an accommodation "worked?"
- Are there effective combinations of accommodations?
- What difficulties did the student experience when using accommodations?
- What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and specialists about how the accommodation worked?
- Should the student continue to use an accommodation, are changes needed, or should the accommodation be discontinued?

Source: Maryland Assessment, Accessibility, and Accommodation Manual, 2024

Maryland Assessment, Accessibility, and Accommodations Manual



Alternate Education Framework



What is the Alternate Education Framework?

A small number of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are determined by their IEP teams to require instruction and/or assessment aligned to alternate academic achievement standards to demonstrate their learning.

If the IEP team considers your child to have a significant cognitive disability, they must consider whether your child should participate in the Alternate Education Framework and/or the Alternate Assessment. The IEP team will complete a form known as Appendix A as part of the IEP process. The IEP team considers the following:

- Does the student have an IEP that includes specially designed instruction and performance data that demonstrates that even with these supports, the student cannot learn the general standards? AND
- Does the student have a significant cognitive disability?
- Is the student learning content derived from the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards in English/language arts, mathematics, and the Next Generation Science Standards aligned with the grade level curriculum significantly modified for the student to make progress? AND
- Does the student require extensive, direct, individualized, and repeated instruction and substantial support to achieve measurable gains in adapted and modified curriculum?

What is a significant cognitive disability?

A significant cognitive disability is not a separate eligibility code. It refers to a student's cognitive functioning that is significantly below grade-level expectations and affects their ability to function at home, in the community, and at school.

A parent must provide consent for their child to participate in the Alternate Education Framework. Separate consent is needed for the child to participate in the modified academic achievement standards.

Further information can be found here: <u>Alternative Education Framework Parent</u> **Guide.**

Source: Maryland Assessment, Accessibility, Accommodations Manual

Secondary Transition



What is Secondary Transition?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act states that the purpose of the legislation is "to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further employment and independent living." The law stresses the need for educators, parents, and community agencies to work together to support the student as he or she works toward postsecondary goals and outcomes. Transition services are provided to assist the student in attaining the skills necessary to reach his or her postsecondary goals.

IDEA 2004 defines transition services as a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that are:

- designed to be within a results-oriented process, focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of an individual with a disability to facilitate their movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation.
- based on the individual's needs, taking into account their strengths, preferences, and interests and;
- designed to include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

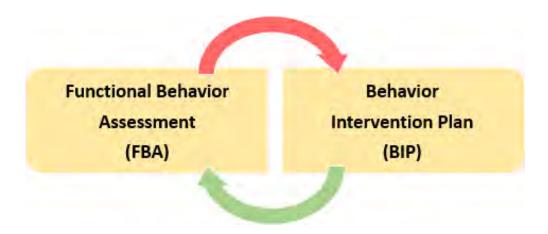
PGCPS is committed to assisting our students with achieving their post-secondary transition goals. For additional information and resources on transition, visit the Secondary Transition Site on the PGCPS district website: **Secondary Transition**. You will also find access to a valuable resource at the **PGCPS Transitioning Youth Information** site.

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) & Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)



What is a Functional Behavior Assessment?

Students who exhibit challenging behaviors that impact their ability to meet both academic and behavioral standards may require a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA). The IEP team may use a FBA to try to figure out the function of your child's behavior and use the information to identify some possible solutions.

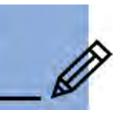


A **Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)** is the systematic process of gathering information to guide the development of an effective and efficient behavior intervention plan (BIP) for the student's problem behavior. It includes:

- Identification of the functions of the problem behavior for the student;
- Description of the problem behavior exhibited in the educational setting; and
- Identification of environmental and other factors and settings that contribute to or predict the occurrence, nonoccurrence, and maintenance of the behavior over time.

An effective FBA collects information from multiple sources and methods to identify when the behaviors occur, how long they last, and the function of the identified behavior.

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) & Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)



An FBA may be used when the behavior of concern does the following:

- causes imminent serious physical harm to self or others
- results in the need for restraint
- causes the student to be suspended from school or prevented from participating in classroom instruction

You do not have to wait until disciplinary action is taken to conduct an FBA. You can request an IEP meeting to discuss your concerns and request that an FBA be conducted for your student.

What is a Behavior Intervention Plan?

A **Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)** is a proactive, data-based, structured plan that is developed as a result of a functional behavior assessment, which is consistently applied by trained staff to reduce or eliminate a student's challenging behaviors and to support the development of appropriate behaviors and responses.

A comprehensive FBA is the foundation of a good BIP. It is critical to understand what is maintaining the behavior of concern (function of the behavior). The BIP should be reviewed regularly to ensure that the interventions and supports are working as intended. If the student is not making progress on their identified behavioral targets, then the BIP should be reviewed and changed as needed.



Discipline



What are the Discipline Procedures for Students with Disabilities?

All students in PGCPS are subject to the District's Code of Student Conduct. This information can be found in the <u>Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook</u>. Students with disabilities are also responsible for maintaining the Code of Student Conduct. If they break any of the rules, schools can enforce the discipline policies that are in place. However, students with disabilities have some additional safeguards. These safeguards do not provide a loophole for avoiding discipline, but they do provide an opportunity for school teams to examine and understand the cause of the behavior.

When disciplinary action is taken against your child, you should review the **Maryland Procedural Safeguards - Parental Rights** document (see below) that contains information for parents on their rights that applies to children with disabilities and families under the federal law, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. **Parental Rights-English Parental Rights-Spanish Parental Rights-French**

Parents have the right to specific procedures and protections if the public agency takes certain disciplinary actions toward their child. Consistent with 34 C.F.R. § 300.530(d), a public agency must provide a child educational services after the child's removal for more than ten school days in a school year for a violation(s) of a student code of conduct.

The Maryland Procedural Safeguards outlines the discipline policy that is in place for students who are in prekindergarten programs, kindergarten, first, or second grade. Students who are in these categories may be disciplinarily removed "if the school administration, in consultation with a school psychologist or other mental health professional, determines that there is an imminent threat of serious harm to other students or staff that cannot be reduced or eliminated through interventions and supports (Maryland Procedural Safeguards, 2021).

Discipline



What is a Manifestation Determination Meeting?

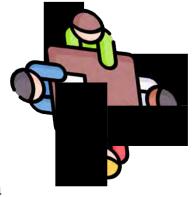
The LEA and IEP team (parent/guardian) will conduct a Manifestation Determination Meeting (MDR) to determine if the student's behavior/conduct was caused by any of the following once a student is removed from the educational environment for 10 or more consecutive or cumulative school days:

- the behavior/conduct was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the child's disability; or
- the conduct/behavior was the direct result of the LEA's failure to implement the IEP.

When making this determination, the IEP team will review all relevant information. This includes a review of the IEP, information from parents/caregivers, or observations that were conducted. If the results of the review indicate that the behavior/conduct is not a manifestation of the disability, the student will be disciplined in accordance with the discipline procedures for non-disabled students. A MDR of the student's disability must be conducted **every** time a student with a disability is removed from an educational program for 10 or more **consecutive** or **cumulative** school days or is being considered for disciplinary action that could lead to expulsion.

Additional Resources on Discipline

- LD ONLINE
- MSDE
- Parent Center Hub
- Parental Rights-English Parental Rights-Spanish Parental Rights-French
- Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook
- Understood







How do I resolve disagreements?

The best way to resolve disagreements is to address them as they occur. If you feel that there are issues that need to be resolved with your IEP team, it is also best to meet with the team first. During the meeting, you should be specific about the concerns that you have and identify ways that you and the team can address the issues. If the discussion stalls, there are additional ways that you can reconnect with the team to resolve issues.

Your IEP Team: Parents are members of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team who participate in the decision-making process regarding their student's educational program. Prince George's County Public Schools shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that parents understand and can participate in group decisions related to the educational placement of their students. The district shall provide access to an interpreter for parents who are deaf and hard of hearing or whose native language is not English. Please contact the IEP Chairperson of your child's school to address your concerns. You may also contact the school's principal.

Compliance Specialist: Each school has a compliance specialist assigned from the Department of Special Education who can assist you. To find your child's assigned compliance specialist for their school, please review this list **here.**

Family Support Center: The Family Support Center is available to help parents resolve concerns and answer questions that they may have regarding their child's special education program. In addition, direct assistance may be provided by the Special Education Instructional Specialist and Compliance staff at 301-618-8335. *Call today; we are here to help you.*



Name	Title	Email Address
Beth Hayre	Instructional Specialist	Beth.Diaite@pgcps.org
Angela Salmeron	Parent Liaison	Angela2.Hernandez@pgcps.org
Martha Torchon	Program Coordinator	Martha.Torchon@pgcps.org
Yvette Young	Social Worker	Yvette.Young@pgcps.org

Maryland State Department of Education Family Support: The Family Support and Dispute Resolution Branch facilitates informal dispute resolution by responding to parent inquiries, assisting parents with navigating Maryland's early intervention and special education systems, and connecting parents with school system resources and personnel who can assist with concerns.

Family Support Services, Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services Office: 410-767-0255

The Parents' Place of Maryland: The Parents' Place offers a variety of programs and services that support families of children with disabilities and special health care needs. Serving as Maryland's Parent Training and Information Center and Family-to-Family Health Information Center, Parents' Place supports many families throughout the state annually. There are no fees associated with their services.

Contact number: 800-394-5694 or 410-768-9100 ext. 4

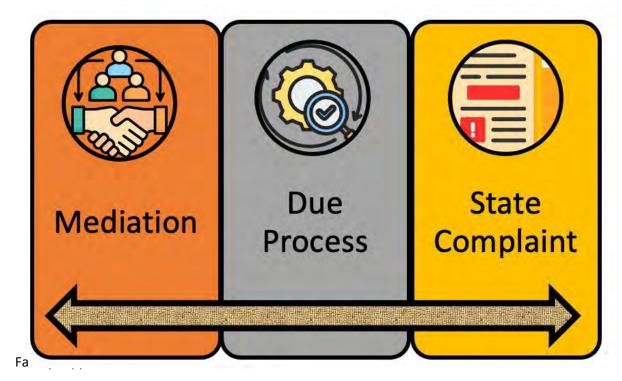




Mediation is a process that may be used to resolve disagreements between the parents of a child with a disability and PGCPS. An employee of the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) who is qualified and trained in effective mediation techniques conducts the mediation. Mediation is at no cost to the parent or school district. We encourage parents to participate in mediation. Contact OAH at 410-229-4100 or 1-800-388-8805 or via mail at 11101 Gilroy Road, Hunt Valley, Maryland 21031.

Due process complaint is a formal complaint regarding the identification, evaluation, educational placement, or the provision of a free appropriate public education for a student with a disability or suspected of having a disability, which may result in a due process hearing. The parents and school involved in a dispute have the opportunity for an impartial due process hearing when filing a complaint.

State Complaint is if an individual or an organization believes that PGCPS has violated a federal or state law or regulation, concerning an early intervention or special education requirement or that PGCPS has not implemented a due process hearing decision, those individuals and organizations have the right to file a **State Complaint** with the Maryland State Department of Education. You may **contact MSDE at 410-767-0100.** To assist with filing the complaint, detailed procedures and a form are available on the MSDE website at **www.marylandpublicschools.org** or by calling the **Division's Complaint Investigation and Due Process Branch at 410-767-7770.**





The IDEA Dispute Resolution Process Comparison Chart below provides a side-by-side comparison of the rights that parents have when trying to resolve disagreements. Consult the Maryland Procedural Safeguards for additional information on these procedures and the documentation required for each of the filings.

COMPARISON	Mediation	Due Process Complaint	State Complaint	Resolution Process
Who initiates this process?	Parent or public agency, but must be voluntary for both	Parent or public agency	Any individual or organization including those from out of state	Public agency schedules the resolution meeting upon receipt of a due process complaint unless the parties agree to waive or use mediation
Is there a time limit for filing?	None Specified	2 years from when the party knew or should have known of the problem with limited expectations	1 year from the date of the alleged violation	Any matter relating to the identification, evaluation or educational placement or provision of a free appropriate public education (there are exceptions)
What issues can be presented as part of the complaint?	Any matter under Part 300, including matters arising prior to the filing of a due process complaint (there are exceptions)	Any matter relating to the identification, evaluation or educational placement or provision of a free appropriate public education (there are exceptions)	Alleged violations of Part B of IDEA or Part 300	Same as the issues raised in the parent's due process complaint
Is there a timeline for resolving the issue?	None specified	45 days from the end of the resolution period unless a specific extension to the timeline is granted	60 days from receipt of the complaint unless an extension is permitted	Public agency must hold a resolution meeting within 15 days of receipt of the parent's due process complaint, unless the parties agree in writing to waive the meeting or agree to use mediation. Resolution period is 30 days from receipt of the parent's due process complaint unless the parties agree otherwise or the parent or public agency fails to participate in the resolution meeting, or the public agency fails to convene the resolution meeting within 15 days of receipt of the parent's due process complaint
Who resolves the issue?	Parent and public agency with a mediator The process is voluntary and both parties must agree to any resolution	Hearing Officer/ Administrative Law Judge (ALJ)	Maryland State Department of Education	Parent and public agency Both parties must agree to any resolution

Adapted from MSDE Procedural Safeguards, 2021

Parental Rights-English Parental Rights-Spanish Parental Rights-French

The Family Support Center



What is the Family Support Center?

<u>The Family Support Center</u> is a resource for families of students with disabilities. Our mission is to:

- Provide information about disabilities and related services, increase awareness of community services
- Assist families in resolving educational concerns
- Connect families with resources they may need to make informed decisions regarding their child's education
- Strengthen collaborative relationships with families, schools, and community partners

Family Support Center Video



Our Services:

- Providing assistance with understanding the IEP process
- Sponsoring disability-specific workshops, fairs, and conferences
- Providing assistance with preparing for your child's annual review
- Providing access to a lending library and computer lab
- Assisting with understanding how to resolve disagreements
- Providing referrals to community resources: Here is our current <u>Community</u> <u>Resource Guide</u>



Contact Us:

Address: 1400 Nalley Terrace, Landover, Maryland 20785

Phone: 301-431-5675 **Fax:** 301-637-4448 **Email:** jhflc.familysupport@pgcps.org

Hours of Operation: Monday – Friday; 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Website: https://www.pgcps.org/offices/special-education/family-support-center

For Access to our virtual newsletter, click the link

below:https://sites.google.com/pgcps.org/familysupportcenternewsletterc/home

YouTube Channel: For recordings of previously held workshops and conference sessions, click here: **PGCPS Special Education Family Support - YouTube.**

We Want to Hear From YOU!



The Department of Special Education values your input. Families have two options to formally share feedback regarding their experiences with the IEP team process.



The first option is the PGCPS Individualized Education Program Parent Survey. This survey is intended to gather insights and feedback from

families regarding your experience and overall satisfaction with your child's IEP process and implementation. After attending your child's IEP meeting, you will receive a link to complete the survey.

Should you want or need further information and/or support, you can reach out to the PGCPS Family Support Center at 301-431-5675.



IEP Parent Survey Link



The second option is through Maryland's **Special Education Parent Involvement Survey**. This survey is sent to parents of students with disabilities each year. Typically, the survey starts in February and ends in May. The survey allows parents to share their thoughts on the special education services, processes and supports that are received during the

school year. We encourage you to take advantage of both of these opportunities to let your voice be heard! This survey is available to families by mail and online.

https://www.mdparentsurvey.com/





Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee (SECAC)



What is SECAC?

The Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee (SECAC) was created by the state legislature to provide support and advice to the Executive Director of Special Education. The SECAC provides support and guidance to parents and the community on issues related to students with disabilities and their families.

The Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committee of Prince George's County Public Schools (SECAC-PG) is an organization of volunteers, parents and caregivers of students who need special education. Your input is solicited, valued, and respected as part of our work to advocate for meaningful changes in special education in YOUR community. Don't miss your opportunity to advise the Department of Special Education on educational matters that lead to achievements in students.

General membership meetings are open to all. They are held on the fourth Tuesday of every month* during the school year at 6:30 pm. There are no meetings in the summer (June, July, August) or December.



SECAC Membership Benefits:

- Access to SECAC-PG-sponsored workshops and seminars
- Network with other parents
- Interact directly with Department of Special Education senior personnel
- Learn about state and county resources
- Be part of the SECAC-PG listserv



Contact Us:

Address: 1400 Nalley Terrace, Landover, Maryland 20785

Phone: 301-431-5675 **Fax:** 301-637-4448

Email: pgsecac@gmail.com

Hours of Operation: Monday – Friday; 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Website: www.secacpg.org



FREE OR LOW-COST ASSISTANCE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION DISPUTES



Legal Assistance and Advocacy Support

Many agencies and offices provide free or low-cost advocacy and legal assistance to families of students with disabilities. On the following page, you will find a listing of those agencies that support families.

Provider Name	Address/Phone/Website		
	229 Hanover Street P.O. Box 907 Annapolis, MD 21404 410-972-2700 800-666-8330	500 East Lexington Street Baltimore, MD 21202 410-951-7777 800-999-8904	103 S. Hickory Avenue Bel Air, MD 21014 410-879-3755 410-836-8202 800-444-9529
Legal Aid Bureau Inc.	110 Greene Street Cumberland, MD 21502 301-777-7474 866-389-5243	106 N. Washington Street Suite 101 Easton, MD 21601 410-763-9676 800-477-2543	22 South Market Street Suite 11 Frederick, MD 21701 301-694-7414 800-679-8813
	P.O. Box 249 Route 231 Hughesville, MD 20637 301-932-6661 410-535-3278 877-310-1810	8401 Corporate Drive Suite 200 Landover, MD 20785 301-560-2101 888-215-5316	111 High Street P.O. Box 4116 Salisbury, MD 21801 410-546-5511 800-444-4099
	29 West Susquehanna Ave. Suite 305 Towson, MD 21204 410-296-6705 www.mdlab.org	P.O. Box 907 Annapolis, MD 21404 410-972-2700 800-666-8330	

FREE OR LOW-COST ASSISTANCE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION DISPUTES



Provider Name	Address/Phone/Website	
Maryland Disability Law Center (MDLC)	1500 Union Avenue, Suite 2000 Baltimore, MD 21211 410-727-6352 410-727-6387 TDD 800-233-7201 www.mdlcbalto.org	
Kennedy Krieger Institute	Maureen van Stone, Esq., M.S. Director, Project HEAL 716 N. Broadway, Office 106 Baltimore, MD 21205 (443) 923-4416 (443) 923-4414 (Intake line) vanstone@kennedykrieger.org	Mallory Finn, Esq. Staff Attorney, Project HEAL 716 N. Broadway, Office 111 Baltimore, MD 21205 (443) 923-9571 (443) 923-4414 (Intake line) finnm@kennedykrieger.org
The University of Maryland Clinical Law Office	500 West Baltimore Street Baltimore, MD 21201 410-706-3295 http://www.law.umaryland.edu	

Provider Name	Address/Phone Number/Website	
PGCPS Family Support Center	You may wish to contact the special education department, Partners for Success, or a similar office for your local school system to find out about Family Support services that may be available to assist. 1400 Nalley Terrace Landover, MD 20785 301-431-5675	
Parents' Place of Maryland	Provides parent support and training 801 Cromwell Park Drive Suite 103 Glen Burnie, MD 21061 410-768-9100 www.ppmd.org	

APPENDICES





Special Programs By Location



Disabilities and Definitions



Special Education Terms & Acronyms



Community Resource Guide



Family Support - YouTube

(Previously recorded Workshops and Conferences)



Links to Resources for Families



Sources of Information