Special Education Services and Plans for Students with Blindness and Visual Impairment

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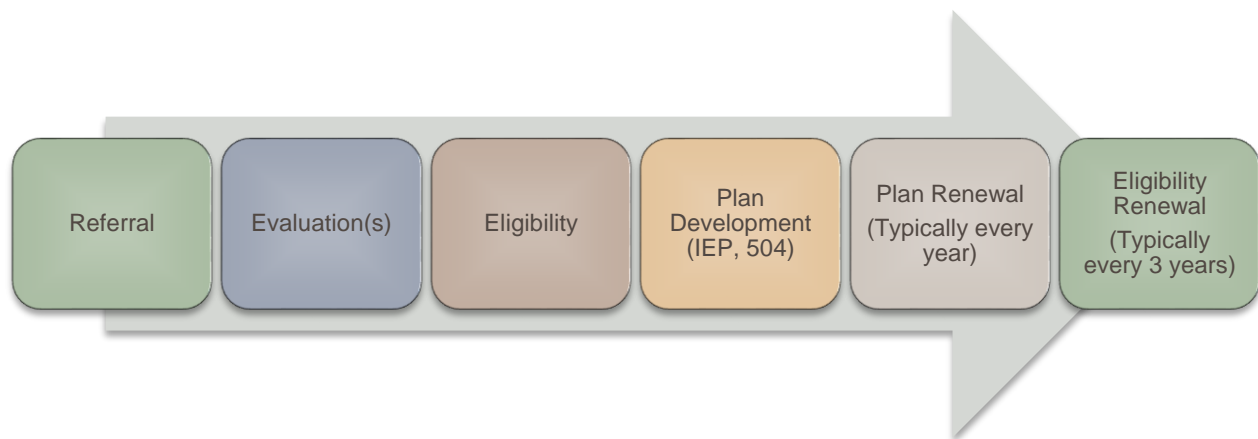
Special Education Process

Image description: a right pointing arrow connect elements of the special education process of: Referral, Evaluation(s) Eligibility, Plan Development (IEP, 504), Plan Renewal, Eligibility Renewal

- ✓ The student is referred to eligibility

- ✓ Assessments are conducted to support the eligibility decision making process

- ✓ The committee evaluates to determine eligibility

- ✓ The child is found eligible for special education services

  - ▪ Visual impairment can be a primary, secondary, tertiary area of eligibility

- ✓ A service plan is selected (in this case, an IEP)

- ✓ Potentially more assessments are conducted

- ✓ The team meets and develops the IEP

- ✓ Eligibility is reevaluated at least every three years

Referral

Referrals for special education can be made by parents, teachers, service providers, etc. Referrals can be made at any time.

Evaluations

IDEA Requirements

• Highlighted sections: Section 300.304 Evaluation procedures

(a) Notice. The public agency must provide notice to the parents of a child with a disability, in accordance with Sec. 300.503, that describes any evaluation procedures the agency proposes to

   • (b) Conduct of evaluation. In conducting the evaluation, the public agency must--

   • (1) Use a **variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather** relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child, including information provided by the parent, that may assist in determining--

   • (i) Whether the child is a child with a disability under Sec. 300.8; and

   • (ii) The content of the child's IEP, including information related to enabling the child to be involved in and progress in the general education curriculum (or for a preschool child, to participate in appropriate activities);

   • (2) **Not use any single measure or assessment as the sole criterion** for determining whether a child is a child with a disability and for determining an appropriate educational program for the child

• IDEA: Section 614 (d)(3)(B)(iii)

   • "In the case of a child who is blind or visually impaired, provide for instruction in Braille and the use of Braille unless the IEP team determines, after an evaluation of the child's reading and writing skills, needs, and appropriate reading and writing media (including an evaluation of the child's future needs for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille), that instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is not appropriate for the child."

Assessment and Evaluation

   • Note: Parent involvement and input during the initial and continued assessment process is vital

- Provide your comments, feedback, participate in interviews, document concerns and areas of strength, provide video/photos when it can supplement understanding for the team

Major VI Assessments
- Functional Vision

- Learning/literacy media

- Expanded Core Curriculum

- O&M

- Assistive Technology

- These assessments can overlap, complement each other and/or be done individually

- Ongoing assessment is crucial

Other Evaluations
- The presence of a visual impairment does not mean a student will have or be exempt from having another disability

- Developmental, educational, intelligence, psychological assessments

    - Note potential limitations with standardization, reliability, validity, norming

    - Administering under non-standardized conditions:

        - Use of accommodations, adaptive tests

        - Include/exclude various sections

Service Plans
- IFSP: Individualized Family Service Plan, early intervention (Infant and toddler years)
- IEP: Individualized Education Program, preschool, school years, transition
- 504 plan
    - Students who have disabilities, but whose disabilities do not interfere with their ability to progress in general education and are not eligible for special education services may be entitled to a 504 Accommodation Plan
- ISP: Individualized Service Plan

Basic Elements of the IEP

- Present level and functional performance
- Annual goals
- Accommodations: in class
- Accommodations: for testing
- Literacy considerations for students who are b/vi
- Placement decisions
- Service delivery for special education and related services
- Inclusion/participation with students who do not have disabilities
- ESY
- Special education transit
- Access to accessible electronic materials
- Transition plan*

Placement Decisions: Types of Settings and Service Delivery

- The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and Inclusion
- Remember: general education placements are not always the right answer for certain students
- Monitor Consult
- Special education service in general education:
    - Intermittent basis
    - Regular, scheduled basis
- Special education service in the special education setting:
    - Intermittent basis
    - Regular, scheduled basis
- Resource services, self-contained settings
- Self-contained school (e.g. school for the blind)

Examples Placement in the Wrong Setting

- Scenarios where placements and settings have not been appropriate:

- The student who is visually impaired with no other disabilities was:

    - Placed in a preschool classroom for children with significant developmental and cognitive disabilities

    - Placed in special education classes for students with emotional and behavioral disorders

    - Denied being placed in gifted and talented, advanced placement, honors, or other classes based only on the visual impairment, even though the student scored in the eligibility range for these courses/programs

- The student was not placed in other special education classes because:

    - The student has a reading, processing, math, or other type of learning disability, but was not placed in these special education classes because challenges with these areas was blamed on the visual impairment

    - The school system lacked a service, support, or specialist, so the student was not able to be placed in an appropriate setting

    - The school system contends general education is the best placement for all students and reports placing the student anywhere outside of general education puts them in violation of the law

Service Time
- Varies for each child

    - Balancing amount of time with child's needs and inclusion/support for independence

- Evaluate goals, how much time is needed to reasonably meet each goal

    - What instruction is necessary?

    - What evaluation methods are necessary?

    - Can goals be met in the timeframe allocated with the amount of service designated?

Inclusion
- Inclusion is successful when

    - The school community is fully committed and engaged

- All staff and faculty are committed to the process

- Peers are respectful and accepting of diversity

- The student is viewed and interacts as a vital member of the school community

- The school has committed to full accessibility and integration