PRE-FERRAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WHAT ALL PARENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SCREENING PROCEDURES, PRE-REFERRAL ACTIVITIES AND THE REFERRAL PROCESS

This page is designed to provide information to parents whose children may be experiencing difficulties in academic, social, or emotional areas, in the regular education environment.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SCREENING PROCESS

Q. How is the screening process started?
A. It is started by someone who suspects that a student is having trouble learning or behaving.

Q. Who can start the screening process?
A. The school staff, SST/IST members, or parents.

Q. What screening is usually done with all students in certain grades in school?
A. State Law requires that all students be screened for vision, hearing, body mass index, and academic performance on a routine basis. If students do not pass these screenings, then a follow-up is done with the parent. If needed, referrals to physicians are made, with full parent involvement.

Q. How could I, the parent, start the screening process?
A. If you think that your child shows any of the signs that a screening might be needed, contact your child’s teacher, the school principal, guidance counselor (elementary), or pre-referral coordinator (secondary). If your child attends a private school or program, or if you are new to our district you should contact the principal at the public school your child would ordinarily attend.

Q. Just what is a screening?
A. A screening is a rapid assessment that may indicate that further testing is necessary. If your child is singled out for screening, this requires you prior informed and written permission.

Q. If school staff thinks my child may have a disability, what procedures will they follow?
A. Please read on in the section called “Pre-Referral Activities,” and “Referral Process.”

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT PRE-REFERRAL ACTIVITIES

Q. What is a Student Study Team/Instructional Support Team?
A. These are teams that attempt to deal with a student’s performance of concerns by examining skills and needs and making modifications in the regular education program. These teams are at each of the schools in our district.

Q. I have heard about observations, parent conferences and interventions. What do these terms really mean?
A. Remember, the purpose of pre-referral activities is to try and help the student function successfully in a regular education classroom. State regulations require that interventions be initiated and documented prior to referring a student for a formal evaluation. Parents are always informed of the school staff’s intent to intervene with an individual student. Observations of your child may be conducted in appropriate school settings by school staff.
You will be invited to attend conferences with your child’s teacher and/or other school staff. Interventions will be attempted in the regular education environment to help him/her overcome the presenting problem. The interventions may include counseling by the guidance counselor, change in instructional methods or techniques, change in schedule, community agency intervention, Title I Program, intensive instruction in areas of deficit, etc.

Q. **My child’s teacher has called me and asked me to attend a parent-teacher conference. What should I do?**
A. A parent-teacher conference is a chance for two very important adults to talk about how a child is doing in school. It is a time for you, as a parent, to ask questions about any concerns you may have about your child’s progress. Since the time allowed for conferences is often limited, it is helpful for parents and teachers to plan ahead.

Q. **Because my child went through this pre-referral process and SST and IST, will he/she be referred for an evaluation?**
A. It is hoped that the pre-referral activities will be successful and that a format evaluation is not needed at this time. The team reviews all data collected and a professional decision is made as to whether a formal evaluation is needed. If the team makes a decision not to refer your child for an evaluation, you will receive written notification along with your procedural safeguards (parent rights). If the team makes a decision to refer your child for an evaluation, please read the next selection.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Q. **What happens if the school team makes a decision to refer my child for an evaluation?**
A. First, no evaluation can take place, for the first time, without your written permission. You will be requested to give your consent to evaluation on the notice/consent for evaluation form. You will also receive written notice of procedural safeguards. Then a referral will be sent to the appropriate evaluation specialists(s).

You do not have the right to refuse or revoke your consent for evaluation, in the best interest of your child. Mediation is available and does not change your right to a hearing or your right to grant or not grant consent for evaluation.

Q. **What questions should I, as a parent, ask before giving consent for the evaluation?**
A. Some questions you might ask are:
- How should my child be informed about the evaluation?
- Who will coordinate the evaluation and administer tests?
- What tests will be given, when will the tests be given, and by whom will the tests be given?
- What areas will each test cover?
- When and in what form will I receive the test results?
- When and how will I have an opportunity to provide input into the evaluation?
- What can I expect to receive information on evaluation results?

Q. **What can I, as a parent, do to prepare, and become an active participant?**
A. **TIPS FOR PARENTS**
1. Be realistic about what your child can do.
2. Recognize that you make the rules in your home.
3. Model the kind of behavior you would like to see in your children. Actions speak louder than words.
4. Discipline clearly. Be short and to the point. Do not nag or lecture. Don’t give your child room for discussion. When you know you are right, why argue?
5. Deal with problems as they occur.
7. Present a consistent and united front.
8. Establish daily routines.
9. Be aware of your child’s social activities; know his/her friends, where they are going, and time of return.
10. Keep in touch with your child’s teacher and school.
11. Work together and play together.

Tips for Parents-based on material from parent Involvement Center, University of New Mexico, Dr. Roger Kroth.

There are a number of terms and words parents should understand in this process.

**Student Study Team/Instructional Support Team:**
These are teams at each school designed to provide individual assistance and interventions in order to maintain the child in the regular education environment. These teams are part of the regular education programs at schools. An SST is not “a special education term”.

**Consent for Evaluation:**
Refers to the process and the form where parents give their permission for the child to be individually screened and/or individually evaluated.

**Formal Evaluation:**
Standardized test(s) administered in an individualized setting by qualified evaluation specialists (psychologist, speech/language pathologist, etc.)

**Pre-Referral Activities:**
Activities such as observations, parent conferences, and interventions, done by school staff before making a decision to refer for a formal evaluation.

**Referral:**
An official act where an individual student is scheduled for a formal evaluation, to determine if the student is eligible for programs for students with disabilities. The referral is made only after screening and pre-referral activities have been conducted, and parent consent for evaluation has been obtained.

**Screening:**
A rapid assessment of an individual child, the results of which may warrant further testing.