

SCHOOL BASED TEAM MEETING & ELIGIBILITY PROCESS

What is the purpose of the School-Based Team?

If a classroom teacher notices a student is displaying difficulty due to **observed** academic deficiencies, behavior problems, or any other academic challenge, he/she may want to try several interventions to see if the student is able to utilize the assistance. The teacher may also inform the parent of the difficulties observed. However, the teacher may refer that student to the School-Based Team to receive some problem solving assistance. (These behaviors may be observed by a guidance counselor, parent, or any other stakeholder.) This team's purpose is to provide interventions and strategies to benefit that student and assist that student with receiving access to FAPE.

What is the process if a disability is suspected?

The evaluation and eligibility process begins at the point the student is suspected of having a disability that requires specially designed instruction. **This suspicion of a disability is usually documented on a "referral for evaluation" form. In Virginia, a referral for evaluation can come from any source or individual.** For example, a referral may result when:

- A parent or teacher suspects a disability and contacts the special education administrator.
- The results of a school screening indicate a suspicion of a disability.
- A school team that is working to provide strategies and supports suspects a disability.
- A parent or teacher suspects a disability and contacts the principal who then asks the school-based team to review the information and make a determination if a referral for evaluation is needed.

A referral can be made in writing, orally, or using electronic communication. The referral must be documented and included in the student's education record. Documentation must include the name of the referring source, date, a description of the concerns and information about any strategies attempted. A sample referral form is included. **The parent must be provided with a copy of the Procedural Safeguards Notice.**

The **65 business day** timeline ***begins*** when the **special education coordinator or designee receives the referral for evaluation.** When the referral goes directly to the special education administrator or designee, that individual has three business days to decide upon one of three options. The special education administrator or designee may:

- Begin the initial evaluation procedures,
- Refer the child to the school-based team to review and respond to the request, or
- Deny the request, and provide prior written notice.

- **If the special education administrator or designee decides to begin the initial evaluation procedures,** the first step is to document the decision in the student's education record. The next step is to hold a meeting to review existing data.
- **If the special education administrator or designee's decision is to refer the request to the school-based team,** then that group has ten business days to meet. The team may determine that it does not suspect a disability, and an evaluation is not warranted. In this case, the team must provide prior written notice to the parents and the process stops. If the team does suspect a disability, they make a referral to the administrator of special education within three business days. It is important to note that if the team met as a result of a request from the administrator of special education, the 65 business day timeline began when the special education director or designee received the initial request.
- **In the event the special education administrator or designee decides that an evaluation is not warranted,** prior written notice must be provided to the parent. The prior written notice must contain all of the required elements. It should focus on the reasons the special education administrator or designee determined that the student is not suspected of having a disability and/or does not require specially designed instruction.
- **If the referral goes first to a school principal or the principal's designee,** such as an assistant principal or the school's student assistance team leader, the school-based team must meet within ten business days from receipt of referral to determine whether an evaluation is necessary. If the team suspects a disability and decides an evaluation is warranted, it has three business days to forward the referral to the special education administrator or designee. In this situation, the 65 business day timeline would begin when the special education administrator receives the referral for evaluation from the school team.