

# Special Education A Guide for Parents

This Parent Guide is designed to help parents understand the process of formally identifying their child. It is to be provided to parents either before or at an initial Identification Placement and Review Committee Meeting.

## Parent's Guide to Special Education

The purpose of this parent guide is to provide you with information about the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC), and to outline the procedures involved in identifying a pupil as “exceptional”, deciding the pupil’s placement, or appealing such decisions if you do not agree with the IPRC. This guide cannot provide you with all information about special education, but attempts to give you some of the basics.

*When used in this guide, the word “parent” includes guardian.*

*If you wish to receive the parent guide in Braille, large print, or audio format, please contact the Board.*

## Who is identified as an exceptional pupil?

The Education Act defines an exceptional pupil as “a pupil whose behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered to need placement in a special education program.

**The Ministry of Education uses the following 5 categories of exceptionalities, which include 12 specific definitions:**

**Behavioural**

- Behavioural

**Communicational**

- Autism
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Language Impairment
- Speech Impairment
- Learning Disability

**Intellectual**

- Giftedness
- Mild Intellectual Disability
- Developmental Disability

**Physical**

- Physical Disability
- Blind and Low Vision

**Multiple**

- Multiple Exceptionalities

## **What is a special education program?**

A special education program is defined in the Education Act as an educational program that:

- Is based on and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation; and
- Includes a plan (called an Individual Education Plan or IEP) containing specific expectations and an outline of special education services that meet the needs of the exceptional pupil.

## **What are Special Education Services?**

Special education services are defined in the Education Act as the facilities and resources, including support personnel and equipment, necessary for developing and implementing a special education program.

## **What special education programs and services are provided by the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario?**

The CDSBEO views every child as unique and aims to provide a Catholic education which nurtures this uniqueness and enables each pupil to maximize his/her spiritual, physical, intellectual, and social potential. It is the Board's belief that the most desirable placement for children is the regular classroom with appropriate special education services. For those students whose needs cannot be met in a regular class setting, more intensive special education services are provided based on school team and parent consideration. The Board provides the following range of programs based on pupil need:

- Regular program
- Remedial program
- Resource support program
- Self-contained program

## **What is an IEP?**

IEP stands for Individual Education Plan. It is a working document that outlines the accommodations and updated program goals for your child, based on the ongoing assessed needs of your child.

It must be developed in consultation with you, and must include:

- Specific educational expectations
- An outline of the special education program and services that will be received
- A statement about the methods by which your child's progress will be reviewed

- For students 14 years and older (except those identified solely on the basis of giftedness), a plan for transition to appropriate post-secondary school activities such as work, further education, and community living.

The IEP must be completed within 30 school days of your child being placed in a program or from the beginning of each new school year, and the principal must ensure that you receive a copy.

## What is an IPRC?

IPRC stands for *Identification, Placement and Review Committee*.

Regulation 181/98 requires that all school boards set up IPRCs. An IPRC is composed of at least three persons, one of whom must be a principal or supervisory officer of the board. A Special Education consultant, a Special Education teacher, or a regular class teacher may also be designated on the Committee.

## What is the role of the IPRC?

The IPRC will:

- Decide whether or not your child should be identified as exceptional
- Identify the areas of your child's exceptionality according to the categories and definitions of exceptionalities provided by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training
- Decide an appropriate placement for your child from the following:
  - Regular class with indirect support from a Resource Teacher
  - Regular class with direct Resource Teacher support (primarily in the classroom)
  - Regular class with withdrawal support
  - Special Education class placement with integration into a regular class
  - Special Education class full time
  - Special school placement
- Review the identification and placement at least once each school year (the time of year may vary).

## How is an IPRC meeting requested?

The Principal of your child's school:

- Must request an IPRC meeting for your child upon receiving your written request
- May, with written notice to you, refer your child to an IPRC when the principal and the child's teacher or teachers believe that your child may benefit from a special education program. The meeting takes place at least 10 school days after you receive the notification letter.

Within 15 days of receiving your request, or giving you notice, the principal must provide you with a copy of this guide and a written statement of approximately when the IPRC meeting will take place.

## May parents attend the IPRC meeting?

Regulation 181/98 entitles parents and pupils 16 years of age or older:

- To be present at and participate in all committee discussions about your child; and
- To be present when the committee's identification and placement decision is made.

## Who else may attend an IPRC meeting?

- The principal of your child's school;
- Other resource people such as your child's teacher, special education staff, board support staff, or the representative of an agency who may provide further information or clarification;
- Your representative, a person who may support you or speak on behalf of you or your child (but cannot be a trustee of the board); and
- An interpreter, if one is required. (You may request the services of an interpreter through the principal of your child's school.)

## **Who may request that others attend an IPRC meeting?**

Either you or the principal of your child's school may make a request for the attendance of others at the IPRC meeting.

## **What information will parents receive about the IPRC meeting?**

At least 10 days in advance of the meeting, the chair of the IPRC will provide you with written notification of the meeting and an invitation to attend the meeting as an important partner in considering your child's placement. This letter will notify you of the date, time, and place of the meeting, and it will ask you to confirm your attendance. (You may choose to waive a review IPRC if there are no changes to the identification or placement.) Before the IPRC meeting occurs, you will receive a written copy of any information about your child that the chair of the IPRC has received. This may include the results of assessments or a summary of information.

## **What if parents are unable to make the scheduled meeting?**

If you are unable to make the scheduled meeting, you may:

- Contact the school principal to arrange an alternative date or time; or
- Let the school principal know you will not be attending, and as soon as possible after the meeting, the principal will forward to you, for your consideration and signature, the IPRC's written statement of decision noting the decision of identification and placement and any recommendations regarding special education programs and services.

## What happens at an IPRC meeting?

- The chair introduces everyone and explains the purpose of the meeting.
- The IPRC will review all available information about your child. They will:
  - Consider an educational assessment of your child;
  - Consider, subject to the provisions of the Health Care Consent Act, 1996, a health or psychological assessment of your child conducted by a qualified practitioner if they feel that such an assessment is required to make a correct identification or placement decision;
  - Interview your child, with your consent if your child is less than 16 years of age, if they feel it would be useful to do so;
  - Consider any information that you submit about your child or that your child submits if s/he is 16 years of age or older.
- The committee may discuss any proposal that has been made about a special education program or special education services for the child. Committee members will discuss any such proposal at your request or at the request of your child if the child is 16 years of age or older.
- You are encouraged to ask questions and join in the discussion.
- Following the discussion, after all the information has been presented and considered, the committee will make its decision.

## What will the IPRC consider in making its placement decision?

Before the IPRC can consider placing your child in a special education class, it must consider whether placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services will meet your child's needs and be consistent with your preferences. If, after considering all the information presented to it, the IPRC is satisfied that placement in a regular class will meet your child's needs and that such a decision is consistent with your preferences, the committee will decide in favour of placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services. If the committee decides that your child should be placed in a special education class, it must state the reasons for that decision in its written statement of decision.

## **What will the IPRC's written statement of decision include?**

- The IPRC's written statement of decision will state whether the IPRC has identified your child as exceptional.
- Where the IPRC has identified your child as exceptional it must state:
  - The categories and definitions of any exceptionalities identified, as they are defined by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training
  - The IPRC's description of your child's strengths/needs
  - The IPRC's placement decision; and
  - The IPRC's recommendations regarding a special education program and special education services.
- Where the IPRC has decided that your child should be placed in a special education class, it must give reasons for that decision.

## **What happens after the IPRC has made its decision?**

- If you agree with the IPRC decision, you will be asked to indicate, by signing your name that you agree with the identification and placement decision made by the IPRC. The statement of decision may be signed at the IPRC meeting or taken home and returned.
- If the IPRC has identified your child as an exceptional pupil and you have agreed with the IPRC identification and placement decision, the board will promptly notify the principal of the school at which the special education program is to be provided. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) will then be developed for your child.

## **Once a child has been placed in a special education program, can the placement be reviewed?**

- Review IPRC meetings will be held within the school year, unless the principal of the school at which the special education program is being provided received written notice from you dispensing with the annual review.
- You may request a review IPRC meeting any time after your child has been in a special education program for 3 months.

## **What does a review IPRC consider and decide?**

- The review IPRC considers the same type of information that was originally considered.
- With your written permission, the IPRC will consider the progress your child has made in relation to the IEP.
- The IPRC will review the placement and identification decisions and decide whether they should be continued or whether a different decision should now be made.

## **What can parents do if they disagree with the IPRC decision?**

If you do not agree with either the identification or placement decision made by the IPRC, you may:

- Within 15 days of receipt of the decision, request that the IPRC hold a second meeting to discuss your concerns; or
- Within 30 days of receipt of the decision, file a notice of appeal with the Director of Education for the CDSBEO

If you do not agree with the decision after the second meeting, you may file a notice of appeal within 15 days of your receipt of the decision.

If you do not consent to the IPRC decision and you do not appeal it, the board will instruct the principal to implement the IPRC decision.

## **How do I appeal an IPRC decision?**

If you disagree with the IPRC's identification of your child as exceptional or with the placement decision of the IPRC, you may, within 30 days of receipt of the original decision or within 15 days of receipt of the decision from the second meeting described above, give written notification of your intention to appeal the decision to:

Superintendent of Special Education,  
Principal of Special Education or Director of Education,  
Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario  
Box 2222, 2755 Highway 43  
Kemptville, ON K0G 1J0

The notice of appeal must indicate the decision with which you disagree and include a statement that sets out your reasons for disagreeing.

## **What happens in the appeal process?**

The appeal process involves the following steps:

- The Board will establish a special education appeal board to hear your appeal. The appeal board will be composed of three persons (one of whom is to be selected by you, the parent) who have no prior knowledge of the matter under appeal.
- The chair of the appeal board will arrange a meeting to take place at a convenient time and place, but no later than 30 days after he or she has been selected (unless parents and board both provide written consent to a later date).
- The appeal board will receive the material reviewed by the IPRC and may interview any persons who may be able to contribute information about the matter under appeal.
- You, the parent, and your child, if they are 16 years old or over, are entitled to be present at, and to participate in, all discussions.
- The appeal board must make its recommendation within 3 days of the meeting ending. It may:
  - Agree with the IPRC and recommend that the decision be implemented; or
  - Disagree with the IPRC and make a recommendation to the board about the identification, placement, or both.
- ◆ The appeal board will report its recommendation in writing, to you and to the school board, providing the reasons for its recommendations.

- ◆ Within 30 days of receiving the appeal board's written statement, the school board will decide what action it will take with respect to the recommendations (boards are not required to follow the appeal board recommendation).
- ◆ You may accept the decision of the school board, or if you do not agree with the decision you may appeal to a Special Education Tribunal. You may request a hearing by writing to the secretary of the Special Education Tribunal. Information about making an application to the tribunal will be included with the appeal board's decision.

The Special Education Department personnel, under the direction of the Superintendent of Special Education and the Principal of Special Education, act as a resource to schools to extend the range of programs and services for pupils with special needs. Consultation, assessment, direct service, professional development, and advocacy are key components of the services provided to the system through the referral process.

Educational consultants and coordinators, psycho-educational consultants, speech-language pathologists, teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing / visually impaired, Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) specialists and the crisis support workers work closely with school personnel to ensure the effective delivery of special education programs.

The in-school special education team offers ongoing support to children. Qualified special education teachers, student success special education teachers, communication disorder assistants, student support workers, and educational assistants are available to provide direct assistance to pupils with physical, intellectual, communicative, social or emotional exceptionalities. Parents are encouraged to play an active and on-going role with the school team. Open communication, cooperation, and sharing of responsibilities are the keys to each child's educational success and welfare.

Additional information can be obtained from:

**Special Education Department**  
**Box 2222**  
**2755 Highway 43**  
**Kemptville, ON**  
**K0G 1J0**

**Telephone: 613-258-7757**

**Toll Free: 800-443-4562**

## **What are the Ministry's provincial and demonstration schools?**

The Ministry operates provincial and demonstration schools throughout Ontario for deaf, blind, deaf-blind, and severely learning-disabled students, as well as those with attention deficit disorder (ADD). Residential programs are offered at the schools from Monday to Friday, for students who live too far from school to travel daily.

### **Eastern Ontario Provincial Demonstration Schools**

Severe Learning Disabilities	Deaf Children	Blind and Deaf-Blind Children
Sagonaska School 350 Dundas Street W. Belleville, ON K8P 1B2 613-967-2830	Sir James Whitney School 350 Dundas Street W. Belleville, ON K8P 1B2 613-967-2823	W. Ross Macdonald School 350 Brant Avenue Brantford, ON N3T 3J9 519-759-0730

## **What organizations are available to assist parents?**

Many organizations are available to provide information and support to parents of exceptional children. Some of these are:

Association for Bright Children

[www.abcontario.ca](http://www.abcontario.ca)

Autism Ontario

[www.autismontario.com](http://www.autismontario.com)

Canadian Hearing Society

[www.chs.ca](http://www.chs.ca)

Canadian Mental Health Association

[www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)

Canadian National Institute for the Blind

[www.cnib.ca](http://www.cnib.ca)

Child and Youth Health Network for Eastern Ontario

[www.child-youth-health.net](http://www.child-youth-health.net)

Children's Mental Health Ontario	<a href="http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca">www.kidsmentalhealth.ca</a>
Community Living Ontario	<a href="http://www.communitylivingontario.ca">www.communitylivingontario.ca</a>
Down's Syndrome Association	<a href="http://www.dsao.ca">www.dsao.ca</a>
eMental Health	<a href="http://www.ementalhealth.ca">www.ementalhealth.ca</a>
Epilepsy Ontario	<a href="http://www.epilepsyontario.org">www.epilepsyontario.org</a>
Family Alliance Ontario	<a href="http://www.family-alliance.com">www.family-alliance.com</a>
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Ontario	<a href="http://www.fasdinfotsaf.ca/en">www.fasdinfotsaf.ca/en</a>
Groupe-Action pour L'Enfant, la famille et la communaute de Precott-Russell	<a href="http://www.groupeaction.ca">www.groupeaction.ca</a>
Integration Action for Inclusion in Ontario	<a href="http://www.inclusionontario.ca">www.inclusionontario.ca</a>
Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO)	<a href="http://www.ldao.ca">www.ldao.ca</a>
MS Society	<a href="http://www.mssociety.ca">www.mssociety.ca</a>
Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders	<a href="http://www.oafccd.com">www.oafccd.com</a>
Open Doors	<a href="http://www.opendoors.on.ca">www.opendoors.on.ca</a>
Parents' Lifelines of Eastern Ontario	<a href="http://www.pleo.on.ca">www.pleo.on.ca</a>
SD&G Developmental Services Centre	<a href="http://www.developmentalservices.ca">www.developmentalservices.ca</a>
Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Association of Ontario	<a href="http://sbhac.ca/">http://sbhac.ca/</a>
The Easter Seal Society of Ontario	<a href="http://www.easterseals.org">www.easterseals.org</a>
Tourette Syndrome Foundation	<a href="http://www.tourette.ca">www.tourette.ca</a>
Valoris for Children & Adults of Prescott-Russell	<a href="http://www.valorispr.ca">www.valorispr.ca</a>
VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children	<a href="http://www.voicefordeafkids.com">www.voicefordeafkids.com</a>

## Special Education Ministry Documents

*These and others can be found at this Ministry link:*

**<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/speced.html>**

## SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MISSION STATEMENT

As the Special Education Advisory Committee established for the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario, we recognize the need for strong partnerships in our Catholic community in order to develop the unique potential of all children. We recognize that we foster each child's uniqueness, as intended by God who created us in his own image and likeness, when we facilitate programs and services that:

- Recognize the importance of all children;
- Respect the unique strengths and needs of all children;
- Nurture self-esteem by recognizing the talents of children as gifts from God;
- Provide equity of opportunity and accessibility;
- Reflect our Catholic faith and the principles of inclusion;
- Promote a quality education for all.

SEAC meets 10 times a year, generally held monthly, either virtually or at the Board Office in Kemptville. Information regarding the dates and times as well as the agendas and minutes can be found on the board website: [www.cdsbeo.on.ca](http://www.cdsbeo.on.ca).

Association members can join, and parents are welcome to attend.