

Dr. Lewis Dolphin Stallworth, Sr. Charter School

Special Education Identification Protocols: Referral, Assessment, and Eligibility Procedures

Purpose

The purpose of these procedures is to ensure that students who may have disabilities are identified, evaluated, and provided appropriate special education services in a timely manner while complying with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), California Education Code, and Child Find requirements.

Step 1: Universal Screening & General Education Supports

Before referring a student for special education (unless the disability is obvious or immediate evaluation is warranted), teachers will provide appropriate Tier I instruction and interventions.

General education staff will:

- Deliver high-quality, standards-based instruction.
- Differentiate instruction.
- Monitor student progress.
- Communicate concerns with parents.
- Document classroom interventions.

Examples include:

- Small group instruction
- Reading or math intervention
- Behavior supports
- English Learner supports
- Attendance interventions

Step 2: Student Study Team (SST)

When classroom interventions are unsuccessful, the teacher submits a referral to the Student Study Team.

The SST will:

- Review academic, behavioral, attendance, and health data.
- Identify student strengths.

- Develop targeted interventions.
- Assign responsibilities.
- Establish progress monitoring.
- Schedule a follow-up meeting (typically within 4–8 weeks).

The SST is not required before a special education referral if there is reason to suspect a disability.

Step 3: Referral for Special Education Assessment

A referral may be initiated by:

- Parent/Guardian
- Teacher
- Administrator
- School psychologist
- Other educational professionals

The referral should include:

- Educational concerns
- Intervention history
- Progress monitoring data
- Attendance
- Academic records
- Behavior information
- Parent input

Upon receipt of the referral, administration and the Special Education Coordinator review the referral to determine whether an evaluation is warranted.

Step 4: Assessment Plan

If the district suspects the student may have a disability:

- Parents receive Prior Written Notice.
- An Assessment Plan is developed.
- Written parental consent is obtained before testing begins.

The assessment plan identifies all areas of suspected disability, which may include:

- Academic achievement
- Cognitive abilities
- Speech and language
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy

- Adaptive behavior
- Social-emotional functioning
- Health
- Vision/Hearing
- Autism
- Functional behavior

Step 5: Comprehensive Evaluation

Qualified personnel complete assessments using multiple measures and sources of information.

Evaluators may include:

- School Psychologist
- Special Education Teacher
- Speech-Language Pathologist
- Occupational Therapist
- Physical Therapist
- Nurse
- General Education Teacher
- Behavior Specialist

Evaluations must:

- Be non-discriminatory.
- Be administered in the student's primary language whenever appropriate.
- Use valid assessment tools.
- Assess all suspected areas of disability.

Step 6: Eligibility Determination

An IEP team meeting is scheduled after assessments are completed.

The IEP team reviews:

- Assessment reports
- Academic data
- Classroom performance
- Parent input
- Teacher observations
- Medical information (when applicable)

The team determines:

1. Whether the student meets eligibility under one or more IDEA disability categories.
2. Whether the disability adversely affects educational performance.
3. Whether the student requires specially designed instruction.

A student must meet all three criteria to qualify for special education services.

Step 7: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

If the student is eligible:

The IEP team develops an Individualized Education Program that includes:

- Present Levels of Performance
- Annual Goals
- Special Education Services
- Related Services
- Accommodations
- Modifications
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Progress Monitoring
- State Testing Accommodations
- Transition Services (when appropriate)

Services begin after parent consent.

Step 8: Ongoing Monitoring

The IEP team monitors student progress throughout the year.

The team will:

- Review progress toward goals.
- Adjust services as needed.
- Hold annual IEP meetings.
- Conduct triennial reevaluations every three years (or sooner if needed).

Timeline Compliance

Stallworth Charter School will ensure compliance with all applicable federal and California timelines, including:

- Timely response to referrals.
- Timely development of assessment plans.
- Completion of evaluations within required legal timelines following parent consent.

- Annual IEP meetings.
- Triennial reevaluations.

The Special Education Coordinator maintains a compliance calendar to monitor all due dates.

Child Find Responsibilities

All school personnel share responsibility for identifying students who may have disabilities.

Child Find activities include:

- Universal academic screening
- Teacher observations
- Parent referrals
- SST meetings
- Preschool transition activities
- Monitoring English Learners to ensure language acquisition is not mistaken for a disability
- Outreach to families regarding available services

Annual Review of Procedures

The Principal and Special Education Coordinator will annually review these procedures to:

- Monitor compliance.
- Analyze referral and eligibility data.
- Review assessment timelines.
- Evaluate service effectiveness.
- Identify needed professional development.
- Revise procedures based on changes in federal or state law.

Evidence of Implementation

- SST Meetings
- Referral forms
- Assessment plans
- Parent consent forms
- Evaluation reports
- IEP meeting documentation
- Compliance timeline logs
- Annual Child Find review
- Staff training agendas and sign-in sheets
- Special education program review documentation