

# Special Education Referrals

## First Step

If you think that a child might require special education then the first step is referral. Referral is made for the purpose of gathering information about a child experiencing problems which interfere with learning.

Referral may be made by any individual with relevant information about the child. Referral may be made at any time and should be in writing. See the following sample of a referral letter on the next page.

## Next Step

Following referral, the school district must **notify the parent within seven days** and a referral conference must be held **within 21 days** from the date of referral.

Along with the information provided in the referral letter, any information which may assist in determining whether or not a child is a child with a disability should be submitted, including but not limited to:

- Results of hearing and vision screening
- Home or classroom behavior checklist
- Existing medical, social, or educational data
- Need for assistive technology devices and services
- Examples of the child's academic work
- Screening inventories.

After submission of the referral notice and other information, notice of a referral conference shall be provided to the parents and a referral conference scheduled.

## Purpose of Referral Conference

The purpose of the referral conference is to review all existing information related to the student. The referral conference must be attended by a minimum of three persons: the principal or designee, the teacher directly involved with the education of the student, and the parent.

## Who May Attend the Referral Conference?

Other persons with relevant information regarding the child may attend the referral conference, including the child. These individuals are considered the student's team. During the referral conference, the school is required to inform the parents of their rights and decide whether an evaluation of the student is required.

If the parent or other team members have acknowledged that the student may need specialized testing, this should be requested at the conference. The school district must notify the parents in writing if it intends to begin or to change the child's identification as a child with a disability, to begin an evaluation, or to begin to change the child's placement. The district must notify the parents of any changes in the child's program. If the district refuses to do any of these things, it must also notify the parents. The notice must fully explain the parent's rights of what the district is doing or refusing to do with an explanation of why and a description of any other options considered and the reasons they were rejected.

## Referral Conference Decision

If the referral conference decision is to evaluate, it may be necessary to initiate a temporary placement for the student if agreed upon by the parent and the school district.

To initiate the entire process, a letter should be sent to the principal requesting referral of the child for special education testing. A request should be made for a conference and supporting medical and other records may be attached. In any case, all records should be brought to the conference. If the child is age 0 – 2 the letter should be addressed to the appropriate Early Intervention Case Service Coordinator listed in Appendix III. If the child is age 3 – 4 the letter should be addressed to the relevant Education Cooperative.

*See a referral letter sample on the next page.*

# Referral Letter Sample

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Date  
Principal's Name  
School Name  
School Address  
City, State, Zip

Dear (PRINCIPAL'S NAME):

I would like to refer my child, (CHILD'S NAME), for special education testing. I have some concerns that I would like to discuss with you at a referral conference. Please notify me as to when this conference can be scheduled.

Thank you. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

(SIGN YOUR NAME)

cc: Special Education Supervisor (You may have to call your school office and ask the name and address of this person or contact the Disability Rights Center of Arkansas for the information.)

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**The contents of this fact sheet were created by Disability Rights Center of Arkansas (DRC) and are excerpted from the booklet titled, A PARENT'S GUIDE CIVIL RIGHTS/EDUCATION. The purpose of the booklet is to assist you as a parent or professional in understanding the educational process for students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and related statutes, and in understanding rights within the process.**

Disability Rights Center of Arkansas is the state designated federally funded non-profit organization to implement several protection and advocacy programs in Arkansas. If you suspect your child has a disability, we can help you protect your statutory rights and attempt to secure appropriate services.

As a Protection and Advocacy System (P&A), DRC is a private, nonprofit organization that advocates for the rights of eligible clients through education, negotiation and litigation. Services include information and referral, individual cases and system advocacy, monitoring, investigations of abuse or neglect, outreach and education, legislative tracking and litigation. Visit <http://www.arkdisabilityrights.org> for more information.

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*The information and statements of law in this fact sheet should not be considered legal advice. This fact sheet is provided as a broad guide to help you understand how certain legal matters are handled in general. Courts may interpret the law differently. Before you take action, talk to an attorney and follow his or her advice. Always do what the court tells you to do.*