Access
EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY

GUIDE

A CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

When the school wants to evaluate

You got a call or a letter from the school. They've noticed something, and now they're recommending an evaluation. Your first reaction might be worry. Does this mean something is really wrong? Are they going to label my child? Take a breath. The evaluation process is not something to be afraid of.

What an evaluation is

A formal assessment to understand how your child learns, where they're struggling, and whether they might qualify for special education. It's not a single test. It can include testing, classroom observations, and input from teachers and from you.

What it is not

A diagnosis. A school evaluation decides eligibility under federal categories. It does not diagnose ADHD, dyslexia, autism or anything else, and it doesn't override what a medical provider tells you.

You have to say yes first

The school cannot evaluate your child without your written consent. First they'll send you a Prior Written Notice (PWN) and a consent form explaining what they want to evaluate and why. You can:

- agree and sign the consent form;
- ask questions before you sign anything;
- decline the evaluation if you choose to;
- revoke your consent at any time if you change your mind.

What happens after you say yes

1. **The clock starts.** The school generally has 60 calendar days to complete the evaluation, though timelines can vary by state.
2. **The team gathers information.** They test, observe, review records and talk to teachers. They should ask for your input too, and it matters.
3. **You get the written report.** You're entitled to it at least three school days before the eligibility meeting. You can always ask for it earlier.
4. **The team decides eligibility.** An evaluation doesn't automatically mean special education. Eligibility is a separate decision, made at a meeting by a team that includes you.

Before you sign the consent form

- [ ] **Don't sign on the spot.** You can take time to review.
- [ ] **Ask what areas they want to evaluate, and why.**
- [ ] **Ask for the reports** to be sent to you as early as possible once they're done.
- [ ] **Write down what you notice at home** that might be relevant (lines below).
- [ ] **Decide if you want to bring someone** to the meetings. You have that right.

Questions to ask the school

- What have you noticed, and what areas do you want to evaluate?
- How will you get my input during the evaluation?
- Can you send me the evaluation reports as early as possible?

Your rights at a glance

- You must give written consent before any evaluation takes place.
- The school must complete the evaluation within the required timeline.
- You are entitled to receive all evaluation reports before the eligibility meeting.
- You can request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) at public expense if you disagree with the school's findings.
- You have the right to bring someone with you to any meeting.

> **Special education is not a place. It's a plan you help create.** It's a set of services and supports to help your child access their education, and you have the right to change it.

WHAT I NOTICE AT HOME

> **Want help with this?** Book a free 15-minute call at myaccessadvocacy.com.

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