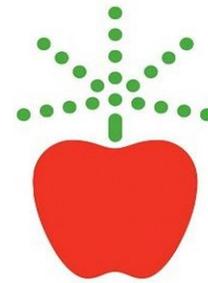




*PA Distance Learning Charter School*  
*2100 Corporate Drive, Suite 500*  
*Wexford, PA 15090*  
*Phone: 888-997-3352*



PA Distance  
Learning  
CHARTER SCHOOL

# Special Education Services

Serving Children  
Supporting Families  
Encouraging Success

**If you have this brochure in your hand, then  
you are most likely asking:**

- 1. Does PA Distance Learning Charter School  
have special education services?**
- 2. What is special education?**

**Yes! PA Distance Learning Charter School has  
a special education department with teachers,  
director, and a special education assistant who  
work with families, teachers, and administra-  
tors to serve children with special needs. PA  
Distance Learning works to serve children of  
all needs given both federal and state regula-  
tions. This booklet will help you understand  
all topics related to  
special education.**

**For more information, contact the Special Edu-  
cation Department of PA Distance Learning -  
888.997.3352 press 7**

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## QUALIFYING FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES

Under the Federal IDEA 2004, there are two steps for a student to qualify for Special Education and related services. The **first step** is a finding that the student has one or more of the following disabilities that interfere with his or her educational performance: (1) **autism** (2) deaf-blindness, (3) deafness, (4) emotional disturbance, (5) hearing impairment, (6) intellectually disabled, (7) multiple disabilities, (8) orthopedic impairment, (9) other health impairment (includes ADD, ADHD, epilepsy, etc.), (10) specific learning disability, (11) speech or language impairment, (12) traumatic brain injury, and/or (13) visual impairment including blindness. (IDEA 2004 provides legal definitions of the above-listed disabilities, which may differ from those terms used in medical or clinical practice or daily language.) The **second step** in determining eligibility for Special Education and related services is a finding by the school's multi-disciplinary team (MDT) that the student with one or more of these disabilities is in need of specially-designed instruction.

### WHAT PARENTS CAN DO IF THEY THINK THEIR CHILD MAY QUALIFY FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

Some potential signs of a student having a qualifying disability include experiencing years of difficulties in reading, writing or solving math problems, difficulties focusing and concentrating on schoolwork, difficulties sitting still in the classroom, and difficulties controlling emotions (such as anxiety and depression) and behaviors. If parents believe that their child has had difficulties in school over the years and may have one or more of these conditions, they should contact the school's Special Education Director.

### Resources

#### Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania

1414 N. Cameron Street

Second Floor

Harrisburg, PA 17103-1049

800.692.7443 (voice)

877.375.7139 (TDD)

[www.drnpa.org](http://www.drnpa.org)

#### Bureau of Special Education's Consultline

800.879.2301

Consultline personnel are available to parents and advocates of children with disabilities or children thought to be disabled to explain federal and state laws relating to special education; describe the options that are available to parents; inform the parents of procedural safeguards; identify other agencies and support services; and describe available remedies and how the parents can proceed.

from those applicable to eligible or thought-to-be eligible students. The Charter School or the parent may initiate an evaluation if they believe a student is a protected handicapped student. For further information on the evaluation procedures and provision of services to protected handicapped students, parents should contact the school's Director of Special Education.

Parents who think their child is eligible for special education may request, at any time, that the school conduct a Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation. Requests for a Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation must be made in writing to the school's Special Education Director. If a parent makes an oral request for a Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation, the school shall provide the parent with a form for that purpose. If the school denies the parents' request for an evaluation, the parents have the right to challenge the denial through an impartial hearing or through voluntary alternative dispute resolution such as mediation.

### **SYSTEMATIC SCREENING AND REFERRAL PROCESSES**

Through our systematic screening and referral processes, PA Distance Learning identifies and refers for evaluation students who are thought to be eligible for special education services. These screening and referral processes include the initial admissions academic placement tests, classroom performance, vision and hearing screenings, response to instruction and intervention (RTII) and the Student Assistance Program known as SAP. PA Distance Learning regularly assesses the current achievement and performance of the child, designs school-based interventions, and assesses the effectiveness of interventions. (The screening of a student by a teacher or specialist to determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation is not to be considered an evaluation for eligibility for special education and related services.) If a concern can be addressed without special education services, or if the concern is the result of limited English proficiency or the lack of appropriate instruction, a recommendation may be made for interventions other than a multidisciplinary team evaluation. Parents have the right to request a multidisciplinary team evaluation at any time, regardless of the outcome of the screening process. Moreover, screening or pre-referral intervention activities

may not serve as a barrier to the right of a parent to request an evaluation, at any time, including prior to or during the conduct of screening or pre-referral intervention activities. Whenever a student is referred for an evaluation, PA Distance Learning must obtain written permission from a parent before the evaluation can be conducted. A surrogate parent (See Board Policy XXX) must be appointed when no parent can be identified; a public agency, after reasonable efforts, cannot locate a parent; the child is a ward of the State under the laws of Pennsylvania, or the child in an unaccompanied homeless youth. The surrogate parent may represent the child in all matters relating to the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child. Reasonable efforts must be made to ensure the assignment of surrogate parent not more than 30 days after it is determined that the child needs a surrogate parent. If parents need additional information regarding the purpose, time, and location of screening activities, they should call or write the school's Special Education Director.

### **EVALUATION**

An evaluation involves the use of a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child, including information provided by the parent that may assist in determining whether the child is a child with a disability and the content of the child's IEP. The Charter School does not use any single measure or assessment as a sole criterion for determining whether a child is a child with a disability and for determining an appropriate educational program for the child. Technically sound instruments are used to assess the relative contribution of cognitive and behavioral factors in addition to physical or developmental factors. Parental consent must be obtained by the Charter School prior to conducting an initial evaluation to determine if the child qualifies as a child with a disability, and before providing special educa-

which is the age of majority for education purposes under Pennsylvania law, the IEP must include a statement that The student has been informed of the student's rights, if any, that will transfer to the student on reaching the age of 21.

### **SECTION 504 PLANS**

Services for Protected Handicapped Students, Other Than Special Education Services Under Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, some school age children with disabilities who do not meet the eligibility criteria outlined above might nevertheless be eligible for special protections and for adaptations and accommodations in instruction, facilities, and activities. Children are entitled to such protections, adaptations, and accommodations if they have a mental or physical disability that substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program and otherwise qualify under the applicable laws. The Charter School must ensure that qualified handicapped students have equal opportunity to participate in the school program and activities to the maximum extent appropriate for each individual student. In compliance with applicable state and federal laws, the Charter School provides to each qualifying protected handicapped student without discrimination or cost to the student or family, those related aids, services or accommodations which are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extracurricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's abilities and to the extent required by the laws. These services and protections for "protected handicapped students" may be distinct

in that environment; (2) regular class placement for most of the school day with itinerant service by a special education teacher either in or out of the regular classroom; (3) regular class placement for most of the school day with instruction provided by a special education teacher in a resource classroom; (4) part-time special education class placement in a regular public school or alternative setting; and (5) special education class placement or special education services provided outside the regular class for most or all of the school day, either in a regular public school or alternative setting, such as an approved private school or other private facility licensed to serve children with disabilities.

### **EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR**

ESY is programming beyond the required 180 days of school. Some students may also be eligible for extended school year services if determined needed by their IEP teams in accordance with Chapter 711 regulations contained in Title 22 of the PA Code.

### **TRANSITION PLANS**

Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 14, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team, and updated annually, thereafter, the IEP must include appropriate measurable postsecondary goals and transition services needed to assist in reaching those goals. The Charter School must invite the child to the IEP team meeting at which the transition plan is developed. Beginning not later than one year before the child reaches the age of 21, which is the age of majority for education purposes under Pennsylvania law, the IEP must include a statement reaches the age of 21,

services to the child. Parental consent for an evaluation shall not be construed as consent for their child to receive special education and related services. The screening of a child by a teacher or specialist to determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation is not considered to be an evaluation for eligibility for special education and related services; therefore, parental consent is not required in this instance. The Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation (MDE) process is conducted by a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) which includes a teacher, other qualified professionals who work with the child, the parents and other members as required by law. The MDE process must be conducted in accordance with specific timelines and must include protection-in-evaluation procedures. For example, tests and procedures used as part of the Multi-Disciplinary Evaluation may not be racially or culturally biased. The MDE process results in a written report called an Evaluation Report (ER). This report makes recommendations about a student's eligibility for special education based on the presence of a disability and the need for specially designed instruction.

### **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

The IEP Team (which includes the parent) determines the type and intensity of special education and related services that a particular child needs based exclusively on the unique program of special education and related services that the school develops for that child. This program is called an Individualized Education Plan—the IEP—and is different for

each student. An IEP Team consisting of educators, parents, and other persons with special expertise or familiarity with the child. The participants in the IEP Team are dictated by IDEA 2004. The parents of the child have the right to be notified of and to be offered participation in all meetings of their child's IEP Team. The IEP is revised as often as circumstances warrant but reviewed at least annually. The law requires that the program and placement of the child, as described in the IEP, be reasonably calculated to ensure meaningful educational benefit to the student. In accordance with IDEA 2004, there may be situations in which the school may hold an IEP team meeting if the parents refuse or fail to attend the IEP team meeting.

### **THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN (IEP)**

IEPs generally contain: (1) a statement of present levels of academic achievement and functional performance; (2) a statement of measurable annual goals established for the child; (3) a statement of how the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals will be measured and when periodic reports will be provided; (4) a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided, if any; (5) an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with non-disabled children in the regular class and in activities; (6) a statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child on State and school assessments; and (7) the projected date for the beginning of the services and modifications and the anticipated frequency, location and duration of those services or modifications.

### **TYPES OF SERVICES AVAILABLE**

Special education services are provided according to the educational needs of the child, not the category of disability. Types of service that may be available, depending upon the child's disability and needs include, but are not limited to: (1) learning support; (2) life skills support; (3) emotional support; (4) deaf or hearing impaired support; (5) blind or visually impaired support; (6) physical support; (7) autistic support; and (8) multiple disabilities support

### **RELATED SERVICES**

Related services are designed to enable the child to participate in or access his or her program of special education. Examples of related services that a child may require include but are not limited to: speech and language therapy, transportation, occupational therapy, physical therapy, school nursing services, audiologist services, counseling, or training.

### **LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT**

PA Distance Learning ensures that children with disabilities are educated to the maximum extent possible in the regular education environment or "least restrictive environment". To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are educated with students who are not disabled. Special classes, separate schooling or other removal of students with disabilities from the general educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general education classes, even with the use of supplementary aids and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily. Programs and services available to students with disabilities, might include: (1) regular class placement with supplementary aides and services provided as needed