

Child Find Policy and Annual Public Notice

Child Find

It is the policy of YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School, in accordance with the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) and Chapter 711 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code, that all students with disabilities who are enrolled in the School, regardless of the severity of their disability, and who are in need of Special Education and related services, are identified, located, and evaluated. This responsibility specifically includes consideration of (1) children who are suspected of being eligible for (and in need of) Special Education services, even though they have been advancing from grade to grade, and (2) highly mobile students, including migrant students.

Annual Public Notice of Special Education Services and Programs for Students with Disabilities

YouthBuild Philadelphia publishes notices to the general community sufficient to inform those applying for enrollment in the School and their parents, as well as to those students already enrolled in the School and their parents, of (1) available Special Education services and programs, (2) how to request those services and programs, and of (3) systematic screening activities that lead to the identification, location and evaluation of children with disabilities enrolled in School. YouthBuild Philadelphia has adopted a public outreach awareness system whereby it publishes such notice—

- on the School's website, www.YouthBuildPhilly.org
- in a newspaper of general circulation, such as the Philadelphia *Daily News*, annually, and
- in recruitment flyers placed in both public places in the community, such as retail stores and community centers, and homeless shelters where highly-mobile and migrant adolescents live, such as Lutheran Settlement House and Covenant House.

In addition to these public outreach efforts, YouthBuild Philadelphia notifies enrolled students and their parents of the available services and programs and how to request them through the School's Student Handbook, as well as through live presentations and printed materials available at scheduled Community/Parents' Nights at the School.

Qualifying for Special Education and Related Services

Under the Federal IDEA Law, 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 or pervasive developmental disorder, (2) deaf-blindness, (3) deafness, (4) emotional disturbance, (5) hearing impairment, (6) mental retardation, (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 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 a student's Evaluation Team 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 Coordinator. Parents who think their child is eligible for Special Education may request, at any time, that the School conduct an Initial Evaluation. Requests for an Initial Evaluation must be made in writing to the School's Special Education Coordinator. If a parent makes an oral request for an Initial Evaluation, the School will provide the parent with a form for that purpose. If the School denies the parents' request for an Initial Evaluation, the parents have the right to challenge the denial through an impartial hearing or through voluntary alternative dispute resolution, such as mediation.

YouthBuild Philadelphia's Systematic Screening and Referral Processes

Through our systematic screening and referral processes, YouthBuild Philadelphia identifies and refers for evaluation those students who are thought to be eligible for Special Education services. These screening and referral processes include: the initial admissions academic placement tests (The Test of Adult Basic Education, or TABE), other screening activities in reading and mathematics, classroom performance, and the student assistance program, known as SAP. The School also regularly assesses the current achievement and performance of the child, designs school-based interventions, and assesses the effectiveness of interventions. (The screening assessment 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 parents need additional information regarding the purpose, time, and location of screening activities, they should call or write the School's Special Education Coordinator.

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 an initial evaluation. Parents have the right to request an initial evaluation at any time, regardless of the outcome of the screening process. Moreover, screening or pre-referral intervention activities may not serve as a bar 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.

A surrogate parent must be appointed when (1) no parent can be identified; (2) the School, after reasonable efforts, cannot locate a parent; (3) the child is a ward of the State under the laws of Pennsylvania, or (4) the child is 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.

Evaluation

Whenever a student is referred for an evaluation, YouthBuild Philadelphia must obtain written permission from a parent before the evaluation can be conducted. 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. YouthBuild Philadelphia 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 YouthBuild Philadelphia both (1) prior to conducting an initial evaluation to determine if the child qualifies as “a child with a disability,” and (2) if the child qualifies, before providing special education and related services to the child. Parental consent for an evaluation is not to 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 evaluation process is conducted by an Evaluation Team, which includes a teacher, other qualified professionals who work with the child, the parents and other members as required by law. The evaluation 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 evaluation process may not be racially or culturally biased.

The evaluation process results in a written report called an Initial 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. If the student's Evaluation Team determines that the student is eligible for special education and related services, then the student's IEP Team and writes a detailed plan for supporting the student in his/her area(s) of need over the coming year so that he/she can be successful in school—and then later in life.

Programs and Services for Children with Disabilities

YouthBuild Philadelphia, in conjunction with the parents, 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. 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.

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 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.

YouthBuild Philadelphia 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 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. Some students may also be eligible for extended-school-year (ESY) services if it is determined that they are needed by their IEP teams.

For students at YouthBuild Philadelphia, the IEP must include appropriate measurable postsecondary goals and transition services needed to assist in reaching those goals. The School must invite the student to the IEP team meeting at which the transition plan is developed. Beginning not later than one year before the student reaches the age of 21, 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.

Parent Access to Classrooms

Parents have reasonable access to their student's classrooms.

Confidentiality of Student Information

Every effort is made throughout the screening, referral and evaluation process to strictly maintain the confidentiality of student information and protect the student's privacy rights, in accordance with the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy (FERPA) Law.