



## START OF SCHOOL (Fall 2010) Questions and Answers for Families of Students with Disabilities in New York City

My child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), and I am not sure where she's supposed to go in September. Who should I talk to so we know where to go on the first day of school?

### IF YOUR CHILD DOES NOT HAVE A SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT AND...

### CONTACT/GO TO...

Is in elementary or middle school (grades K-8) and needs related services only or Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS).

Go to your zoned school, if you have one, as soon as they open the doors for pre-registration (usually during the week before the first day of school). If you have no zoned school, you will need to visit one of the Temporary Student Registration Centers, which open on September 1, 2010 and will remain open until September 24, 2010.

Is in elementary or middle school (grades K-8) and needs Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) services or a self-contained classroom (special class ratios 12:1, 12:1:1, 8:1:1, 6:1:1, and 12:1:4), and you still haven't been sent a letter with a school placement (a Final Notice of Recommendation (FNR)) or you received a FNR that was inappropriate to meet your child's needs and therefore rejected the offer.

If your child has no school to attend at the start of the school year, visit the special education enrollment site for your home district. They will identify a placement and give you an FNR. Remember that even after you receive a FNR, you have the right to visit the recommended program before accepting that offer.

Is in high school (grades 9-12).

Go to one of the Department of Education's (DOE's) Temporary Student Registration Centers. Take a copy of your IEP with you when you visit the center, and they should identify a school assignment.

Was not in a New York City public school last year and has a current IEP from somewhere other than NYC.

Visit the Committee on Special Education (CSE) for your home district to get a comparable special education plan. The CSE will also work with you to find an appropriate school placement for your child.

### **What if my child shows up for the first day of school and is told that the school no longer has a seat?**

Try to work with your school first because you still have a right to remain at that school and receive services. If the school resists, visit your special education enrollment site in your district for K-8, or go to the Student Registration Center in your borough for 9-12. You can also call (718) 935-2224 for help.

### **WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING TO A NEW SCHOOL TO ENROLL YOUR CHILD:**

Bring your child, proof of immunization, and proof of NYC residence. If you are enrolling in the New York City school system for the first time, you will need proof of age. For the list of documents that the school will accept, call (718) 935-2224 or visit [www.nyc.gov/schools/enrollment](http://www.nyc.gov/schools/enrollment). Even without proof of immunization or age, your child should still be enrolled while the school helps get these documents. If your child has been enrolled in another school, bring any records you have to make sure she gets placed in the right grade. If you don't have those records, she can still enroll, and the new school will be responsible for getting them. You do NOT need to bring proof of immigration status.

**To find addresses for the DOE's Special Education Enrollment Sites, and the Temporary Student Enrollment Centers:**

Go to <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/NewStudents/default.htm> or call 311

**For additional questions about enrollment:**

Visit <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/NewStudents/Peak+Enrollment.htm>

**For information about the Committees on Special Education:**

Go to <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/ISC/SpecialEducationServices/CSE/default.htm> or call 311

## **About Advocates for Children of New York (AFC)**

*For almost forty years, Advocates for Children of New York has worked to promote access to the best education New York can provide for all students, especially students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. The organization uses uniquely integrated strategies to advance systemic reform, empower families and communities, and advocate for the educational rights of individual students.*

### **Our IEP says that my child is supposed to get porter service or a mini bus, but we have not heard anything yet about pick up arrangements. What should I do to make sure someone is there to pick him up on the first day of school?**

If your child needs porter service or a mini bus to get to school, your IEP should say that. Some students who need someone to pick them up at their home may require more modifications – such as special equipment, air conditioning, or a shorter ride. If your child needs these things, but they are not identified on his or her IEP, you will need to request an IEP meeting right away to change the IEP. When you go to the new meeting, bring copies of your evaluations and a specific doctor's note explaining the need for the additional services. If your IEP says your child should get any transportation services, you should receive a notice in the mail with specific information about pick up and drop off times. If you haven't received this notice before school begins, call the Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) ((718) 784-3313). Give them your child's identification number and ask about your child's bus. If they don't have a request for transportation for your child, reach out to your school. If you moved over the summer, notify your school right away so they can call OPT with the changes.

### **My child uses a wheelchair, and I am worried that his new classroom isn't going to be accessible. Who should I call to find out? What should I do if it is not?**

Call the school's principal or Parent Coordinator and ask. You can also look online for a list of accessible sites at <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/2BCCCF14-9EAE-4506-BD3E-42E9789BCE99/59829/ListofAccessibleSchools2009updated4097.pdf>. If you still have concerns, call (718) 935-2224. If the school is not accessible for your child, visit a Special Education Enrollment site.

### **What is the special education reform I've heard about in NYC and how will it affect me and my child?**

Last February, the DOE announced plans for reform in special education. This fall, 265 of NYC's public schools will be included in Phase 1 of this reform. Families with students who have IEPs in one of the Phase 1 schools should expect to see some change this fall. It is important to know that under the reform all students with IEPs continue to be entitled to receive the services on their IEPs, and they should begin receiving those services as soon as school starts. As the year goes on families in those Phase 1 schools should see their children's IEPs reviewed to make certain that each student is educated in the most appropriate environment. At that review, IEP teams, which include parents, may decide to modify the supports and services an individual student receives, but until that review, there should be no IEP or program changes. To find out if you're in a Phase 1 school, you can call 311.

### **What if my child arrives at school and finds that the school doesn't have the type of program called for on the IEP?**

Try to work with your school. They should work with you and Student Enrollment to determine the best way to meet your child's needs. If that doesn't work, visit your special education enrollment site, reach out to your district's Superintendent or District Family Advocate, call 311 and ask for the DOE's Special Education Call Center, or reach out to the Division of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners. If none of that helps, call the AFC Helpline at (866) 427-6033.

### **My child has been accepted at a charter school. When we showed up to register there and they found out she has an IEP, they either said we could stay if we agreed to go without our special education services or turned us away altogether. What should I do?**

Call (718) 935-2224 or go to the CSE in your district.

### **According to my child's IEP, she is supposed to receive assistive technology or related services (OT, PT, Counseling, etc.) Who would I contact to make certain that these support services can be provided to my child?**

Your child has a right to receive all the services on your child's IEP, and all schools should be able to provide these services. You should check with the school during the first few weeks to make sure the school is providing your child these services. If your child is not getting the services she is supposed to get, work with your school to resolve the problem. Start with your child's teacher and move to the parent coordinator, and if necessary, the school's principal. Next, try your District Family Advocate, who can be found by calling 311. If you are still having trouble resolving the matter, call 311 and ask to speak with the DOE's Special Education Call Center. If the school cannot provide a service, the school must give you a Related Services Authorization (RSA). The RSA allows you to get the service for your child through an approved provider outside of school.

### **When I tried to get my kindergarten child the help he needs, the school told me that kindergarten is not mandatory. Can the school refuse to help me on this basis?**

No! Although you do not *have* to send your child to kindergarten, you have the *right* to send your child to kindergarten. If you want your child to attend school during kindergarten, the DOE must provide an appropriate, full-day kindergarten class and all the services on your child's IEP. If you elect not to enroll your child in the public school kindergarten and your child has an IEP, the CSE will work with you to arrange appropriate special education services.

### **IF YOU TRY EVERYTHING SUGGESTED HERE, BUT YOUR CHILD IS STILL NOT IN SCHOOL OR RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES:**

Call the **Advocates for Children Helpline** at (866) 427-6033

Or go to the **ARISE Coalition's Resource Page** at [www.arisecoalition.org](http://www.arisecoalition.org) to find other organizations that provide assistance to parents in school-related matters.

*Please be aware that this guide does not replace legal advice!*