

# Exceptional Children Parent Partner Carteret County Schools

## Our vision and commitment to you

To ensure every student is provided  
with an individualized set of  
supports and services to graduate  
and become successful adults  
engaged in the community.



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# Welcome!

This Handbook is designed to supplement the Carteret County Schools' Parent Handbook and to serve as a guide to special education services for families/guardians of children with disabilities, grades K-12. Whether you are new to the district, new to special education, or just interested in our services, we hope this resource will be useful. It is designed to give an overview of special education in our district and to direct you to other resources for additional information. If you are looking for additional information, please refer to our EC website. An electronic copy of this document can also be found on our website.

## **Are you new to special education or Carteret County?**

We encourage you to look at our Exceptional Children's Website on the Carteret County webpage. No two special education students are alike so we realize how overwhelming it can be. We are here to help you navigate through things so the best possible services can be provided for your child. Special Education is very individualized and can have many facets. The goal for Carteret County Schools is to provide each student with a Free Appropriate Public Education. Our students are served in a variety of settings from separate to inclusive (co taught). The majority of our students are served in the inclusive/co-taught setting.

## **Are you new to our district?**

If your child has a disability and an IEP (Individualized Education Plan), please follow these steps:

Register your child at your home school. Indicate to the staff in the office that your child has an IEP and is receiving services. Provide a copy of your child's current IEP to the school. The Principal or the Lead EC Teacher at that school will look at the IEP and meet with the school psychologist to determine how your child's needs can best be met

If your child has significant needs that cannot be addressed in their school assignment we have cluster classrooms in various schools. Cluster classrooms are not available in every school. If your child is to attend one of these classrooms, transportation will be provided by our school system. Once your child is in that school they are actively involved and a member in that school. We encourage you as a family to be involved in Open Houses, PTO and other school activities at that school.

## Exceptional Children (EC) Staff

Each school has its own administrators, teachers, teacher assistants, clerical staff and support staff. Special education includes an array of individuals including teachers, therapists, teacher assistants and others. The overall coordination of EC (Exceptional Children) services within the school is done by the EC Team Leader. The EC Case manager/EC Teacher for each child arranges and facilitates meetings, ensures compliance with the law and works closely with the EC team at the school. The EC teacher (or EC resource teacher) provides direct instruction to students. This person usually serves as the EC student's case manager and is the best contact for parents regarding their child's special education. The school psychologist conducts evaluations and provides consultation and interventions. The speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist and physical therapist provide services to eligible students. Other individuals may also be involved with students with disabilities: the English as Second Language teacher, the Gifted Education Specialist, school counselor, school social worker and more. For a list of EC Lead teachers by school, please refer to the District's Exceptional Children website. Carteret County School System also has Regional Coordinators at the district level. These individuals are assigned to specific schools and are available across the district as needs arise. Specialists and Coordinators are available in the areas of autism, behavior, assistive technology, adapted physical education, vision impairment, hearing impairment and orientation and mobility. These specialists provide consultation and support to school staff in addition to working with individual students on a short-term basis. For a current list of these individuals, please refer to the District's Exceptional Children website.

## Basics of Special Education

The EC Process for special education is a vast, complicated and jargon-filled subject. Federal law and state policies mandate both process and content. All decisions are made by the IEP team, a school-based group of people that always includes the parent/guardian. To be considered a student with a disability, a sequence of steps must occur.

1. Referral
2. Evaluation
3. Determination of eligibility
4. Development of Individualized Education Program (IEP)
5. Placement

## The EC Process

The entire process from the referral to placement must be completed within 90 calendar days. Informed written consent from the parent/guardian is required for the student to be evaluated, and again before the student begins to receive special education and related services. The process is reflected in a series of meetings to which parents are invited: the referral meeting, eligibility determination meeting, IEP meeting. You will be notified in advance of these meetings by the EC teacher at your child's school. The Exceptional Children Division of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction/ Exceptional Children Division has developed forms that guide this process.

Visit [ec.ncpublicschools.gov/policies/forms](http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/policies/forms) to view and download the forms.

## The IEP Team

All decisions about the child are made by a school-based team: the IEP team. The composition of this team varies, but certain individuals must always participate:

- parent/guardian/surrogate parent of the child
- representative of the Local Educational Agency (LEA rep)
- general education teacher of the child
- special education teacher of the child
- someone who can interpret (school psychologist) the instructional implications of evaluation results. Others are involved as appropriate:
- the child, when appropriate
- related services providers (e.g. speech language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist)
- English as Second Language (ESL) teacher
- gifted education specialist
- other individuals invited by the parent and/or school staff (e.g. school counselor, behavior specialist, physician, mental health provider, representative from Vocational Rehabilitation Services, etc.)

In North Carolina, there are 14 categories of eligibility. A student may be eligible in one or more categories. Each category has its own requisite evaluations. Eligibility for special education is determined by the school-based IEP team and is based on data.

## Categories of Eligibility

- Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder (AU or ASD) - developmental disability that affects communication and social interaction
- Serious Emotional Disability (SED or ED) - an emotional disorder that can involve the inability to maintain satisfactory relationships with peers and teachers, inappropriate behavior or depression
- Developmental Delay (DD) - delayed or atypical behavior or development (age 3-7 only)
- Hearing Impairment or Deafness (HI) - an impairment in hearing either permanent or fluctuating
- Intellectual Disability (ID - mild, moderate, severe) - significantly sub average general intellectual functioning concurrent with deficits in adaptive behavior
- Multiple Disabilities (MU) - two or more disabilities occurring together
- Orthopedic Impairment (OI) - a severe physical impairment
- Other Health Impairment (OHI) - having limited strength, vitality or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems
- Specific Learning Disability (SLD or LD) - a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes affecting reading, reading fluency, math, written expression, oral expression or listening comprehension

- Speech or Language Impairment (SI) - a communication disorder
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) - acquired injury to the brain caused by an external force, resulting in partial or total functional disability or psychosocial impairment
- Visual Impairment (including blindness) (VI) - can include partial sight or blindness
- Deaf-blindness (DB) - hearing and visual impairments that occur together
- Deafness (DF) - severe hearing impairment when a student is eligible for special education, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed by the IEP Team.

### **Twice Exceptional**

A student can be considered “2E” when there is evidence of both a disability and giftedness. Whereas eligibility for special education is determined by the IEP team, giftedness is identified through a different process. For students who are gifted and who also have a disability, careful planning is needed to ensure that their needs are met. Participation of the Gifted Education Specialist on the IEP team is essential.

### **What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?**

The IEP is individualized. It is written for one specific student. No two IEPs are alike. The IEP describes the unique needs of the student due to the disability, the services and supports that the student needs, and how the school district is going to address those needs.

The IEP is important for two reasons:

1. It is a document. The IEP describes the goals that the child will be working on and can reasonably accomplish within one year. Goals are designed to help the child progress in the general education curriculum. The IEP also states what aids and services are necessary for the child to participate in typical school activities. The school district must provide the services listed on the IEP. It does not have to provide services that are not listed.
2. It is a process. Development of the IEP is an opportunity for the parent and school staff to meet, discuss the child’s needs, and work together to create a program for the child. The IEP is a comprehensive document developed by the IEP team (including the parent). Many topics are discussed: strengths of the student; parent’s and student’s vision for the future; present level of academic and functional performance; goals; accommodations in the classroom; state assessments; and more.

### **Continuum of Services**

An important concept is the continuum of services. For each child with an IEP, the IEP team must determine not only what the specialized instruction will entail, but where it will be done and with whom (e.g. with other students with disabilities or with typical peers? in the general education classroom or somewhere else?). Based on several factors, the continuum is determined to be Regular, Resource, Separate, Homebound and so on. Carteret County Schools (CCS) is required to provide services in the least restrictive environment possible. CCS provides a full continuum of services to address the needs of our students.

## **Curriculum**

The curriculum followed by all students in public schools in North Carolina is the Standard Course of Study. Competencies at each grade level are determined by the Department of Public Instruction ([www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum)). The Extended Content Standards are an adaptation of the Standard Course of Study intended for students with significant cognitive disabilities ([www.ncpublicschools.org/acre/standards/extended](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/acre/standards/extended)).

## **IEP Timelines**

There are certain timelines that must be followed when developing an IEP for a student. An IEP must be written within 30 days after the child is first found by the IEP Team to be eligible for special education. An IEP is required for each child receiving special education. It is usually written for the duration of one calendar year. A new IEP must be developed before the expiration of the “old” IEP. The IEP can be reviewed more than once a year at the request of parent or school staff.

Since the IEP is designed to be a working document that establishes goals and objectives for each child, there is a periodic review of the progress made by the child. If the child’s needs change during the year or if the child has completed the goals and objectives, the IEP can be revised to reflect those changes.

Since the IEP is a fluid document, a parent or teacher can make suggestions for changes at any time during the school year.

## **Notification of the IEP Meeting**

The EC Teacher will send an invitation to the parent well in advance of the IEP meeting and try to schedule it at a time convenient for the parent. This invitation is in writing. If the time is inconvenient, another time or date can be arranged. The written notice of the meeting includes the purpose of the meeting, time, location and participants. At this time a draft copy of the IEP goal(s) will be sent so the parent has time to look over the goals ahead of time and provide input at the meeting.

If the parent cannot attend, the school must offer other methods to ensure participation of the parent such as video conferencing or conference calls. If the parent cannot attend or participate, the school may hold the meeting without the parent. The school will notify the parent in writing of any decisions that were made and provide a copy of all documents completed at the meeting.

## **What to Expect in an IEP Team Meeting**

The IEP Team will convene with all invited participants. It will be facilitated by the EC Teacher who will describe the purpose of the meeting, make introductions, review the Parent Procedural Safeguard Handbook of Rights and ensure that the meeting stays focused. An agenda will be followed for the meeting. Someone will take notes/next steps of the discussion. The group discussion will follow the sequence of the contents of the IEP and agenda. Data and perspectives are shared to provide a comprehensive picture of the child’s strengths and needs. Annual goals will be developed with short term objectives or benchmarks that define the steps to meet those goals. The specifics of the child’s special education program will be defined. When the IEP is completed, the meeting is over. The parent will receive a copy of the IEP and the Prior Written Notice.

The goal of the IEP team is to develop an IEP for the child that everyone can accept. If there is disagreement within the IEP team, further discussion and additional information may be needed.

Occasionally, no consensus is possible. In that situation, the LEA Representative states what the school district is going to provide for the student. Documentation of the disagreement is made, and the parents are reminded of their rights, as outlined in Procedural Safeguards: Handbook on Parents' Rights (<http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/parent-resources/parents-rights-handbook>).

## Reevaluation

At least every three years, the student must be reevaluated to determine if he or she continues to be eligible for special education. The IEP Team (including the parent, of course) conducts the reevaluation. The reevaluation may or may not include formal testing. If testing is recommended by the IEP team, the parent must give written consent for the evaluation to occur.

## Transitions

Every child has many transitions during a school career: a different school, a new teacher, the next grade. Transitions provide exciting opportunities for growth.

Carteret County Schools has many activities in place for all students and parents to help ease the stress of anticipated transitions. For example, groups of students moving from elementary to middle, or middle to high school, have discussions with staff at the next level and visit the campus. Open Houses allow parents to become familiar with new staff and buildings.

For students with disabilities, additional tools and activities have been developed to assist with transitions.

- PreK to Kindergarten: a transition meeting occurs between the preschool team and the receiving elementary school. The PreK to K Parent Handbook has additional information about this process.
- Elementary to Middle School: At the end of fifth grade, students with IEPs and their parents participate in meetings with middle school staff.
- Middle to High School: Students are included in high school orientation activities near the end of eighth grade.
- High School to the Adult World: students with disabilities may be included in the development of their IEPs from an early age, but their participation is required at age 14. Employment, education/training and adult living goals are formulated, and the graduation pathway is determined. As the student becomes older, more comprehensive transition components are developed and representatives from community agencies may be included (with prior permission from parent). Collaboration helps the student and the parents prepare for the significant transition from high school into the adult world.



## Key Roles with Exceptional Children

**Autism Specialist** | Supports students with autism in the general education setting by providing training on best practices; assists with the development of structured support systems and strategies for organizational and academic needs; provides social skills instruction; consults with school staff.

**Behavior Specialist** | Provides training and support to school staff in conducting functional behavior assessments and developing behavior intervention plans; provides social skills training; provides direct classroom support on short term basis.

**Case Manager** | Develops IEP goals and objectives; monitors progress; provides direct instruction to student; advocates for student; ensures implementation of accommodations and modifications; serves as “go to” person for student and parent.

**Regional Coordinator** | Coordinates the special education services within a school; Facilitates EC PLC meetings; may attend IEP meetings; ensures compliance with legal requirements.

**Occupational Therapist** | Provides screening, evaluation and intervention services for students in the areas of personal care, management of personal belongings, school and vocational needs, and play/leisure activities.

**Physical Therapist** | Provides screening, evaluation and intervention services for students with physical disabilities; modifies the school environment and functional tasks; provides direct services to eligible students. School Psychologist Conducts evaluations; consults with school staff and parents; designs interventions for individual students; provides counseling services.

**Speech-Language Pathologist** | Provides direct services to eligible students in articulation, voice, fluency, listening comprehension and oral expression; provides assistance with augmentative and alternative communication.

**Regional Coordinator/Support Specialist** | Provides consultation and support to staff and students in cluster level classrooms.

**Teacher Assistant** | Under the supervision of the EC teacher, provides support to individuals or groups of students in EC and general education classrooms.

**Transition Specialist** | Identifies and develops school-community partnerships; supports students’ post-secondary goals related to training, education, employment and living skills.

## **Acronyms Commonly used in Special Education**

**2E** Twice Exceptional

**ADA** Americans with Disabilities Act

**ADD/ ADHD** Attention Deficit Disorder / Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

**AIG** Academically and /or Intellectually Gifted

**APE** Adapted Physical Education

**ASD** Autism Spectrum Disorder

**AT** Assistive Technology

**AU** Autism

**BIP** Behavior Intervention Plan

**CCS** Carteret County Schools

**CPI** Crisis Prevention Intervention

**DB** Deaf-Blindness

**DD** Developmental Delay

**DEC** Division of Exceptional Children

**DF** Deaf

**DOB** Date of Birth

**DPI** Department of Public Instruction

**DSS** Department of Social Services

**EC** Exceptional Children

**ECAC** Exceptional Children's Assistance Center

**EOC** End-of-Course Test

**EOG** End-of-Grade Test

**ESL** English as a Second Language **ESY** Extended School Year

**FAPE** Free and Appropriate Public Education

**FBA** Functional Behavior Analysis (or Assessment)

**FERPA** Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act

**HI** Hearing Impairment **ID** Intellectual Disability (mild, moderate or severe)

**IDEA** Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act

**IEE** Independent Educational Evaluation

**IEP** Individualized Education Program

**IFSP** Individualized Family Services Plan

**LD** Learning Disability

**LEA** Local Education Agency

**LEP** Limited English Proficiency

**LRE** Least Restrictive Environment

## How Does Carteret County Schools Measure Outcomes for Exceptional Children?

Our EC department completes a LEA Self-Assessment yearly. Every school district in North Carolina submits data on its students in exceptional children programs. North Carolina mandates a cyclical process. The LEA Self-Assessment is designed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Indicators are measured against targets set by the state. Results of the Indicators are posted publicly and updated annually. Look to this source for information on students with disabilities: graduation rate; dropout rate; participation and performance on statewide assessments; suspension and expulsion rates; least restrictive environment; growth in preschool children; parent involvement; racial representation; adherence to timeline requirements; transitions; post-school outcomes; and compliance data. For results from the previous school years, please refer to the state's website for this information ([www.nccecas.org/apr2009-2010/apr-681-sy2009-10.html](http://www.nccecas.org/apr2009-2010/apr-681-sy2009-10.html)).

If Parents Have Concerns about their child's education please let us know. Only by knowing parents' concerns can CCS address them! Parents should speak with the people closest to their child first and follow the chain of command in the school. If parents think their concerns have not been addressed, go to the district level. Then contact the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) / Exceptional Children Division if you are still not satisfied.

### *Talk with School Staff*

- ...talk with your child's teacher(s)
- ...talk with your child's EC teacher and/or related services provider
- ...talk with the EC Program Facilitator at your child's school
- ...talk with the Administrator at your child's school

### *Talk with District Staff*

- ...talk with the Director of Exceptional Children Programs
- ...talk with the Assistant Superintendent
- ...talk with the Superintendent

### *Talk with DPI*

- ...request a facilitated IEP meeting
- ...request mediation
- ...file a formal complaint with DPI
- ...request a due process hearing
- ...request a resolution meeting

## Resources for Parents of Children with Disabilities

**Autism Society of North Carolina (ASNC)** offers services and supports to individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. ASNC also has local chapters. The community's local chapter is the Orange/Chatham Chapter. Information about the local chapter activities can be found on the ASNC web site under "support for family members."

505 Oberlin Road, Suite 230, Raleigh, NC 27605 | 800-442-2762 or 919-743-0204

**Crystal Coast Autism Society** provides individuals on the autism spectrum (or with another developmental disability) the opportunity to achieve independence by supporting all areas of life. It also provides support for their families and strengthens their voice within the community through advocacy and awareness.

113 Roberts Road, Newport, NC 27570 | 800-442-2762 | <https://www.autismsociety-nc.org/>

**Department of Social Services** provides protection to vulnerable children and adults, economic support to low-income individuals and families in crisis and intervention services to at-risk persons residing in Orange County. The agency is the access point for most state and federal human service programs.

210 Craven Street, Beaufort, NC 28516 | 252-728-3181 | [www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/local/dir\\_oran.htm](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/local/dir_oran.htm)

**Disability Rights NC** protects the legal rights of people with disabilities in North Carolina through advocacy and systems change.

2325 Glenwood Avenue, Suite 550, Raleigh, NC 27608 | 800-235-4210 or 919-856-2195 | <https://www.disabilityrightsn.org>

**Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services** provides counseling, training, education, transportation, job placement, assistive technology and other support services. These services are provided to people with physical, psychiatric or intellectual disabilities to assist them with living independently and with finding and keeping a job.

310 Commerce Avenue, Morehead City, NC 28557 | 252-247-2037 | [www.ncdhhs.gov/dvrs](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dvrs)

**Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (ECAC)** provides information, education, outreach and support to and for families with children with disabilities in North Carolina. The local office located in Raleigh and the main office is in Davidson, NC.

Parent Information Line: 1.800.962.6817 | Local phone numbers 919-571-8092 or 866-740-4136 | [www.ecac-parentcenter.org](http://www.ecac-parentcenter.org)

**Learning Disabilities Association of North Carolina** provides education, support, advocacy, collaboration, and encouragement of ongoing research in learning disabilities.

1854-A Hendersonville Road #239, Asheville, NC 28803 | [www.ldanc.org](http://www.ldanc.org)

**North Carolina Assistive Technology Program** is a state and federally funded program that provides assistive technology services statewide to people of all ages and abilities. Assistive Technology is any type of equipment that helps people with disabilities or older individuals be more independent at home, school, work, during leisure time and in community life.

4900 Waters Edge Drive, Suite 250, Raleigh, NC 27606 | 919.850.2787 | [www.ncatp.org/overview.html](http://www.ncatp.org/overview.html)

**North Carolina Department of Public Instruction/Exceptional Children Division** provides information, resources and links to policies and procedures governing programs for children with disabilities in North Carolina.

301 N. Wilmington Street, Raleigh, NC 27601 | 919.807.3969 | [www.ec.ncpublicschools.gov](http://www.ec.ncpublicschools.gov)

## **Community Recreation Resources**

Special Olympics North Carolina Dignity, acceptance and a chance to reach one's potential are human rights worth promoting for everyone. For more than four decades, Special Olympics has been bringing one message to the world: people with intellectual disabilities can and will succeed if given the opportunity.

1702 Live Oak Street, Suite 300, Beaufort, NC 28516 | 252-808-3301 | [www.sonc.net](http://www.sonc.net)

## **Trillium Health Resources**

Family resource center for information and services for substance abuse, mental health and intellectual/developmental disabilities.

144 Community College Road, Ahoskie, NC | 1-877-685-2415 | [www.trilliumhealthresources.org](http://www.trilliumhealthresources.org)