Overview of School- Based Services

MILESTONES AUTISM RESOURCES

Intro: What this Toolkit Covers & Why It Matters

This toolkit walks families through the **Ohio Evaluation Roadmap** for children and youth ages 3–21 who may need special education services. It outlines each step of the process—from first noticing learning concerns to implementing an Individualized Education Program (IEP)—and explains your rights and responsibilities along the way. Understanding this process empowers families to advocate effectively for timely evaluations, appropriate supports, and quality education for their children.

Step-by-Step Guidance

1. Notice Concerns
- Watch for signs of developmental or academic struggles.
- Reach out to the teacher, principal, or special education director to raise your concerns.

2. Understand Interventions vs. Evaluations
- Know the difference: Interventions support struggling students, but don't replace formal evaluations.
- Interventions must happen *with* evaluation—not used to delay it.

3. Request an Evaluation
- Submit a **written request** for a special education evaluation.
- The school must respond within **30 calendar days** with:
  - A notice that they **don't suspect a disability**, or
  - A **request for your written consent** to evaluate.

4. Consent for Evaluation
- If evaluation proceeds, you'll be asked to sign a **consent for evaluation form**. Once signed, the school has **60 calendar days** to complete the evaluation.

5. Evaluation Planning Meeting
- A team (including you) meets to decide what areas to assess.
- For preschoolers (ages 3–5): Must use **at least five assessment methods**, each used at least once.

6. Evaluation & Completion of the ETR
- Assessments are conducted by the evaluation team at the school.
- You'll be invited to a meeting to review findings, and complete the **Evaluation Team Report (ETR)**.

7. Eligibility Determination
- The team (including you) decides if your child qualifies for special education:
  - **If eligible**: identify the disability and move forward.
    If not eligible: child stays in general education; you may request an **Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)***.

8. Develop the IEP
- If eligible, the school has **30 calendar days** to create an IEP.

- You must provide **written consent** before services start.

9. Implement the IEP

- The school provides services outlined in the IEP.
- Services must meet **FAPE** standards and be provided in the **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**.

Tips or Common Mistakes

- **Tip**: Always make requests in **writing** and keep copies for your records.
- **Tip**: Stay actively involved in meetings—you're an equal member of the team.
- **Common Mistake**: Believing schools must complete interventions *before* evaluating. This is not true—both can happen at the same time.
- **Common Mistake**: Delaying action if the school says "let's wait and see." You have the right to request an evaluation **at any time**.

What to Ask / Advocate For

- **Ask**: "What interventions have been tried, and how were they documented?"
- **Ask**: "Can you provide the evaluation consent form today?"
- **Ask**: "Which areas will be evaluated, and why?"
- **Advocate**: For your child to be evaluated **without unnecessary delays**.
- **Advocate**: To be an active participant in planning and eligibility decisions.
- **Advocate**: For a comprehensive, strength-based evaluation using multiple methods.

***Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) Process**

1. The parent must disagree with the results or conclusions of the school district's ETR. This disagreement can be about any part of the evaluation (e.g., assessments, eligibility determination).
2. The parent submits a written request to the school district, stating that they are requesting an Independent Educational Evaluation at public expense.
3. Once the request is received, the school must respond without unnecessary delay. The district must either:
    - Agree to fund the IEE and provide information about how to obtain one,
    - File for a due process hearing to show that its evaluation is appropriate.
4. If the District Agrees to Pay
    - The parent can choose an evaluator, but the district may provide criteria (e.g., qualifications, cost limits).
    - The IEE must be conducted in a timely manner.
    - The results must be considered by the IEP team in decision-making.
5. If the District Refuses to Pay and Requests Due Process
    - A hearing officer decides whether the school's ETR was appropriate.
    - If the hearing officer agrees with the school, the parent may still obtain an IEE, but at their own expense.
    - If the hearing officer sides with the parent, the district must fund the IEE.
6. Once completed, the results of the IEE:
    - Must be considered by the school district in determining eligibility and services,

- May be used as evidence in a due process hearing.

Key Resources

- Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Evaluation Road Map
- Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Evaluation Road Map (Spanish)
- Advocacy Organizations: Groups such as the Autism Society of Ohio and the Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities offer workshops, support networks, and one-on-one assistance for parents.