

Barrow County School System
Special Education Implementation Manual



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Purpose of this Manual

This manual is designed for use by teachers, administrators, parents, service providers, professionals, and others involved in the identification, evaluation, and education of students with disabilities in the Barrow County School System. The manual is intended to guide the user in complying with federal and state legal requirements as they apply to the BCSS's interaction with students with disabilities and their parents. This manual frequently refers to BCSS personnel who are responsible for carrying out certain activities, as well as the appropriate contacts if issues arise. If BCSS personnel have any questions regarding the use or interpretation of this manual or any legal or other issues affecting students with disabilities, they should contact the District Special Education Department at 770-867-4527.

Application of Laws and Recommendations

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, often referred to as "IDEA," provides federal funds to state and local agencies for the education of eligible students with disabilities. In order to be eligible to receive services under IDEA, a student must be determined to be a child with a disability and to need special education and related services (each as defined under IDEA).

The BCSS receives IDEA funds for the education of students with disabilities only if it complies with the specific requirements of IDEA. They include, among other things, the requirement to identify and evaluate students who may have disabilities, to determine the eligibility of such students, to develop individualized education programs, to place students in appropriate settings, to follow certain procedural safeguards (including in connection with disciplinary actions), and to protect the confidentiality of student records. These requirements are discussed in more detail throughout this manual. Congress made changes to IDEA in 2004, and the U.S. Department of Education revised the regulations on August 14, 2006 and December 1, 2008. This manual incorporates those changes.

State of Georgia Requirements

The State of Georgia has adopted its own laws and regulations covering the education of students with disabilities. These largely emulate the requirements of the federal laws and regulations discussed above but, in some instances, expand on the federal requirements. The Georgia requirements are incorporated throughout this manual.

State Rule: 160-4-7-.02—Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

A. FAPE Inclusive for Students Aged 3 to 21: Full Educational Opportunity

All children with disabilities between the ages of 3 through 21 who are residing in the Barrow County School System District are entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE), including children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school. The special education and related services that make up the FAPE are provided to children identified with disabilities who have an IEP at no cost to the parent.

Special education and related services, including special education at the preschool, elementary, and secondary levels, are services that are provided so eligible students can make progress toward and/or meet the educational standards of Georgia. All students will be provided with an education that includes access to the Georgia curriculum and addresses the unique needs of the individual student and their disability.

While the education provided to the student with an IEP must be appropriate and must address what the individual student needs to make educational progress, this is neither a guarantee of achievement of each goal on the IEP nor a guarantee of promotion, passing grades, or graduation. Likewise, passing from grade to grade or receiving all passing grades does not mean that a student is receiving FAPE. Each student is an individual, and their appropriate education is determined on a case-by-case basis. In addition, the term “appropriate” is not the same as “best;” “appropriate” is a minimal standard that assures the student has the opportunity to make educational progress.

Students are entitled to FAPE when they are determined eligible for special education and related services. This can be as early as 3 years of age. If a child is receiving services prior to age 3 through the Babies Can’t Wait (BCW) program, then both the BCW program and the district have an obligation to work together to transition the child to the public-school program by the child’s 3rd birthday. Children should have eligibility for special education determined and an IEP developed (if eligible) and in place by age three if they were previously receiving services.

Children are entitled to continue to receive special education and related services through their 21st year (or until they turn 22) if they remain eligible for special education, and they have not graduated with a regular high school diploma. Entitlement to FAPE ends upon reaching age 22 or graduating with a regular diploma, whichever comes first.

B. FAPE for students aged 22

According to Georgia Rules, districts are required to develop a written procedure that identifies a process for completing services when a student reaches the age of 22. The district must state in writing whether services for the student who is still attending school on their 22nd birthday will cease on the birthday, cease at the end of that semester, or cease at the

end of that school year. Students who remain in school after their 22nd birthday are not entitled to FAPE or other Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) rights for the remainder of their time in school. Although each district can develop its own procedures, those procedures must be in writing in order to be clear and fair to all students. The ultimate goal is to transition students to the desired activity in collaboration with other agencies or supports so that, by the 22nd birthday, transition has occurred, and the student can continue in appropriate adult activities.

When a student with an IEP graduates with a regular diploma or ages out of school (i.e., turns 22 years of age), they must be provided with a Summary of Performance (SOP) of their academic and functional needs. The SOP also includes strategies to assist the student in achieving their desired postsecondary goals. Although not required for students who receive a special education diploma or another exit document, such as a certificate of attendance, the best practice is to provide the SOP to ALL students with IEPs who are exiting public school. Those students who do not earn a regular diploma or transition to a specific job are those who will most likely need all the assistance available to develop successful adult lifestyles, and the SOP is a tool that can assist with this. (The actual requirement for the SOP can be found in Georgia Rule 160-4-7-.04 Evaluations and Re-evaluations.)

Exception to FAPE

1. The obligation to make FAPE available to all children with disabilities does not apply to adult students aged 18 through 21, who, in the last educational placement prior to their incarceration in an adult correctional facility
 - a. were not actually identified as being a child with a disability,
 - b. did not have an IEP in effect,
 - c. graduated from high school with a regular high school diploma. (This constitutes a change in placement, requiring written prior notice.).
2. The exception does not apply to adult students with disabilities, aged 18 through 21, who:
 - a. had been identified as a child with a disability and had received services in accordance with an IEP but who left school prior to their incarceration in an adult correctional facility or local jail,
 - b. did not have an IEP in their last educational setting, but who had actually been identified as a child with a disability,
 - c. have graduated from high school but have not been awarded a regular high school diploma.

BCSS procedures for students completing services at age 22:

1. The IEP Team meets to determine a graduation plan for students remaining in school who wish to continue to receive special education and related services through their

- 21st year (or until they turn 22) if they remain eligible for special education and they have not graduated with a regular high school diploma.
2. The IEP Team's discussion should include information related to the fact that entitlement to FAPE ends upon reaching age 22 or graduating with a regular diploma, whichever comes first.
 3. The IEP Team will determine if services for such a student, who is still attending school on their 22nd birthday, will cease on the birthday or cease at the end of that semester.
 4. A commonsense approach to planning grade placement should be considered; a consideration should be communicated and stated that SWD whose 22nd birthdays fall during a semester of a school year be allowed to complete that semester of school.
 5. The IEP Team decision should be in writing.
 6. When a student with an IEP graduates with a regular diploma or ages out of school (i.e., turns 22 years of age), they must be provided with a Summary of Performance (SOP) of their academic and functional needs.

At age 18, students become their own educational decision-makers unless a court decides they are not able to make these decisions. On or before the student's 17th birthday, the school is to inform the parents and the student that at age 18, the student attains the age of majority in Georgia and will become their own educational decision-maker. This is done during the IEP meeting. The school may also inform parents of other options or where to get more information about guardianships, powers of attorney, and any other options. Beginning at age 18, the school is to send all notices to both the parent and the student, but the student will provide informed written consent for any action requested by the system. When the student turns 18, they become the educational decision-maker, but the parents retain the rights to all notices of meetings, notices of changes in program or placement, and notices of evaluations while the student is eligible under the IDEA.

BCSS Procedures for Summary of Performance (SOP)

When developing the SOP, the student should actively participate. Other IEP team members, family members, or other community agencies involved in the student's transition planning process should also provide input. The SOP becomes the student's resume as they transition to postsecondary settings.

Part 1: Student Information – Complete this section as specified. Please note this section requires copies of the most recent formal and informal assessment reports that document the student's disability and provide information to assist in post-high school planning.

Part 2: Student's Postsecondary Goals – These goals should indicate the post-school environment or environments in which the student intends to transition upon completion of

their high school education. These goals should address education, employment, independent living, and community access, as appropriate for the student.

Part 3: Present Levels of Performance Summary – This section includes two critical areas of student performance: academic and functional levels of performance. Next to each academic or functional area, please complete the student’s present level of performance, the accommodations used, and the rationale for why those accommodations are necessary. When listing accommodations include any accommodations, modifications, assistive technology, or other supports used to assist the student in achieving success in that area. Include specific details about each accommodation, such as “30 extra minutes” instead of simply “extra time.” In the rationale section, provide an explanation of how the student’s disability impacted their performance such that the listed accommodations were necessary for success. An accommodation is defined as a support or service that is provided to help a student fully access the general education curriculum or subject matter. An accommodation does not change the content of what is being taught or the expectation that the student meets a performance standard required for all students. A modification is defined as a change to the general education curriculum, which changes the standards or expectations for students. Assistive Technology is defined as any device that helps a student with a disability function in a given environment and includes “low-tech” or “high-tech” options.

Part 4: Recommendations to Assist the Student in Meeting Post Secondary Goals – This section should present suggestions for accommodations, adaptive devices, assistive devices, assistive services, compensatory strategies, modifications, or general areas of need that a student will require to be successful in a post-high school environment, including higher education, training, employment, independent living, and/or community participation.

Part 5: Student Perspective – The student provides information for the development of this section. The student’s contribution can help (a) secondary professionals complete the summary, (b) the student to better understand the impact of their disability on academic and functional performance in the postsecondary setting, and (c) postsecondary personnel to more clearly understand the impact of the disability on the student. This section may be filled out independently by the student or completed with the student through an interview.

Part 6: Postsecondary Community Agency Contacts, Team Members, and Supports – The Transition Team should provide all the necessary contact information to help the student as they transition to postsecondary settings.

C. FAPE provision by 3rd birthday

Children with disabilities may be served by Babies Can’t Wait, as well as other agencies (e.g., Georgia Pines), from birth to age 3. If a child is receiving services prior to age 3 through the Babies Can’t Wait (BCW) program, then both the BCW program and the Barrow County School

System have an obligation to work together to transition the child to the school program by the child's 3rd birthday. If they were previously receiving BCW services, children should have eligibility for special education determined and an IEP developed (if eligible) and in place by age three in order to ensure FAPE provision.

BCSS Procedures for FAPE Provision for students turning 3

The Barrow County School System outlines procedures in the evaluation and re-evaluation section of this manual to ensure students coming from Babies Can't Wait (BCW) don't have an interruption in service when transitioning to the local school system.

D. FAPE for Incarcerated Students

Students eligible for special education services who have an IEP and are in a facility operated by the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) or the Department of Corrections (DOC) must receive their educational programs. Each of these agencies provides the services to students within their facilities in Georgia. Each agency has the responsibility to identify, evaluate, determine eligibility, and provide special education and related services to students. These agencies will contact the most recent public school attended by a student to obtain copies of educational records so that FAPE can be provided. DJJ and DOC are public schools and should be treated as other public schools when providing records in an expeditious manner. Adult students who are between the ages of 18 and 21 who, prior to being in the correctional facility (jail), did not have an IEP the last time they attended school, are the exception. These students do not have an entitlement to FAPE. A student with a current IEP who is in the community jail, such as those managed by city or county agencies (i.e., the sheriff's office), is also entitled to FAPE. In these circumstances, the district where the student is incarcerated is responsible for providing services. Districts need to work closely with the local jail in order to gain access to the student and to deliver services. The main concern of the local sheriff or other enforcement agency is safety, while the district's obligation is to provide FAPE. The term regular high school diploma does not include an alternative degree that is not aligned with the State's academic standards such as a special education diploma, certificate of attendance, or a general educational development credential (GED).

BCSS FAPE Procedures for Incarcerated Students

The Barrow County School System offers special education services for students with disabilities who have been incarcerated. School personnel are informed of the incarceration by school resource officers, social workers, counselors, parents, etc. Once informed, the caseload manager will contact the parents and offer services to the student while they are incarcerated. If the parent declines the offer, this decision is documented in the GOIEP contact log. If the parent wishes to pursue the continuation of services, an IEP meeting is scheduled to discuss and agree upon a plan for service provision.

E. Definition of regular high school diploma

The term regular high school diploma does not include an alternative degree that is not aligned with the State's academic standards such as a special education diploma, certificate of attendance or a general educational development credential (GED).

F. Delay of Services Not Allowed

The Barrow County School System ensures that there will be no delay in implementing a child's IEP, including any case in which the payment source for providing or paying for special education and related services to the child is being determined.

G. Medicaid Payment Allowances and Limitations

The Barrow County School System files for and receives reimbursement from Medicaid for Medicaid-eligible students receiving Medicaid-billable services performed by school staff; however, the school system does not require parents to sign up for or enroll in public benefits or insurance programs in order for their child to receive FAPE. Furthermore, the Barrow County School System does not require the parents to incur any out-of-pocket expenses such as the payment of a deductible or co-pay amount incurred in filing a claim for services provided, but may pay the cost the parents would otherwise be required to pay; and the school system will not use a child's benefits under a public benefits or insurance program if that use would

1. decrease available lifetime coverage or any other insured benefit, resulting in the family paying for services that would otherwise be covered by the public benefits or insurance program and are required for the child outside of the time the child is in school,
2. increase premiums or lead to the discontinuation of benefits or insurance, or
3. risk loss of eligibility for home and community-based waivers, based on aggregate health-related expenses.

The IDEA clearly states that districts must notify parents each time they propose to access the student's insurance and must have parental consent before accessing these funds. The Barrow County School System informs parents of their right to refuse district access to the insurance benefits and of the fact that such refusal does not relieve the district of its responsibility to ensure that all required services are provided at no cost to the parents. If a district is going to access benefits, public or private, it should seek written consent from the parent and inform the parent about the amount of benefits it plans to access. This can be done as part of the annual IEP process. The IEP will define the frequency of any service (for example, occupational therapy one time per week for 30 minutes). This can be used to inform the parents and to obtain their agreement.

If a district believes a medical evaluation is warranted as part of the determination of eligibility or continuing provision of special education and related services, it must seek parental permission before such evaluation is provided, and the evaluation must be provided at public expense or no cost to the parent. As stated previously, any available insurance may be used to offset the costs of the evaluation. A child should not be denied a medical evaluation, if it is needed for educational purposes such as the determination of eligibility for special education or the educational needs of the child.

BCSS Procedures for Medicaid Billing

All therapists must be on the staff pool list prior to billing for speech, occupational, and/or physical therapy services. All students receiving services should be entered into the Medicaid billing platform in order to verify Medicaid eligibility. Additionally, billing should not be entered unless we have a signed consent form on file. All eligible students should have a signed consent form on file. Billing should be completed by the 10th of the month for the month prior.

H. Notice to Parents Regarding the Use of Benefits

The Barrow County School System obtains parental consent prior to accessing a child's or parent's public benefits or insurance for the first time and after providing notification to the child's parents. The parental consent to access a child's or parent's public benefits or insurance

1. specifies the personally identifiable information that may be disclosed or information about the services that may be provided to a particular child, the purpose of the disclosure (e.g., billing for services provided under IDEA), and the agency to which the disclosure may be made (e.g., the Georgia Department of Community Health), and
2. specifies that the parent understands and agrees that the school system may access the child's or parent's public benefits or insurance to pay for services provided under IDEA.

Prior to accessing a child's or parent's public benefits or insurance for the first time, and annually thereafter with progress letters, the Barrow County School System provides written notification to the child's parents that includes

1. a statement of parental consent provisions,
2. a statement of the "no cost" provisions,
3. a statement that the parents have the right to withdraw their consent to disclosure of their child's personally identifiable information to the agency responsible for the administration of Georgia's public benefits or insurance program at any time, and
4. a statement that the withdrawal of consent or refusal to provide consent to disclose personally identifiable information to the agency responsible for the administration of

Georgia's public benefits or insurance program does not relieve the school system of its responsibility to ensure that all required services are provided at no cost to the parents.

I. Residential Placement

The IEP may call for instruction outside of the general classroom or for a separate day school or program. Home instruction may be used as a short-term placement option when the parent and the district agree that it is necessary.

Residential placements either in Georgia or out of state may be considered when the nature and severity of the disability indicate a need. The IEP team must document the placement options that were considered. The more restrictive the placement, the more important it is to document the reasons the more restrictive environment was selected. Documentation must include all options the IEP team considered and rejected when making the decision.

If placement in a residential facility, either public or private, is necessary for the student to receive FAPE, then the placement is at public expense, usually paid for by the local district. Districts should not consider placement in residential facilities unless they have exhausted the nonresidential resources. The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) has tuition grants to assist local districts if they place a student in a residential facility.

J. Provision of Accessible Instructional Materials

The Barrow County School System provides print instructional materials in specialized, accessible formats (i.e., Braille, audio, digital, large print, etc.) to children who are blind or other print-disabled in a timely manner. The system takes all reasonable steps to ensure that children with print disabilities have access to their accessible format instructional materials at the same time as students without print disabilities.

1. Print instructional materials include textbooks and related core materials that are required by the school system for use by children in the classroom.
2. Specialized formats refer to Braille, audio, or digital text which is exclusively for use by children who are blind or other persons with print disabilities. Large print formats are also included when the materials are distributed exclusively for use by children who are blind or other persons with disabilities.
3. Specialized formats do not include altering the content (e.g., breadth, depth, or complexity) of the print instructional material in the production of accessible instructional materials.
4. Children who are blind or print disabled include
 - a. children whose visual acuity, as determined by a competent authority, is 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting glasses, or whose widest diameter of visual field subtends an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees,

- b. children whose visual disability, with correction and regardless of optical measurement, is certified by a competent authority as preventing the reading of standard printed material,
- c. children certified by a competent authority as unable to read or unable to use standard printed material as a result of physical limitations, or
- d. children certified by a competent authority as having a reading disability resulting from organic dysfunction and of sufficient severity to prevent their reading printed material in a normal manner.

K. Provision of Assistive Technology

Districts must consider each student's need for assistive technology devices and services. Assistive technology is considered by each IEP team in the development, review, and revision of student IEPs. When the IEP team determines that a student requires assistive technology devices or services, this should be clearly documented in the IEP, and the assistive technology should be provided to the student in a timely manner. The assistive technology provided should be integrated into instructional activities, and data should be collected on the use of the technology. If the IEP team determines that the student requires school-purchased assistive technology at home or in other settings to receive FAPE, the assistive technology must be provided to the student at no cost to the parent.

L. Assistive Technology Evaluations

An assistive technology evaluation may be required if appropriate assistive technology solutions are not known to the child's IEP Team through the consideration process. This evaluation is conducted by a multidisciplinary team of professionals knowledgeable about assistive technology devices in the technology areas being assessed. The child and family are also included in this evaluation process. The evaluation results in recommendations for assistive technology devices and services, if required. If the child's IEP Team determines that assistive technology devices or services are required for the child to receive a FAPE, a statement to that effect is included in the child's IEP.

1. If assistive technology is required for the child to participate in system-wide or statewide testing, the need for technology is documented in the appropriate section of the IEP and provided to the child.
2. If assistive technology devices or services, or both, are required for a child who is blind or other print disabled to access alternative format instructional materials, the assistive technology is documented in the IEP and provided to the child.
3. The Barrow County School System has in place procedures and practices that ensure the proper functioning of hearing aids. Regular inspection of hearing aids will be documented. This also applies to external components of surgically implanted medical devices such as cochlear implants.

M. Home Use of Assistive Technology

If the IEP Team determines that the child with a disability requires school-purchased assistive technology at home or in other settings to receive a FAPE, the assistive technology will be provided to the child at no cost to the parent. The need for assistive technology in the non-school settings will also be documented in the child's IEP.

BCSS Procedures for Home Use of Assistive Technology

Barrow County School System students requiring home assistive technology access in order to access the curriculum will be identified through the IEP team. Once the student is identified, the parents will complete a property loan agreement, and the appropriate technology will be loaned to the student.

N. Extracurricular Activities Accessibility

FAPE can also include nonacademic and extracurricular services. The Barrow County School System will consider supplementary aids and services necessary to provide students with disabilities the equal opportunity to participate in nonacademic and extracurricular activities. This may include, but is not limited to, participation in clubs, referral to agencies that provide services, special interest groups, employment assistance, counseling, health services, or athletics. An IEP does not negate eligibility requirements such as having to try out for the team or having an "A" average to be in French Club.

O. FAPE and Extended School Year

The Barrow County School System will provide extended school year (ESY) services to students who need such services to receive FAPE. ESY services are those services a student requires beyond the normal school year of the district and are not limited to only the summer months. A district may not limit ESY services to a certain time period or type of activity.

BCSS Procedures for Extended School Year

The IEP team makes the determination regarding whether a student needs ESY and, if so, what services will be provided. This includes determining the details of ESY, such as what services will be provided, when and where the services will take place, and the frequency and the duration of the services. Any services provided as ESY must meet the requirements of FAPE. The Barrow County School System does not state that ESY is only for certain groups of students.

P. Access to Physical Education and Specially Designed Physical Education

The Barrow County School System ensures that:

1. general physical education services, specially designed, if necessary, are made available to every child with a disability receiving FAPE unless the school system enrolls children without disabilities and does not provide physical education to children without disabilities in the same grades,
2. each child with a disability is afforded the opportunity to participate in the regular physical education program available to nondisabled children unless
 - a. the child is enrolled full time in a separate facility – the Barrow County School System is responsible for the education of any child with a disability who is enrolled in a separate facility and ensures that the child receives appropriate physical education services, or
 - b. the child needs specially designed physical education, as prescribed in the child's IEP, which is a Related Service: Adapted PE (If specially designed physical education is prescribed in a child's IEP, the Barrow County School System provides the services directly or makes arrangements for those services to be provided through other public or private programs.).

BCSS Procedures for Access to Physical Education

Each individual IEP team determines if a student is able to participate in general physical education. If the team determines the student is unable to access general physical education accommodations, modifications, and/or supports may be added to the IEP. In some circumstances, a referral for adaptive physical education may be conducted. If this referral is warranted, the adaptive physical education teacher will conduct an evaluation and the team will reconvene and discuss the results and next steps.

Q. Services to Public Charter Schools That Are Not LEAs

Children who attend public charter schools and their parents retain all the rights given to them in the public school under the IDEA. In general, two types of charter schools are present in the state: public schools or public school districts that operate according to the terms of a charter or contract that has been approved by a local board of education and the State Board of Education; and state chartered special schools that operate according to the terms of a charter or contract that has been approved by the State Board of Education.

Charter schools must make available the services needed to provide education for students with IEPs. The charter that is part of a district has, as part of its resources, the full continuum of services and supports within the district. At times, a student's IEP may determine that a specific setting is needed that may not be available at the charter but is available at another school within the district. The charter that is part of the district may not, however, decline to serve students with IEPs.

If the charter is a state charter school, the school is responsible for finding a way to provide whatever services the IEP team determines are appropriate for a student with an IEP who chooses to enroll in the charter. Students with IEPs may not be discriminated against, and a state charter must accept students who choose to enroll.

R. Charter Schools That Are LEAs

The Barrow County School System must treat charter schools that are part of the local district the same as all other individual schools within the district. This includes flowing funds, state and federal, to the charter at the same time as money is sent to other schools. This also includes providing services or supports that are centrally based in the same manner as for other schools. For example, if the central office of the local district funds the occupational therapist for any student in any school who needs the service to receive FAPE, then the students in the charter school must also be included.

If the school provides transportation to and from school or financial support (e.g., tokens) for nondisabled students for that kind of transportation, then it needs to do the same for students with disabilities. If districts do not provide this support in general, then they typically do not need to provide it to students with disabilities. However, if an IEP team identifies transportation as a related service on a child's IEP, then the district will need to arrange for transportation services or see that the responsible entity does so. As an IEP team considers a student's need for transportation, it is critical that team members understand the differences between a student's need for transportation to get to school (common for all students) and a student's need as a factor of a disability that results in the need for a related service. If a charter school is responsible for providing this related service, a district may contract for it or pay the family to transport the child to and from school or the location of the special services.

S. Programming Options and Equal Access

The Barrow County School System ensures that children with disabilities have available to them the variety of educational programs and services available to non-disabled children in the area served by the Barrow County School System, including art, music, and career, technical, and agricultural education.

T. Hearing Equipment Checks

The Barrow County School System ensures that hearing aids and external components of surgically implanted medical devices worn in school by students with hearing impairments, including deafness, are functioning properly.

BCSS Procedures for Hearing Equipment Checks

When problems arise with a hearing aid or external surgically implanted device within the school district, the case manager contacts the District Special Education Coordinator immediately for technical assistance. The Barrow County School System is not responsible for the post-surgical maintenance, programming, or replacement of the medical device that has been surgically implanted. The case manager and assigned audiologist can collaborate with the families for replacement and/or repair. If funding is an issue, school social workers may also be involved.

U. Prohibition of Mandatory Medication

The Barrow County School System may not require medication as a condition of attending school, receiving an evaluation, or receiving services. Parents make the decisions regarding their children and any medication they administer or do not administer. Districts should not make medical decisions that require medication. Nothing prohibits a district, however, from sharing classroom observations regarding the academic, behavioral, or functional performance of a child with the parents in order to better inform the parents of the student's behavior and academic performance when taking or not taking medication. If a district believes a student is not receiving medication that is essential for their health or education, it may refer the family to the Department of Family and Children's Services for assistance.

BCSS Professional Learning, Supervision, and Technical Assistance

The Special Education Director, district special education coordinators, program specialists, and school-level IEP facilitators will provide ongoing professional learning for special education policies and procedures regarding *Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)* throughout each school year. The Director of Special Education provides training to building-level administrators during preplanning and monthly instructional leadership meetings.

Existing BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: The Special Education Director, district special education coordinators, program specialists, and designated school staff (e.g., assistant principals, special education IEP facilitators, counselors, etc.) will provide ongoing professional learning regarding FAPE policies and procedures throughout the school year. The Director of Special Education also provides professional learning to the district leadership team as well as administrators during their scheduled meetings throughout the school year.

New BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: New special education teachers are trained in special education policies and procedures through new teacher training provided by the district special education coordinators and program specialists at the beginning of each

school year. They also participate in ongoing professional learning that is provided for existing teachers, as described above, as well as professional learning that is provided by administration and other support staff. Additionally, new teachers are assigned a veteran mentor teacher in their school building to provide support and guidance regarding FAPE throughout the school year. IEP facilitators also work closely with new teachers and mentors to ensure the process is adequately functioning and to give additional clarity and support regarding FAPE policy and procedure. Finally, the IEP facilitator provides coaching and guidance for first- and second-year teachers.

Evidence of Training: Professional learning will be documented through agendas, sign in sheets, and beginning-of-year Policy and Procedure Review documents. This documentation will be stored electronically on the Microsoft platform, and originals will be housed in the Special Education Administrative Assistant's office.

Supervision and Monitoring: The Director of Special Education collaborates with BCSS special education coordinators, program specialists, IEP facilitators, and school administrators as well as the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning to ensure the provision of FAPE for all special education students. School-level IEP facilitators, program specialists, and special education coordinators hold monthly meetings with teachers to discuss and monitor compliance with the rules regarding the provision of FAPE for each special education student. District coordinators meet with the Director of Special Education weekly, and coordinators meet with program specialists at least monthly to augment the supervision and monitoring of FAPE in the school system. There is an open line of communication between all special education school staff, district staff, and school administrators to further strengthen the supervision and monitoring of FAPE in the BCSS. Furthermore, drafts are required before IEP meetings and are submitted to LEA representatives and administrators to ensure thoroughness, thoughtfulness, and preparedness. IEPs are also audited each month by district coordinators and program specialists to provide an additional layer of supervision and monitoring for the provision of FAPE.

Technical Assistance: Teachers and administrators who require additional technical assistance with policies and procedures regarding FAPE will be provided with technical assistance and support through trainings, one-on-one conferences, webinars, and/or professional learning plans from the Director of Special Education, district special education coordinators, program specialists, and/or designated school staff (e.g., assistant principals, special education IEP facilitators, etc.). If teachers or other staff continue to have difficulty despite the technical assistance they receive, building-level administrators and/or direct supervisors will be notified so they may determine next steps to ensure remediation and compliance.

State Rule: 160-4-7-.03—Child Find Procedures

The purpose of Child Find is to identify, locate, screen, and evaluate children and youth, from birth to age 21, who are suspected of, or have a disability or developmental delay for children enrolled in the LEA school district including public charter schools. Barrow County School System serves children ages 3 through 21 with identified special education needs. For children from birth through age 3, services are provided via Babies Can't Wait and/or Georgia Pines.

A Child Find referral may be made by anyone that has concerns about a child's development. All referrals are considered confidential.

A. Annual Child Find activity is published through public notification system

Each school year, Child Find Screenings for preschool age children (ages 2 1/5–5 years of age) are completed. Screenings are advertised in the local newspaper, on district and school websites, on district and school social media accounts, in community daycare/PreK centers, in pediatrician offices and in WIC offices. Information is also disseminated via a meeting with private school representatives and to district special education staff to share with teachers so information can be sent home with students. As these screenings are advertised, information is also shared regarding students ages 6–21 that may be attending one of the Barrow County Schools or that may be homeschooled or may attend a private school.

B. Provides for identification, location and evaluation of children with suspected disability ages 3-21 including:

For students ages 3–5, Child Find activities are provided through interventions implemented in the home setting, daycare setting, PreK setting, Head Start, or other community centers. Additionally, the Preschool Program Coordinator and Preschool SLP provide professional learning to educate parents and community center directors regarding identifying students who may have developmental delays, speech-language delays, etc. This professional learning includes a review of the process for Child Find referrals.

For students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade, Child Find activities are provided through the Response to Intervention (RTI) process. Additionally, special education IEP facilitators and BCSS coordinators provide professional learning education for teachers regarding identifying students who may have developmental delays, speech-language delays, etc. This professional learning includes a review of the process for Child Find referrals.

1. *Children birth through age three*

The Babies Can't Wait Early Intervention Program serves children with special needs from birth–age 3. A transition meeting (generally six months before the child's 3rd birthday) is held with a Preschool representative from the Barrow County School System. Because these students have received prior interventions through Babies Can't Wait, the RTI process is not required since the early intervention records serve as prior interventions. Students transitioning from Babies Can't Wait participate in a developmental evaluation conducted by Barrow County Schools. Identifying and evaluating these children must follow the 60-day timeline for initial evaluations. If found eligible, services must be initiated on or before the child's 3rd birthday.

For children not transitioning from the Babies Can't Wait program, LEAs must follow the 60-day timeline for initial evaluations; however, the IEPs are not required to be implemented by the child's 3rd birthday.

Anyone aware of a child younger than 3 that presents with suspected developmental delays should provide contact information to the Babies Can't Wait Regional Office in Athens, GA by calling (706) 369- 6101.

2. *Preschool children, ages 3–5 not yet eligible for state-funded kindergarten*

The Barrow County School System provides Child Find Procedures throughout the year to identify, locate, and evaluation children ages 3–5 that attend lottery-funded PreK, private preschool programs, daycare centers, Head Start, and any child not enrolled in the aforementioned environments.

Barrow County is responsible for applying Child Find procedures for out-of-county students that attend programs within Barrow County. If the student is in a private school which has a kindergarten class, Barrow County School System is responsible for screening, providing RTI, evaluating, and providing service(s) if the student is found eligible. These students will be offered an IEP; however, if the parents choose not to enroll their student(s) in the Barrow County School System, the parents are declining FAPE, and the student(s) may be served via an Individualized Service Plan (ISP). Barrow County School System allocates proportionate share funds for students with Speech Impaired eligibility.

If the student who resides out-of-county is in a center that does not have a kindergarten classroom, such as a daycare center, Pre-K center or private preschool center, Barrow County School System is responsible for screening, providing RTI and evaluating. However, service provision is provided by the school system in the county in which the student resides.

3. *Children enrolled in the LEA schools including public charter schools*

The Barrow County School System employs Child Find procedures throughout the year to identify, locate, and evaluate students with suspected disabilities, including children that are enrolled in the LEA schools. These procedures are initiated when a parent and/or teacher expresses concern regarding a child's academic progress, behavior, functional development, or any other area of concern. At this time, there are no public charter schools within the Barrow County School System; however, in the event of a public charter school, Child Find procedures would be implemented there as well.

Anyone with concerns regarding students enrolled within LEA schools should contact their school-level RTI coordinator and/or assistant principal.

4. *Children who are suspected of being children with disabilities*

The Barrow County School System provides Child Find procedures throughout the year to identify, locate, and evaluate students with suspected disabilities. These procedures are initiated when a parent, teacher, agency or other individual expresses concern regarding a child's academic progress, behavior, functional development or any other area of concern.

5. *Highly mobile children, including migrant children*

The Barrow County School System provides Child Find procedures throughout the year to identify, locate, and evaluate students with suspected disabilities, including children that are considered highly mobile, including migrant children. These procedures are initiated when a parent and/or teacher expresses concern regarding a child's academic progress, behavior, functional development, or any other area of concern.

Anyone with concerns regarding a student that is considered highly mobile should contact their school-level RTI coordinator and/or assistant principal. Additional support can be provided from the district office via the Migrant Education, Title III & English Learner Coordinator, and the Family Engagement and Migrant Support Specialist.

6. *Children who are detained or incarcerated in jails or correctional facilities*

The Barrow County School System provides Child Find procedures throughout the year in order to identify, locate, and evaluate students with suspected disabilities, including children who are detained or incarcerated in jails or correctional facilities. These procedures would occur through a joint effort with the Barrow County School System and the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice and the Georgia Department of Corrections.

Anyone aware of a student that has been detained or incarcerated and concerned about the student's academic progress, behavior, functional development, or any

other area should contact their school-level RTI coordinator and/or assistant principal. Additional support can be provided from the counselor and/or social worker.

7. *Children enrolled in home school/study programs*

The Barrow County School System provides Child Find procedures throughout the year in order to identify, locate, and evaluate students with suspected disabilities, including children that are enrolled in home school or other study programs. These procedures would be initiated when a parent expressed concern regarding a child's academic progress, behavior, functional development, or any other area of concern.

If a parent of a home school student expresses concern, they should contact the school-level RTI coordinator and/or assistant principal at the school in which their child would be enrolled.

8. *Parentally-placed private school children, including religious, elementary, and secondary schools*

It is the responsibility of the Barrow County School System to locate, identify, and evaluate students with suspected disabilities, including children that are parentally-placed in a private school, including religious, elementary, and secondary schools. For the purposes of this manual and identification procedures, homeschooled students are also considered parentally-placed private school students.

Barrow County School System consults with the appropriate representatives of the private school children with disabilities to carry out Child Find activities. These activities are similar to those undertaken for the children in the district and must be completed in a timely manner comparable to other children attending the district. Additionally, for home school students, these procedures would be initiated when a parent expressed concern regarding a child's academic progress, behavior, functional development, or any other area of concern.

When a child is enrolled in a private school in another district, then both districts have an obligation, and they work together so as not to delay access to the Child Find activities.

When the student is in private school by parent choice, the student and the parent lose their individual rights to special education services; however, to the extent consistent with their number and location in the state, provisions are made for the participation of private school children with disabilities in programs provided under Part B of IDEA by providing children with special education and related services in accordance with this section. No parentally-placed private school child with a disability

has an individual right to receive some or all the special education and related services the child would receive if enrolled in a public school.

BCSS Procedures

If a parent of a parentally-placed private school child expresses concern, the appropriate personnel in the private school should contact the BCSS school-level RTI coordinator and/or assistant principal. Additional support may be provided by the appropriate special education coordinator (preschool, elementary, or secondary).

- Screening to determine appropriate educational strategies is not considered evaluation

Screenings are offered to determine appropriate educational strategies and to aid in determining if an evaluation may be warranted. The screening is not considered an evaluation. Following the completion of screenings, if developmental needs are identified, RTI interventions will be developed and implemented.

C. Student referrals are accompanied by documentation of scientific research- or evidence-based academic or behavioral interventions that demonstrate insufficient rate of progress (only required for SLD)

IDEA does not require that a child receive scientific research- or evidence-based interventions before being referred for consideration for eligibility for special education and related services ([34 C.F.R. § 300.111](#)). However, per the Georgia Child Find rule, the implementation of a multi-tiered system of supports, including the use of scientific research- or evidence-based interventions are required before referring a child for an initial evaluation for special education ([160-4-7-.03](#)). The use of interventions before referring a child for an initial evaluation for special education can have a positive impact on reducing the disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services. In addition, if a parent or teacher requests an evaluation and interventions have not been provided prior to the referral, interventions may be provided while the child is being evaluated (within the 60-day timeline requirement). Although a child's receipt of interventions can provide a critical piece of information in helping to determine eligibility for special education, a lack of interventions must not be a reason for determining that a child is not eligible for special education services.

However, in regard to a potential SLD eligibility, student referrals **must** be accompanied by documentation that scientific research- or evidenced-based academic and/or research-based behavioral interventions have been implemented as designed for the appropriate amount of time to show effect or lack of effect that demonstrates the child is not making a sufficient rate of progress to meet age- or state-appropriate grade-level standards within a reasonable time frame.

BCSS Procedures

Best practices within the BCSS are that all students have access to scientifically researched- or evidenced-based academic and/or research-based behavior interventions prior to the determination of eligibility for special education services.

D. Exception allowed only when evaluation and/or placement is required due to significant disability

Exceptions to screenings and the implementation of interventions may be made in circumstances where immediate evaluation and/or placement is required due to a significant disability that would preclude access to instruction. However, exceptions should be infrequent and rare occurrences. These exceptions should be clearly documented in the eligibility decision.

BCSS professional learning, supervision, and technical assistance

Existing BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: The Special Education Director, district special education coordinators, program specialists, and designated school staff (e.g., assistant principals, special education IEP facilitators, counselors, etc.) will provide ongoing professional learning regarding Child Find policies and procedures throughout the school year. The Director of Special Education provides professional learning to the district leadership team. The Director of Special education is in close contact with the preschool program coordinator, who assists with facilitating all Babies Can't Wait referrals and any other Child Find referrals to ensure compliance with mandated timelines. General education teachers will be provided training by school-level administrators, the school-level RTI coordinator and/or the district RTI coordinator.

New BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: New-to-BCSS special education teachers will be trained in special education policies and procedures through a new teacher training provided by the district special education coordinators. Existing special education teachers will be updated regarding Child Find procedures during monthly school-level special education meetings. General education teachers will be provided training by school-level administrators, the school-level RTI coordinator and/or the district RTI coordinator.

Evidence of Training: Professional learning will be documented through agendas, sign in sheets, and beginning of year Policy and Procedure Review documents. The documentation will be stored electronically on the Microsoft platform, and the originals will be housed in the Special Education Administrative Assistant's office.

Supervision and Monitoring: The Preschool Program Coordinator holds monthly meetings during which Child Find procedures for preschool-age children are continually monitored through a referral list that is updated weekly. For all other grade levels, grade-level meetings, as well as RTI/SST meetings are held to identify children who are suspected of having a disability. Additionally, ongoing monitoring for Child Find procedures is managed by the Director of Special Education and district-level special education coordinators.

Technical Assistance: If Child Find procedures are not followed, additional training and technical support will be provided by the Director of Special Education, district special education coordinators, program specialists and/or designated school staff (e.g., assistant principals, special education IEP facilitators, counselors, etc.).

State Rule: 160-4-7-.04—Evaluations and Reevaluations

A. Initial Evaluation Referral Process

IDEA requires that before a student can receive special education services, the BCSS must determine whether the student meets eligibility requirements for special education and needs special education services. The BCSS must conduct (or arrange for) a comprehensive evaluation that

1. provides sufficient data to determine whether the student is a student with a disability,
2. documents how the disability affects the student's academic or behavioral performance in school, and
3. provides appropriate information for the development of an IEP, if eligible.

BCSS Referral Procedures for Babies Can't Wait Transitions

Transition meetings are scheduled within six months of the child's third birthday and attended by a Babies Can't Wait representative and a preschool special education representative. The BCW representative contacts the administrative assistant for preschool and PreK regarding notification of referrals from BCW and scheduling transition meetings. At transitions meetings, the following occur:

1. Hearing and vision screenings are scheduled or completed.
2. Parents are informed of the evaluation process and provided an overview of preschool services.
3. Referral packet information is obtained (e.g., confidential developmental case history form, authorization to release records, permission to screen).
4. The developmental evaluation is scheduled, and subsequent eligibility meeting and IEP meetings are discussed.
5. Registration information is reviewed, and registration is completed by the parents.

After obtaining cleared vision and hearing screening, a developmental evaluation is scheduled prior to the child's third birthday. The child, the child's parents, the Preschool Program Coordinator, and the Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) will participate in the assessment. In some cases, a school psychologist may participate in the evaluation. Following completion of the developmental evaluation, an eligibility meeting and an initial IEP meeting, if applicable, will be scheduled. The eligibility meeting must be held on or before the child's third birthday.

**Due to these students having received prior interventions through Babies Can't Wait, they are not required to complete the RTI process through the Barrow County School System.*

BCSS Referral Procedures for Preschool-Age Students (3-5 years of age) in the Home Environment

With respect to preschool children, IDEA does not require or encourage a local or preschool program to use a MTSS approach prior to referral for evaluation or as part of determining whether a 3-, 4-, or 5-year-old is eligible for special education and related services. Once an LEA receives a referral from a preschool program, the LEA must initiate an evaluation process to determine if the child is a child with a disability. See: [34 C.F.R. §300.301\(b\)](#).

Upon a parent contacting the Barrow County School System with speech-language and/or developmental concerns regarding their preschool age student, an intake form is completed. Vision and hearing screenings will be scheduled, and interventions will be provided to the parents for implementation until the evaluation occurs. However, an evaluation will not be delayed for the sole purpose of collecting intervention data. The referral for the evaluation process will be implemented, to include the following steps.

1. Referral packet information, including registration information, is completed by the parents.
2. Once the registration process has been completed, the consent to evaluate will be signed by the parent.
3. A developmental evaluation will be completed either by the Speech-Language Pathologist and/or the Preschool Program Coordinator. Parents will also participate in this process by filling out rating scales. In some cases, a school psychologist may be a part of the evaluation team.
4. Following completion of the evaluation, an eligibility meeting and initial IEP meeting, if applicable, will be scheduled.

BCSS Referral Procedures for Preschool Age Students (3-5 years of age) in the Community:

If speech-language and/or developmental needs are suspected, the community center director and/or teacher will contact either the Speech-Language Pathologist or the Preschool Program Coordinator. Vision and hearing screenings will be scheduled, and interventions will be provided to the community center staff for implementation until the evaluation occurs. However, an evaluation will not be delayed for the sole purpose of collecting intervention data. The referral for the evaluation process will be implemented, and include the following steps:

1. Referral packet information, including registration instructions, is completed by the parents.
2. Once the registration process has been completed, the consent to evaluate will be signed by the parent.

3. An evaluation will be completed by the speech-language pathologist. Parents and teachers will also participate in this process by filling out rating scales. In some cases, a school psychologist may be a part of the evaluation team.
4. Following completion of the evaluation, an eligibility meeting and initial IEP meeting, if applicable, will be scheduled.

Student Support Team (SST)/Response to Intervention (RTI)

Generally, prior to a child being referred for a special education evaluation, the student goes through various levels, or tiers, in the school's SST/RTI process; however, it is important to note that RTI may not be used to delay or deny a full and individual evaluation under [34 C.F.R. § 300.304 through 34 C.F.R. § 300.311](#) for a child suspected of having a disability. For more information about the BCSS RTI process, please refer to the Barrow County School System RTI manual. [Barrow County Multi Tiered System of Supports Guide 6.2020.docx \(sharepoint.com\)](#) Below is a description of the three tiers that make up the RTI process:

1. Tier I: Evidence-based instruction that is based on the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE). It includes effective school-wide behavior supports and differentiated instruction to promote higher levels of student engagement and achievement.
2. Tier II: Interventions following standard protocols for students in the school who require extended learning opportunities or students who are not making adequate progress and need additional interventions. Tier II interventions are group-based interventions and include EIP, ESOL and any group-based instruction.
3. Tier III: If students are not making the expected levels of progress in Tier II, they are referred to the school's SST/RTI Tier III committee. Tier III interventions are intensive, individualized interventions developed to meet the specific needs for students.

Prevention through intervention is stressed in all tiers. Alternative strategies for increasing the student's academic, social, and behavioral performance are identified, reviewed, and implemented. SST/RTI committees should follow the procedures outlined in the Georgia RTI Guidance Document and policies set forth by the State of Georgia (GA Board Rule 160-4-2-.32). Documentation of response to Tier II and Tier III interventions will be included in the referral packet if a child is referred from Tier III to Tier IV, which is a special education referral. It is best practice for student referrals to be preceded by evidenced-based academic and/or behavioral interventions.

Not Referred for Further Evaluation Should the SST/RTI committee develop alternative strategies and interventions that are successful with a student, naturally the student should not be referred for further evaluation. However, the SST/RTI committee should not exclude a student from further evaluation because the team "feels" that the student will not meet special education eligibility. The SST/RTI committee must have data to support the decision

that interventions are successful at Tier III and that the student is successful without further evaluation. The SST/RTI committee may have attempted reasonable strategies at the school-level in Tiers II and III and have physical/emotional/academic questions that might be answered by an evaluation. Remember: the SST/RTI committee is not an eligibility/placement team; therefore, the SST/RTI committee should never make decisions on special education eligibility or placement.

Referred for Further Evaluation SST/RTI should have attempted reasonable alternative strategies and interventions. If those strategies have not been successful, and data supports the potential need for additional supports, the SST/RTI committee may make a referral for an evaluation to determine if physical/emotional/academic problems may be interfering with a student's school progress.

Twelve weeks of intervention and progress monitoring data should be collected for a specific learning disability consideration (unless the implemented research-based intervention specifies a lesser time period for effectiveness). However, if data shows progress is being made, continue the interventions as long as they are effective. Please note that not all eligibility areas require 12 weeks of data.

Please contact the appropriate school psychologist for guidance. Be sure to document changes in the interventions, including changes in frequency/duration. If the SST/RTI committee determines that the student has made sufficient progress, return to a lower tier.

Student Support Team Report Be sure to include documentation of interventions implemented, observations, and any assessment results. Document this on the Barrow County School System SST/RTI forms located on Infinite Campus (complete meeting minutes and progress monitoring chart). If the student is referred directly for an evaluation and is bypassing the SST/RTI process, the SST/RTI committee should document the reason for the bypass through the minutes of at least one SST/RTI meeting. Interventions to address student needs should be implemented immediately and progress monitoring should begin.

*Please consult with a district special education coordinator when considering an SST/RTI bypass prior to the special education referral.

Steps in the Initial Evaluation Process

1. Appropriate BCSS staff or the parent make a referral for an evaluation. Parental consent for evaluation is received from the parent. Once BCSS staff receives the signed consent, the 60-calendar-day timeline begins.
2. Review all other data about the child, which includes the permanent record, current classroom assessments and progress, results of any provided interventions, previous results of statewide assessments, attendance data, and disciplinary history.

3. Classroom observations in a setting in which the concern has been noted are conducted to determine current performance and to look for specific causes or reasons why the child is not learning or behaving at the expected levels. The observations are usually conducted by a professional with expertise.
4. The current and previous teachers of the child are interviewed. The focus of the interviews is to determine whether the concerns cited as the reason for the evaluation are new issues or recurring issues. In addition, the interviews will provide information on any interventions or strategies that may have been tried previously.
5. The parents are interviewed as part of the evaluation process. If the parents have any independent evaluations or medical information they have not provided to BCSS, they should provide it as part of the initial evaluation process. Information the parents have about learning at home, such as how long it takes the child to complete their homework and how much help the child requires, assists in the evaluation. Often the behavior of the child at home is also discussed to determine whether the parents see the same behaviors as the school, what kind of interventions work at home, and how frequently certain behaviors occur. In addition, many times the BCSS psychologist may screen for adaptive behavior, which could ask questions about household chores or tasks, about money management, and other tasks that do not appear to be educational to the parent. This information contributes to the whole picture of the child.
6. All previous information and data on the child are reviewed (e.g., previous evaluations, medical reports, psychological evaluations, and independent evaluations). This helps the team determine which evaluations to administer for the current evaluation.
7. Many evaluations include the administration of surveys or questionnaires. These are usually published forms of surveys or questionnaires that gather information about the typical day-to-day behavior of the child. The surveys or questionnaires are often completed by multiple people who know the child, providing a comprehensive view that encompasses school, home, and the community.
8. As all this information is received, the multidisciplinary evaluation team begins to review the information and determine what individual assessments are needed, and by whom, to provide more in-depth information. The needed assessments are then conducted and may include a variety of instruments that assess learning, listening, speaking, behavior, sensory, motor, and/or academics.
9. As these assessments are administered, other areas of concern may arise that need to be evaluated, and additional assessments will be conducted as necessary. For example, fine motor skills may not have been a concern when the evaluation was requested, but information from the assessments and observations may

indicate a concern that warrants an evaluation of the fine motor skills as a component of the comprehensive evaluation.

10. All instruments are scored, and the results are analyzed and interpreted by the professionals who administered the instruments.
11. The person coordinating the evaluation discusses the results of the initial evaluation with the parent and educators, with an accompanying eligibility and/or evaluation report at the eligibility meeting. Completion of the initial evaluation is defined as completion of the evaluation report(s). The latest date of the evaluation report(s) will serve as the end of the initial evaluation. As a matter of best practice, within 10 calendar days after the 60-day initial evaluation, a determination of eligibility should be made.
12. The eligibility meeting determines whether a disability exists and what the impact is on the education of the child. If there is an adverse impact, the team may determine that the child is a child who needs special education and related services. Evaluation report(s) and an eligibility report are created regardless of whether the child is determined eligible.

**If the parents of a child referred for a special education evaluation refuse to give written consent for an initial evaluation, the Barrow County School System may but is not required to pursue the evaluation through mediation or a due process hearing.*

BCSS Referral Procedures for a Special Education Evaluation

Once it has been determined that a student requires a special education evaluation, the following steps will need to be taken:

1. Ask the parent to sign the **BCSS Consent to Screen** document.
2. Conduct Hearing and Vision Screening:
 - a. The school may either administer vision and hearing screenings or attach documentation of vision and hearing screenings conducted outside the school environment (i.e., health department, doctor's office, etc.). An evaluation cannot be accomplished until vision and hearing is either passed or resolved by appropriate medical personnel.
 - b. Students may be re-screened within several days after failure unless failure is due to other circumstances that require a longer wait (colds, earaches, etc.).
 - c. If you know that the student wears glasses, be sure to screen with the glasses, AND document that the student wore their glasses for the screening.
 - d. Vision/hearing results must be current within one calendar year of the special education eligibility meeting.
 - e. Often a child may pass near vision but not distant vision. In this case, you may continue the evaluation process; however, the school should still follow-up

with a letter to parents notifying them of their child's failed distant vision screening.

- f. **Failed Vision** (on 2nd attempt) – The school-level hearing and vision coordinator will contact the parent by phone and letter to notify them of results. The parent is responsible for scheduling an eye exam and reporting results to the school. If the school suspects the parent is unable to afford the exam or glasses, contact the school's social worker for assistance.
- g. **Failed Hearing** (on 2nd attempt) – The school-level hearing and vision coordinator will send a letter home to the parents and make a RESA (Regional Educational Service Agency) referral for an audiological evaluation. The results will be sent to the school following the evaluation.

**In either case, please only send a completed evaluation referral packet to the School Psychologist with the hearing and vision passed/resolved.*

- 3. Once the student has passed vision and hearing, start gathering the referral packet information as indicated on the **Referral Packet Requirements Checklist**. Once achievement testing is complete, send the protocol to the School Psychologist for scoring within five days. The Psychologist will score the achievement assessment and send the results back to the person collecting the referral packet information. All other scorable items should be sent in with the completed referral packet after the consent to evaluate is signed.
 - a. Hold an SST/RTI meeting to review and discuss results of screening and achievement testing. During this meeting, confirm that the results of screening match the areas of RTI being addressed and make any necessary adjustments.
 - b. Be sure to invite the parent and the referring teacher to the meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to determine whether a referral for a special education evaluation is appropriate for the student.
- 4. If the team determines that a special education evaluation is appropriate, continue to follow the instructions on the **Referral Packet Requirements** cover page to ensure all items that are needed for the referral packet have been collected promptly and accurately. The Special Education IEP Facilitator or designee and teacher collecting the initial referral packet will collaborate to ensure guidelines and timelines are followed.
- 5. If the parent agrees and wants to proceed with a special education evaluation, they must sign a **Consent for Evaluation** document from GO-IEP. Informed written parental consent must be obtained before conducting an evaluation. When the Consent for Evaluation document is given to the parent(s), please also give them the list of evaluation instruments and a copy of the Procedural Safeguards/Parental Rights.

- a. Signed consent initiates the 60-day timeline to complete the evaluation reports and hold the eligibility meeting.
 - b. The received-by date on the Consent for Evaluation form starts the 60-day countdown. Pre- and post-planning days do count towards the 60 days. Breaks lasting more than 5 consecutive days are not included in the 60 days.
6. Upon receiving the Consent to Evaluate, the teacher who receives it will sign and date the form indicating it was received, place it in the completed referral packet and submit the packet to the Special Education IEP Facilitator. At that time, the IEP Facilitator will record parental response and enter the date of the Consent to Evaluate into GO-IEP.
7. When the Psychologist receives the completed referral packet, they will verify the accuracy of the Consent to Evaluate date entered in GO-IEP.
8. Once the finished packet is reviewed and determined to be complete by the Special Education IEP Facilitator, a copy of the referral packet should be made for the school files, including the Consent to Evaluate, and the list of evaluation instruments. The IEP Facilitator will then forward the packet to the appropriate School Psychologist within 5 days of receipt.
9. Referrals for Psychological/Educational/Speech-Language/Occupational Therapy/Physical Therapy/Augmentative and Alternative Communication: Completed evaluation referrals will be logged in by the Special Education Department at the BCSS Board Office and given to appropriate evaluation staff.
10. Staff will complete evaluations according to the Georgia Department of Education timeline requirements. The school-level staff in collaboration with the School Psychologist will schedule an Initial Eligibility meeting to determine eligibility and the need for an IEP.

BCSS Referral Procedures for Students Receiving English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Services

If a student in the Student Support Team (SST)/Response to Intervention (RTI) process is an English Learner (EL) student and he/she is not making adequate progress through SST/RTI interventions and a referral for a special education referral is recommended, follow the procedures listed below:

1. At the next scheduled RTI meeting, the ESOL teacher will bring the completed EL Background Information Form and the student's ACCESS scores to the meeting to be reviewed. Consent to screen will be signed at this meeting.
2. Send signed screener, passed/resolved hearing & vision, EL Background Information form, and copies of all ACCESS scores to the school psychologist.

3. The School Psychologist contacts the BCSS Language and Cultural Diversity Specialist, or another appropriate source, to determine if the student can be evaluated in English or if the administration of the Bilingual Verbal Ability Tests (BVAT) is warranted.
4. After that determination is made, the School Psychologist informs the referring school whether they can proceed to administer the Woodcock Johnson-IV Achievement (WJ-IV) or other achievement testing.
5. In the interim, the referring school continues to gather other needed information for the referral packet (e.g., observations, work samples, anecdotal records).
6. If the BVAT indicates English is not the student's dominant language, the school psychologist will consult with the Special Education Director and the Language and Cultural Diversity Specialist to determine whether the child will be evaluated by local or contract personnel who can evaluate in the student's dominant language.
7. The School Psychologist informs the referring school of the decision. At that point the Consent to Evaluate is obtained from the parent and the referral packet is sent to the School Psychologist.

BCSS Referral Procedures for Students Receiving Speech & Language Services

If concerns of an academic and/or behavioral nature for a Speech/Language student are primarily linked or driven by the area of eligibility (i.e. speech and language) then the process of writing goals, progress monitoring, and managing paperwork should be dealt with directly through the IEP without referral back to the RTI process. However, at times, a student with an IEP for speech and/or language has new academic and/or behavioral concerns that are logically separable from speech and language difficulties and are not addressed in the IEP. In this situation, the SST/RTI and special education processes will overlap. Please adhere to the following procedures:

1. Conduct a simultaneous IEP/SST to document the academic weaknesses in the IEP and start interventions and progress monitoring through Tier 3.
2. Intervention and progress monitoring updates can be held through the SST process.
3. If the student is ready for a full psychoeducational evaluation, another simultaneous IEP/SST meeting is held. The reevaluation data review and consent for evaluation documents must be completed through the IEP process and documented through SST.

BCSS Referral Procedures for Parentally-placed Children in Private Schools and Home-Schooled Children

If a parent or the private school staff suspects a child of having a disability, the Barrow County School System will conduct an evaluation in a timely manner. The child must pass a hearing and vision screening. The BCSS can conduct a hearing and vision screening upon receiving

consent from the parents, or parents may obtain hearing/vision screening from the child's physician or the health department. Parents and private schools are asked to provide documentation of interventions implemented and progress monitoring prior to referral. The feedback will help the evaluator identify the student's deficits in the area(s) of suspected disability. This will also help the staff determine if an SLP will be involved in the initial steps of the evaluation process. The SLP will be notified if a speech evaluation is needed.

Once a request for an evaluation is received, follow the procedures listed below:

1. Contact the appointed District Special Education Coordinator for the student's home school if they are a Barrow County resident. For home school students, contact the District Special Education Coordinator for the school the child would attend if enrolled in public school. The SST/RTI meetings will be scheduled by the appropriate school. Please note that parents of homeschooled children within the district are responsible for transporting the child to the board office or a mutually agreed upon location for assessment. Students will need to register prior to testing. Registration is coordinated through the RTI Coordinator, District Special Education Coordinator, and the registration department.
2. The private school representative will be responsible for bringing the student's SST/RTI documentation to the meeting. For home school students, this responsibility will lie with the parent(s). All SST/RTI documentation is to be provided on Barrow County School System's SST/RTI forms.
3. At the meeting, review baseline data, documentation of research-based interventions, and progress monitoring. If the SST/RTI documentation is adequate, and the student is not making adequate progress, have the student's parent/guardian sign the Consent to Screen form.
4. If the student attends the meeting, screen their vision and hearing on the day of the meeting. If the student is not present, the Special Education Program Specialist or IEP Facilitator will facilitate scheduling a time for the student to come to the public school to have their vision and hearing screened.
5. Complete the referral packet using the **Referral Packet Requirements Checklist** (in appendix). Once the referral packet is complete, a follow-up SST/RTI meeting is held to discuss progress and achievement testing results and obtain a Consent to Evaluate from the student's parent/guardian if warranted.
6. The IEP Facilitator will send the completed referral packet to the School Psychologist assigned to the school.
7. Evaluations are conducted based on timeline expiration dates.

Once testing is complete, the School Psychologist will contact the school's IEP Facilitator, Program Specialist, and/or District Special Education Coordinator to schedule a time to hold an eligibility/IEP meeting. If the student is eligible for special education services, the IEP

team will develop an IEP (if the student is a resident of Barrow County) and offer services based on student needs as determined by the IEP committee. If the parent chooses to enroll the child, the IEP team will project an appropriate implementation date based upon enrollment. If the parent chooses to continue the student's placement in a private school, then that will be documented in the meeting notes section of the IEP and the parent will indicate they do not consent to services on the consent for services form. The original copies of the IEP and Eligibility Report will be sent to the county office.

For students who are only found eligible for speech-language impairment, and the parent chooses not to enroll, the IEP meeting notes will reflect this decision. Eligibility will be determined following the same procedures as other speech-language impaired students who are enrolled in the Barrow County School System. The IEP will be offered if the student intends to enroll in the Barrow County School System, and if the student does not enroll, a service plan may be developed.

BCSS Referral Procedures for Students Who Attend Private School in Barrow County but Are Not Barrow County Residents

If the child does not live in Barrow County but attends a private school in Barrow County, the county will evaluate the child, and the eligibility team will determine eligibility. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the eligibility status to the school system of residence. The system of residence is responsible for offering services, not the Barrow County School System unless it is for speech services only, and in that case, an ISP will be developed.

Private School Residency Requirements for Students aged 5–21 Attending Schools Outside Their Home District

The district of residence always has some responsibility to conduct Child Find for any of its residents. When a child is enrolled in a private school in another district, then both districts have an obligation, and they must work together to not delay access to the child find activities.

The referral process is for the purpose of the identification of a suspected disability where special education services may be warranted. Referrals are NOT to be made for the purposes of assessing attentional issues or to gain accommodation on statewide or standardized testing.

Private Evaluations

Oftentimes parents and caregivers have private testing (e.g., speech, occupational therapy, psychological, etc.) conducted and provide results to the school. Upon receipt of this documentation, an SST/RTI committee meeting should be held to document receipt of the evaluation and consider the findings. At this point, the RTI process may begin, or further

testing may be recommended. Schools should collaborate with their assigned School Psychologist for the next steps and guidance.

For a student who already has an IEP, please contact the school's District Special Education Coordinator or Program Specialist for guidance. The IEP Team should convene, document, and consider the results of the private evaluation, and update the IEP as necessary.

Related Services Evaluations (OT, PT, O & M, Audiology)

Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Orientation and Mobility, and Audiology Related Services are contracted through Northeast Georgia RESA Shared Services. If an evaluation is needed, please refer to the **Northeast Georgia RESA Shared Services Referral** documentation process. Contact the school's Program Specialist for this resource.

Parent Request for an Evaluation

Whenever the parent requests an evaluation or when a child has been referred for an initial comprehensive evaluation, the LEA must give the parent a copy of their procedural safeguards, or parental rights, document, and provide an explanation to ensure that the parent understands these rights. If a parent's primary language is not English, a translated copy in their language must be given to the parent whenever feasible. Translations may be accessed online at the Parents' Rights link on the Special Education web page of the GA DOE website.

If the referral is made by parental request, the district can either agree to or refuse the request. If the district refuses, it must give the parent written notice explaining the reason(s) why it is declining to initiate an evaluation, what data the decision was based upon, and other factors considered. The parents then have the right, if they choose, to request a due process hearing to seek a favorable ruling to conduct an evaluation.

If a parent requests a direct referral, please have them complete this form and then return it to your school's psychologist.

[Parent Direct Request for Eval form.docx \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

B. Timeframes for Evaluations

The timeframe for evaluation is 60 Calendar Days.

Once the signed **Consent for Evaluation** document is received by an employee of the Barrow County School System, the 60-day timeline begins. The evaluation process will be completed no later than 60 calendar days from the 'received by' date (the 'received by' date counts as day one). If consent is received 30 days or more before the end of the school year (defined as the last day teachers are under contract), the evaluation process must be completed within the 60-day time period. Holiday breaks and other circumstances when children are not in attendance

for five consecutive school days are not counted toward the 60-day calendar timeline, including the weekend days before and after such holiday periods, if contiguous to the holidays. The summer vacation period in which the majority of teachers are not under contract is not included in the 60-day timeline for evaluation; however, pre- and post-planning days do count toward the 60 days. Nevertheless, the Barrow County School System is not prohibited from conducting evaluations over the summer vacation period. Also, students who turn three during the summer period or other holiday periods must have an eligibility decision and IEP, if appropriate, in place by their third birthday.

Exceptions

The timeframe described above does not apply if

1. The parent of a child repeatedly fails or refuses to produce the child for the evaluation,
2. A child enrolls in BCSS after the relevant timeline has begun, and prior to a determination by the child's previous school system as to whether the child is a child with a disability. This exception applies only if BCSS is making sufficient progress to ensure prompt completion of the evaluation, and the parent and BCSS have agreed to a specific time when the evaluation will be completed; or
3. If extenuating circumstances (e.g., illness, unusual evaluation needs, or revocation of parent's consent for evaluation) affect this timeline, BCSS will document the exceptions.

C. Parental Consent

Before an evaluation can begin, the BCSS must obtain a signed, informed parental Consent for Evaluation. The BCSS has 60 calendar days to complete the evaluation process. Completion of the initial evaluation is defined as completion of the evaluation report(s). LEAs are not required to make the eligibility determination during the 60-day initial evaluation timeline. However, the eligibility decision should be made within a reasonable period of time following the completion of the evaluation. As a matter of best practice, an eligibility meeting should be held within 10 calendar days of the completion of the evaluation report(s). Development of the IEP can take up to 30 additional days; however, best practice and procedure in Barrow County is to hold the initial IEP meeting on the same day as the eligibility meeting.

Please refer to the section **Timeframes for Evaluation** for specific details on the 60-day timeline.

**If the parent refuses to give consent for the evaluation, the district may, but is not required to, pursue the evaluation through mediation or a due process hearing. If the child is homeschooled or placed by the parents in a private school at their expense, the LEA cannot use the mediation or due process hearing procedures to override the parents' refusal for evaluation.*

Parent Consent is not needed for the district to perform these routine duties:

1. Review existing evaluation information.
2. Screen a child to determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation.
3. Administer a test or evaluation that is given to all students without consent for that test or evaluation.

D. Reevaluation Consideration

Reevaluations are consistent with initial evaluations in terms of “what” an IEP team should be able to do with them when they are complete. Specifically, the purpose of the reevaluation process is to review current evaluation information and to consider what additional information might be needed to determine, among other things, whether the child continues to have a disability and the educational needs of the child. Reevaluations are considered just as important as the initial evaluation for special education. Throughout the child’s educational career, their educational needs may change, and the reevaluation process assesses the child’s evolving needs.

A reevaluation of a child with a disability, which can be a review of existing evaluation data, must be conducted at least once every three years. The reevaluation may be conducted at any time if the LEA feels the needs of the child should be reevaluated, or if the child’s teacher or parent requests a reevaluation. However, a reevaluation may not occur more than once a year unless the parent and BCSS agree to more than one in a school year.

As part of the reevaluation process, the IEP Team, including the parent and other qualified professionals, must review evaluation data, including but not limited to the current, full eligibility on the child that is already available. This review may include evaluations and information provided by the parent, current classroom-based local or state assessments, classroom-based observations, and observations by the teacher and related service providers. This review shall be conducted through a Reevaluation Data Review meeting.

The team will, based on that review, and considering how long it has been since a comprehensive evaluation of the child last occurred, identify additional data needed, if any, to determine the following:

1. The present levels of academic achievement and related developmental needs of the child;
2. Whether the child continues to have a disability or additional areas of need due to a disability;
3. Whether the child continues to need special education and related services;
4. Whether the child needs any additions or modifications to the special education and related services to meet the measurable annual goals set in the IEP; and

5. Whether the child needs any additions or modifications to special education and related services to enable participation, as appropriate, in the general education curriculum.

If, after reviewing the existing data on the child, the IEP team determines that no additional information is needed to determine whether the child continues to be a child with a disability, nor to determine the child's educational needs, then the BCSS must notify the child's parent of that determination, the reasons for the determination, and the parent's right to request assessments for the determination of eligibility and the child's educational needs. If no additional information is needed, this completes the reevaluation process, and the date of this determination is the child's reevaluation date. In no more than three years from that date, the need for a reevaluation must be considered again. If the team determines that more data is needed, please follow the procedures listed below under Reevaluation Data Review: Comprehensive Evaluation is Recommended.

The BCSS must provide written notice to the parent and must receive written informed parental consent before conducting any additional assessments as part of a reevaluation of a child with a disability. If the BCSS makes multiple reasonable attempts to contact the parent for written consent to conduct additional assessments as part of a reevaluation, and the parent does not respond after several attempts, the district must keep documentation of those attempts and lack of responses. Then the district may move forward with the reevaluation. In circumstances where the parent refuses to provide consent to administer additional assessments as part of a reevaluation, the BCSS may, but is not required to, pursue the reevaluation by using mediation or due process hearing procedures. If the BCSS does not pursue the reevaluation by using mediation or due process hearing procedures when a parent refuses consent, the district has not violated its obligations under Child Find.

BCSS Procedures for Reevaluation Data Review

1. BCSS procedures state a Reevaluation Data Review should be held at least 120 days prior to the eligibility lapse date. Please refer to the **120-day Timeline Calendar** provided by your psychologist for guidance.
2. Use the **Reevaluation Data Review Checklist** to prepare for the meeting.
3. For any eligibility due between August and December of the following school year, the Reevaluation Data Review must be held before the end of the current school year as indicated on the **120-day Timeline Calendar**
4. Please invite other team members who must be a part of the Reevaluation Data Review process (e.g., SLP, D/HH and VI teachers, OT, PT, ESOL etc.).

Reevaluation Data Review: Eligibility Reestablished with No Further Data Collection Needed

After the case manager has collected the existing data outlined on the **Reevaluation Data Review Checklist**, they will review the data with the IEP Team during the Reevaluation Data Review meeting. The existing data will assist the team in deciding whether additional information is needed to determine continued eligibility. If the IEP Team concludes that the student continues to meet eligibility requirements based on existing data, the Case Manager will complete the Reevaluation Data Review, include meeting notes and IEP paperwork as needed to be submitted to the IEP Facilitator, and subsequently, the county office. The date of this meeting becomes the new eligibility date.

Reevaluation Data Review: Comprehensive Evaluation is Recommended

If the IEP Team concludes that additional data is needed to determine continued eligibility status, the Team will indicate the request for a comprehensive evaluation on the GO-IEP Reevaluation Data Review document. The Case Manager will also get the Consent for Evaluation document signed by the parent(s) during the IEP meeting. The Case Manager will then follow the steps indicated below.

1. The Caseload Teacher will gather the reevaluation packet by using the **Referral Packet Requirements** form to guide them. Please note, the teacher will already have many of the items for the reevaluation packet, which were gathered for the Reevaluation Data Review. The Caseload Teacher has three weeks after the Reevaluation Data Review meeting to get the completed referral packet submitted to the IEP Facilitator if the RDR was held in accordance with the 120-day calendar. If not, the packet must be expedited.
 - Caseload teachers should check in with their IEP facilitator for feedback during the three-week collection phase.
2. Please turn the completed referral packet into the IEP Facilitator no later than three weeks after the Reevaluation Data Review. The IEP Facilitator will review the packet, make a copy, and submit it to the School Psychologist within one week of receiving the referral packet. The School Psychologist should have a completed referral packet three months before the eligibility lapse date.
3. Once the School Psychologist completes the evaluation, they will contact the Caseload Manager and/or Special Education IEP Facilitator to schedule the reeligibility/IEP meeting with appropriate team members to review the results and develop a new eligibility report.
4. If appropriate, the current IEP will be amended to reflect the new eligibility results (e.g., adjusted or additional goals, updated accommodations or modifications, etc.).
5. The date of the reeligibility meeting will become the new eligibility date. All paperwork will be given to the parent, saved online through GO-IEP, and signature pages will be submitted to the Special Education Records Clerk at the county office within 10 days of the meeting.

*****If a comprehensive evaluation is recommended by the Team, and eligibility lapses in the fall semester of the following school year, the Reevaluation Data Review meeting is to be held before the end of the current school year, AND the completed evaluation referral packet is to be submitted to the School Psychologist before leaving for summer break.**

For those reevaluation cases where the student was originally placed for Speech Impaired services only, but now has a suspected disability in an academic area(s), the RTI Tier III/SST Team will manage all academic interventions/progress monitoring while the Speech-Language Pathologist continues the speech/language research-based interventions. The RTI Tier III/SST administrator will coordinate with the Speech-Language Pathologist when a Reevaluation Data Review meeting is needed to discuss with parents the potential need for additional research-based interventions and/or a referral for a comprehensive evaluation to assess all student needs.

E. Comprehensive Evaluations

Review Existing Data, and Identify Additional Data Needed

As part of the reevaluation process, the IEP Team, including the parent and other qualified professionals, must review evaluation data, including but not limited to the current full eligibility on the child that is already available. The review may include evaluations and information provided by the parent, current classroom-based local or state assessments, classroom-based observations, and observations by the teacher and related service providers. The review may be conducted without a meeting if the parent and BCSS agree not to convene a meeting for that purpose. The team will, based on that review, and considering how long it has been since a comprehensive evaluation of the child last occurred, identify additional data needed, if any, to determine the following:

1. The present levels of academic achievement and related developmental needs of the child,
2. Whether the child continues to have a disability or additional areas of need due to a disability,
3. Whether the child continues to need special education and related services,
4. Whether the child needs any additions or modifications to the special education and related services to meet the measurable annual goals set in the IEP,
5. Whether the child needs any additions or modifications to special education and related services to enable participation, as appropriate, in the general education curriculum.

After reviewing the existing data on the child, if the IEP Team determines that no additional information is needed to determine whether the child continues to be a child with a disability and to determine the child's educational needs, then the BCSS must notify the child's parent of that determination, the reasons for the determination, and the parent's right to request

assessments for the determination of eligibility and the child's educational needs. If no additional information is needed, the reevaluation process is complete, and the date of that determination is the child's reevaluation date. In no more than three years from that date, the need for a reevaluation must be considered again.

Variety of Appropriate Evaluation Tools

An initial evaluation needs to look at the needs of the whole child, regardless of the reason for the referral. In a comprehensive evaluation, the BCSS will

1. informally and formally assess all areas related to any suspected disability, including, if appropriate, vision and hearing; health, social and emotional status; general intelligence; academic performance; communicative status; and motor abilities,
2. use a variety of evaluation tools and strategies to gather relevant academic, functional, and developmental information about the child, including information provided by the parents,
3. not use only a single procedure as the criterion for determining whether a child is a child with a disability or for determining an appropriate educational program for the child,
4. use assessment techniques that may assess developmental, physical, intellectual, academic, communication, and social/emotional skills,
5. use evaluation tools and strategies to provide relevant information that will directly assist the eligibility team in determining the educational needs of the child,
6. use assessments and other evaluation materials to assess specific areas of educational need and not only those that are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient (IQ) score,
7. select assessment methods that, when administered to a child with impaired sensory, manual, or communication skills (to include English Learner (EL) barriers), accurately reflect the child's aptitude or achievement level and are not culturally biased,
8. review existing data,
9. identify additional data as needed.

Information Sources:

Evaluations often use many of the following:

1. Individually administered tests and tools
 - a. Academic achievement
 - b. Cognitive ability

- c. Social/emotional/behavioral
 - d. Speech/language
- 2. Parent/Teacher/Child Questionnaires
 - a. Social/emotional/behavioral
 - b. Adaptive behavior
- 3. Parent information and input
- 4. Teacher input—verbal or written descriptions/analyzed work samples)
- 5. School-wide standardized testing results
- 6. Medical information, as appropriate
- 7. Classroom observations
- 8. Prior testing done in private settings
- 9. Prior testing done in other school settings, such as formative assessments from classroom progress monitoring.

Administered by Trained and Knowledgeable Staff

When a referral for special education evaluation is made, a multidisciplinary team will conduct the comprehensive evaluation. This team may consist of a BCSS School Psychologist, Speech-Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, the child’s teacher(s), and others as appropriate to the evaluation. The child’s parents are considered members of this team. The child should be evaluated in any area which committee members have determined to be an area of weakness. The team is responsible for formally or informally assessing the child in all areas related to a suspected disability. Formal assessments may include standardized, criterion-referenced tests and norm-referenced tests, while informal assessments may include teacher-made assessments, naturalistic observations, and interviews. The child’s parents will be asked to provide input during the evaluation process. Their information is valuable in developing the total picture of the child.

BCSS policy indicates the student be given a hearing and vision screening by trained staff during the SST/RTI process on or before the Reevaluation Data Review process. Hearing and vision results may not be older than one calendar year on the date of the eligibility meeting.

Qualified Psychological Examiner Requirements

Initial evaluation results used for consideration of eligibility for special education, if not provided by a School Psychologist with a valid S-5 (or higher) certificate in school psychology, shall be from one of the following:

- 1. A psychologist licensed by the Georgia Board of Examiners of Psychologists and having training and experience in school psychology or child clinical psychology,

2. A full-time graduate student in an approved, properly supervised school psychology or child clinical psychology training program internship/practicum, who has completed a minimum of one year of approved appropriate graduate training,
3. A Georgia Merit System employee who has a classification rating of psychologist, senior psychologist, or psychology program specialist.

Independent Educational Evaluation

When a parent of a student with a disability disagrees with an evaluation conducted by the BCSS, the parent has the right to request that the district fund an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE). An IEE is an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not an employee of the school system. Any results obtained through an IEE must be considered by the school system in any eligibility or placement decision.

The BCSS must agree to pay for the IEE or begin the due process hearing procedures to show that the school system's evaluation is adequate. If there is a due process hearing, and the district's evaluation is judged to be sufficient, then the BCSS will not have to pay for an IEE. A parent is entitled to only one IEE at public expense each time the BCSS conducts an evaluation with which the parent disagrees. The list of criteria of the independent evaluator must be the same as those required of the BCSS's evaluators. The BCSS may set a reasonable limit on the cost of the IEE. However, the BCSS must also allow parents the opportunity to prove extraordinary circumstances warranting an IEE at public expense that does not meet the BCSS's criteria.

A parent does not have the right to an IEE at public expense until they have allowed the BCSS to conduct its own evaluation. Then, if the parent disagrees with the results of the evaluation, they may request an IEE. The parent always has the right to obtain an outside IEE at their own expense, before or after the BCSS's evaluation. As long as the evaluation was conducted by someone who meets the qualifications for district's evaluations, the BCSS must consider the results of the parentally obtained evaluation.

*Notify the District Special Education Coordinator immediately upon request of an IEE by a parent. The School System is under strict time constraints once a parent makes that request.

F. Determination of Eligibility

After reviewing the existing data on the child, if additional information is needed to determine:

1. the present levels of academic achievement and related developmental needs of the child,
2. whether the child continues to have a disability or additional areas of need due to a disability,

3. whether the child continues to need special education and related services,
4. whether the child needs any additions or modifications to the special education and related services to meet the measurable annual goals set in the IEP,
5. whether the child needs any additions or modifications to the special education and related services to enable participation, as appropriate, in the general education curriculum.

The team will determine which assessments are needed to provide the additional information. If a decision is made to conduct additional assessments, then after the assessments are complete, the Eligibility Team will review those assessments and determine the child's continued eligibility and educational needs. Once the determination is made, it completes the reevaluation process, and the date of this determination is the child's reevaluation date. In no more than three years from that date, the need for reevaluation must be considered again.

Eligibility Team

Once the evaluation is completed, the Eligibility Team will decide whether the student is eligible for special education services. The Eligibility Team consists of the parent(s), the School Psychologist, the Speech-Language Pathologist (if appropriate), a General Education Teacher, a Special Education Teacher, the LEA Representative, the student (when appropriate), relevant related services staff (OT, PT, etc.), and any other individuals invited at the discretion of the parent and/or the BCSS. The Eligibility Team must meet to review evaluation results and determine eligibility before an IEP can be developed. It is the responsibility of the School Psychologist and Caseload Teacher to ensure that all evaluations and the eligibility meeting are scheduled and completed to meet state and federal-prescribed timelines.

If the parent is not present at the initial eligibility meeting, the Case Manager will send the parent a copy of the Eligibility Report, the Psychological Report, the IEP, Procedural Safeguards/Parental Rights, and Consent for Placement documents for review and signature. If the parent does not attend, the date for initiation of services must be at least 10 days from the date of the IEP meeting in order to allow for Prior Written Notice and opportunity for the parent(s) to respond.

Documentation of Evaluation Results

The Eligibility Report is the documentation that verifies if the student is or is not eligible for special education services. The School Psychologist will initiate the Eligibility Report.

Additional data may be needed and must be documented by General Education or Special Education personnel to verify a student's eligibility. An IEP Team must meet to determine eligibility and is required for all disability areas. Eligibility determination involves meeting eligibility requirements as well as not having exclusionary criteria that would prevent eligibility.

The eligibility report contains the following information:

1. Student identifying information
2. Case history that provides an overall picture of the child
3. Hearing and vision screening dates (conducted prior to administration of assessments). These screenings are completed within a year of the evaluation
4. A summary of research-based interventions that were made prior to referral (gives the committee a review of the interventions and adaptation of content, methodology, and/or instructional delivery that have already occurred)
 - a. Initial eligibility—The committee lists the interventions provided for the child. There are occasional situations that are so compellingly appropriate for Special Education consideration that it would be unacceptable to delay needed services by having to go through the RTI/SST processes. The committee must review the information presented by the parents and school to determine if the intensity of the rare, unique situation warrants referral for immediate, comprehensive special education evaluation and eligibility consideration. If it does, this section of the report is used to document that decision.
 - b. Reevaluation—The committee lists the specially designed instruction, which includes adaptation of content, methodology (specialized program), or instructional delivery. Additional areas of concern that have developed since the previous eligibility are also listed.
5. Summary of progress monitoring data toward achieving standards [data about specific scientific, research or evidence-based interventions and accurate information regarding progress monitoring data for the interventions implemented (for an initial evaluation or the specially designed instruction for reevaluation are provided)]
6. Area(s) of difficulty
7. Scientific, research, evidence-based interventions which includes baseline performance and intervention data
8. Results of district, state, and benchmark assessments
9. Individual student data
10. Exclusionary factors
11. Decision-making for eligibility
12. Summary of considerations
13. Determination of eligibility
14. Eligibility team information, including the title, position, and name of the members present.

*For Specific Learning Disability eligibility, each eligibility team member must certify in writing whether the report reflects the member's conclusions. If it does not reflect the member's conclusion, the eligibility team member must submit a separate statement presenting the member's conclusions.

The parent, who is included on the IEP team, is provided a copy of the evaluation report, which details the results of the comprehensive evaluation. Many times, a parent will request a copy of the evaluation report prior to the eligibility meeting to read and understand the results of the evaluation. The law does not require that the parent be provided with a copy prior to the eligibility decision. On occasion, it is appropriate to provide it prior to a meeting. Other times, the report is not provided until a time at which the evaluation specialist can meet with the parent(s) to explain the results of the evaluation. Many of the assessments that are administered as part of the evaluation have results that are reported in numbers that have little meaning to a parent until an explanation is also provided. If the results are confusing or disconcerting to the parent, it may be necessary to conduct a meeting to discuss the results of the evaluation and then convene a later meeting for the eligibility decision.

Exclusionary Factors

Possible exclusionary factors are discussed at length during the RTI/SST Tier 3 process as to whether the factor had an impact on the child's educational progress. Exclusionary factors are considered in eligibility determinations as well. Each factor is considered in its impact or lack of impact on educational progress, and the reason for it. Once the factors have been addressed, the team refers to the responses and to the eligibility criteria for each disability category. The BCSS utilizes the following guidance from the Georgia Department of Education when addressing each exclusionary factor:

1. Lack of appropriate instruction in reading, math, and written expression: The eligibility team discusses whether the child have access to quality instruction and research-based curricula.
2. Limited English Proficiency: It is very important to include an English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) staff member who is familiar with the child suspected of having a disability if the child being evaluated is an English Language Learner. A language profile for the child is necessary so that it specifically investigates the language proficiency in both the primary language and English.
3. Cultural Factors: A child's culture should not be a determinant factor of a disability.
4. Environmental or economic disadvantage: A child's environment or economic disadvantage should not be a determinant factor for determination of a disability. The committee thoroughly examines family

stressors that may be impacting educational progress to include homelessness, unemployment, extended illnesses, death in the family, divorce, pre-school experiences, and lack of books in the home or expectations of the family for the child.

5. Atypical education history: The team discusses if the child has high levels of mobility and/or absenteeism which may have influenced the educational progress of the child.
6. Visual, hearing, or motor disability: The committee analyzes information in order to rule out as a source of difficulty when determining specific disabilities.
7. Mutism, tongue thrust and dialectic: Mutism, tongue thrust behavior without associated speech sound impairment, and dialectic differences cannot be a speech language disorder. The committee analyzes information in order to rule out as a source of difficulty when determining specific disabilities.

Determination of the Disability and the Need for Special Education or Dismissal

The BCSS must comprehensively reevaluate a student with a disability before determining that the child is no longer a child with a disability who requires special education services (dismissal). However, a reevaluation is not needed when

1. the student graduates from high school with a regular education diploma, or
2. the student has exceeded the age of eligibility (22nd birthday) for a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

However, the BCSS will provide the student with a Summary of Academic and Functional Performance that includes recommendations for meeting postsecondary goals when the student is graduating with a regular diploma or aging out of school. Best practice would also include providing the Summary of Performance for the student who receives a Special Education Diploma or other exit document. The BCSS's policy is for a student to remain in school until the end of the semester in which the student's 22nd birthday occurs.

BCSS Professional Learning, Supervision and Technical Assistance

Existing BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: The Special Education Director, District Special Education Coordinators, Program Specialists, School Psychologists and school-level IEP Facilitators will provide ongoing professional learning for special education policies and procedures regarding *Evaluations and Reevaluations* throughout each school year. The Director of Special Education and district special education coordinators will provide up-to-date training and information regarding evaluations and reevaluations at bimonthly, school-level IEP

Facilitator meetings. Furthermore, the Director of Special Education provides training to building-level administrators during regular instructional district leadership meetings. The district special education coordinators, program specialists, and IEP facilitators provide additional professional learning to support best practices during regularly scheduled, school-level special education meetings and trainings. School psychologists provide supplementary professional learning to teachers and administrators regarding referral packet requirements, the Initial Timelines Calendar and the 120-Day Calendar, progress monitoring procedures, and the administration of achievement measures, behavior rating scales and adaptive behavior assessments. Moreover, the District MTSS/RTI Coordinator provides professional learning to assistant principals and school-level MTSS/RTI Coordinators, who then train the staff on compliant MTSS/RTI practices.

New BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: Teachers new to the Barrow County School System are trained in special education policies and procedures related to evaluations and reevaluations through a new teacher training provided by the district special education coordinators and program specialists at the beginning of each school year. They also participate in ongoing professional learning that is provided for existing teachers, as described above, as well as professional learning that is provided by administration and other support staff such as the District MTSS/RTI Coordinator and school psychologists. Additionally, new special education teachers are assigned a veteran mentor teacher in their school building to provide support and guidance regarding evaluations and reevaluations throughout the school year. IEP facilitators also work closely with new teachers and mentors to ensure the mentoring process is effective and to give additional clarity and support regarding evaluation and reevaluation policy and procedure.

Evidence of Training: Professional learning will be documented through agendas, sign-in sheets, and beginning of year Policy and Procedure Review documents. This documentation will be stored electronically on the Shared drive and originals will be housed in the Special Education Administrative Assistant's office.

Supervision and Monitoring Procedures: At the beginning of the school year, school psychologists review all initial referrals to prioritize them. They collaborate on the yearly Special Education Timelines Report, documenting initial evaluations, allowing them to monitor all initial timelines for the BCSS.

School psychologists also pull a report of the Reevaluation Data Reviews that are due during the current school year, share that information with school-level IEP Facilitators, and monitor these throughout the year. Furthermore, school psychologists meet monthly to discuss individual cases and general policies and procedures regarding evaluations and reevaluations within the BCSS.

The Special Education Director, district special education coordinators, and program specialists monitor the GO-IEP Dashboard for eligibility timelines routinely and follow-up with IEP Facilitators when students are approaching critical timelines. If a concern arises, the IEP Facilitator and/or District Special Education Coordinator will conference with the teacher(s) to provide support in adhering to compliant evaluation practices. Special Education Teachers are also asked to monitor their GO-IEP Dashboard weekly, so they are continuously aware of timelines related to evaluations and reevaluations. Additionally, teachers are asked to sign off on the BCSS Special Education Beginning of year Policy and Procedure Review document verifying understanding of their responsibilities as it pertains to evaluations and reevaluations throughout the school year.

Continuous communication and collaboration between the Special Education Director, district special education coordinators, program specialists, IEP facilitators, school psychologists, the MTSS/RTI Coordinator and administrators will take place to review and monitor all timelines and due dates to ensure compliance with testing policies, practices, procedures, and adherence to timelines.

Technical Assistance: Teachers and other staff who require additional technical assistance with policies and procedures related to evaluations and reevaluations will be provided with technical assistance and support through trainings, one-on-one conferences, webinars, and/or professional learning plans from the Director of Special Education, district special education coordinators, program specialists and/or designated school staff (e.g., RTI coordinators, assistant principals, special education IEP facilitators, etc.). If teachers continue to have difficulty despite the technical assistance they receive, building-level administrators will be notified so they may determine next steps to ensure remediation and compliance.

State Rule 160-4-7.05—Eligibility Determination and Categories of Eligibility

A. Definitions for areas of disability for children aged 3 to 21

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

Autism Spectrum Disorder is a developmental disability, generally evident before age three, which adversely affects a student's educational performance and significantly affects developmental rates and sequences, verbal and non-verbal communication, and social interaction and participation. Other characteristics often associated with autism are unusual responses to sensory experiences, engagement in repetitive activities, stereotypical movements, and resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines. Students with autism vary widely in their abilities and behavior. The term does not apply if a student's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the student has an emotional and behavioral disorder.

The term of Autism may also include students who have been diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Asperger's Disorder, Rett's Syndrome, or Childhood Disintegrative Disorder provided the student's educational performance is adversely affected and the student meets the eligibility and placement requirements. Autism may exist concurrently with other areas of disability.

Evaluations and Assessments

The following evaluations and assessments shall be utilized to determine the presence of the characteristics of autism spectrum disorder:

1. a comprehensive psychological evaluation to include a formal assessment of intellectual functioning and an assessment of adaptive behavior,
2. an educational evaluation to include an assessment of educational performance and current functioning levels,
3. a communication evaluation to include assessment of verbal and non-verbal communication, prosody (linguistics including intonation, rhythm, and focus in speech), and pragmatic language utilizing both formal and informal measures,
4. behavioral evaluations to include assessment of social interaction and participation, peer and adult interactions, capacity to relate to others, stereotypical behaviors, resistance to change, atypical responses to sensory stimuli, persistent preoccupation with or attachment to objects, and other behaviors often associated with autism spectrum disorder,

5. a developmental history to include developmental differences and delays and age of onset, which is typically before the age of three. A child may be diagnosed as a child with autism spectrum disorder after age three if the characteristics of autism spectrum disorder are met.

Eligibility and Placement

Eligibility shall be based on an assessment of the five characteristic areas associated with autism spectrum disorder. The assessments shall minimally document that each of the characteristic areas of (a) developmental rates and sequences, (b) social interaction and participation, and (c) verbal and nonverbal communication are affected. The adverse effect on a child's educational performance shall be documented and based on the following criteria.

1. **Developmental rates and sequences:** A child exhibits delays, arrests, and/or inconsistencies in the acquisition of motor, sensory, social, cognitive, or communication skills. Areas of precocious or advanced skill development may also be present, while other skills may develop at typical or extremely depressed rates. The order of skill acquisition frequently differs from typical developmental patterns.
2. **Social interaction and participation:** A child displays difficulties and/or idiosyncratic differences in interacting with people and participating in events. Often a child is unable to establish and maintain reciprocal relationships with people. A child may seek consistency in environmental events to the point of exhibiting rigidity in routines.
3. **Communication (verbal and/or nonverbal):** A child displays a basic deficit in the capacity to use verbal language for social communication, both receptively and expressively. Characteristics may involve both deviance and delay. Verbal language may be absent or, if present, may lack the usual communicative form, or the child may have a nonverbal communication impairment. Some children with autism may have good verbal language but have significant problems in the effective social or pragmatic use of communication.
4. **Sensory processing:** A child may exhibit unusual, repetitive, or unconventional responses to sensory stimuli of any kind. A child's responses may vary from low to high levels of sensitivity.
5. **Repertoire of activities and interests:** A child may engage in repetitive activities and/or may display marked distress over changes, insistence on following routines, and a persistent preoccupation with or attachment to objects. The capacity to use objects in an appropriate or functional manner may be absent, arrested, or delayed. A child may have difficulties displaying a range of interests and/or imaginative play. A child may exhibit stereotypical body movements.

A child with autism spectrum disorder may be served by any appropriately certified teacher in any educational program as described in the child's individualized education program (IEP). The identification of autism spectrum disorder for educational programming does not dictate a specific placement; however, it is based on the assessed strengths, weaknesses and individual goals and objectives of the child.

DEAF/BLIND

Deaf/Blind means concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

Eligibility and Placement

1. For a child to be determined eligible for placement in special programs for the deaf/blind, the child shall have current optometric or ophthalmological examination and an audiological evaluation, all administered by qualified professionals. Children who are deaf/blind shall have an audiological evaluation administered by a certified/licensed audiologist annually, or more often if needed. The annual audiological evaluation shall include, but is not limited to an otoscopic inspection, unaided and aided pure tone and speech audiometry (as applicable), immittance testing, word recognition, hearing aid check and electro-acoustic analysis of the hearing aid (if amplified), and an analysis of a frequency modulated (FM) system check (if utilized). A comprehensive written report is required indicating the dates of the audiological evaluation and a description of the results of the audiological testing and amplification evaluation. In addition, the report should include a description of classroom environmental modifications which will assist the IEP team in making instructional decisions, the child's ability to understand spoken language with and without amplification, and an interpretation of the results as they apply to the child in their classroom setting.
2. Children who are deaf/blind may receive educational services in classes with other disabled children; however, the class-size ratio for deaf/blind shall be maintained.

Additional Requirements:

Each child who has been diagnosed as deaf/blind shall be reported in the Georgia Deaf/Blind Census.

DEAF/HARD OF HEARING

Deaf/Hard of Hearing(D/HH): A child who is deaf or hard of hearing is one who exhibits a hearing loss that, whether permanent or fluctuating, interferes with the acquisition or maintenance of auditory skills necessary for the normal development of speech, language, and academic achievement and, therefore, adversely affects a child's educational performance.

A child who is deaf can be characterized by the absence of enough measurable hearing (usually a pure tone average of 66-90+ decibels American National Standards Institute without amplification) such that the primary sensory input for communication may be other than the auditory channel.

A child who is hard of hearing can be characterized by the absence of enough measurable hearing (usually a pure tone average range of 30-65 decibels American National Standards Institute without amplification) that the ability to communicate is adversely affected; however, the child who is hard of hearing typically relies upon the auditory channel as the primary sensory input for communication.

Eligibility and Placement

1. The eligibility report shall include audiological, otological, and educational evaluation reports.
 - a. Audiological evaluations shall be provided with the initial referral. Children who are deaf or hard of hearing shall have an audiological evaluation administered by a certified/licensed audiologist annually, or more often if needed. The annual audiological evaluation shall include but is not limited to an otoscopic inspection, unaided and aided pure tone and speech audiometry (as applicable), immittance testing, word recognition, hearing aid check and electro-acoustic analysis of the hearing aid (if amplified), and an analysis of a frequency modulated (FM) system check (if utilized). A comprehensive written report shall be included in the audiological evaluation. This written report shall include but is not limited to the date of the audiological evaluation, description of the results of the audiological testing, an amplification evaluation including the child's ability to understand spoken language with or without amplification, as well as an interpretation of the results as they apply to the child in their classroom setting.
 - b. An otological evaluation report from appropriately licensed or certified personnel is required at the time of initial placement in the program for the deaf/hard of hearing. The otological evaluation report is required as medical history pertinent to the absence of hearing. If such a report is not available upon initial placement, it shall be obtained within 90 days of placement. The initial or most recent otological evaluation result shall be

summarized, and that otological evaluation report shall be attached to the eligibility report.

- c. A comprehensive educational assessment shall be used in the development of the child's individualized education program. The educational evaluation shall include assessment data from more than one measure and shall include but is not limited to information related to academic/achievement levels, receptive and expressive language abilities, receptive and expressive communication abilities, social and emotional adjustment, and observational data relative to the child's overall classroom performance and functioning.
2. A psychological evaluation, using instruments appropriate for children who are deaf or hard of hearing is recommended as part of the overall data when eligibility is being considered.
3. Children who exhibit unilateral hearing loss may be considered for eligibility provided documentation exists that indicates academic or communicative deficits are the result of the hearing loss.

Additional Requirements

1. An evaluation of the communication needs of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing shall be considered in the program and class placement decisions. An evaluation of a child's communication needs shall include but is not limited to language and communication needs and abilities, opportunities for direct communication with peers and professional personnel in the child's preferred language and communication mode, the severity of loss, educational abilities, academic level, and a full range of needs including opportunities for direct instruction in the child's language and communication mode.
2. Any classroom to be used for a child who is deaf or hard of hearing shall be sound-treated and present an appropriate acoustical environment for the child. All placements, including regular education placements and desk arrangements within classrooms, shall be made so that environmental noise and interruptions are minimized.
3. Recommendation of the appropriate educational environment, including acoustical considerations, should be made by the IEP Team.
4. Each LEA shall have written procedures to ensure the proper functioning of assistive amplification devices used by children who are deaf or hard of hearing. These procedures shall include the designated qualified responsible personnel, daily and ongoing schedules for checking equipment, as well as follow-up procedures.

EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOR DISORDER

An emotional and behavioral disorder (EBD) is an emotional disability characterized by the following:

1. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers, and/or teachers. For preschool-age children, this would include other care providers
2. An inability to learn which cannot be adequately explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors
3. A consistent or chronic inappropriate type of behavior or feelings under normal conditions
4. A displayed pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
5. A displayed tendency to develop physical symptoms, pains, or unreasonable fears associated with personal or school problems.

A student with EBD is a student who exhibits one or more of the above emotionally based characteristics of sufficient duration, frequency, and intensity that it/they interfere(s) significantly with educational performance to the degree that provision of special education services is necessary. For preschool-age children, these characteristics may appear within the preschool environment or in another setting documented through an extended assessment period. The student's difficulty is emotionally based and cannot be adequately explained by intellectual, cultural, sensory, or general health factors.

Eligibility and Placement

1. A child may be considered for placement in a program for children with EBD based upon an eligibility report that shall include the following:
 - a. Documentation of comprehensive prior extension of services available in the regular program to include counseling, modifications of the regular program or alternative placement available to all children, and data-based progress monitoring of the results of interventions
 - b. Psychological and educational evaluations
 - c. Report of behavioral observations over a significant period of time
 - d. Appropriate social history to include information regarding the history of the child's current problem(s) and the professional services and interventions that have been considered or provided from outside the school
 - e. Adequate documentation and written analysis of the duration, frequency, and intensity of one or more of the characteristics of emotional and behavioral disorders.
2. A child must not be determined to be a child with an Emotional and Behavioral Disorder if the primary factor for that determination is
 - a. lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including the essential components of reading instruction,

- b. lack of appropriate instruction in math,
 - c. lack of appropriate instruction in writing,
 - d. limited English proficiency,
 - e. visual, hearing, or motor disability,
 - f. intellectual disabilities,
 - g. cultural factors,
 - h. environmental or economic disadvantage,
 - i. atypical educational history (multiple school attendance, lack of attendance, etc.)
3. The term does not include children with social maladjustment unless it is determined that they are also children with EBD. A child whose values and/or behavior are in conflict with the school, home, or community or who has been adjudicated through the courts or other involvement with correctional agencies is neither automatically eligible for nor excluded from EBD placement. Classroom behavior problems and social problems, e.g., delinquency and drug abuse, or a diagnosis of conduct disorder, do not automatically fulfill the requirements for eligibility for placement.

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY (Mild, Moderate, Severe, Profound)

Intellectual disabilities refer to significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning which exists concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior that adversely affects educational performance and originates before age 18. Intellectual disability does not include conditions primarily due to a sensory or physical impairment, traumatic brain injury, autism spectrum disorders, severe multiple impairments, cultural influences, or a history of inconsistent and/or inadequate educational programming.

1. Significantly subaverage intellectual functioning is defined as approximately 70 IQ or below as measured by a qualified psychological examiner on individually administered, nationally normed standardized measures of intelligence.
 - a. All IQ scores defining eligibility for children with intellectual disabilities shall be interpreted as a range of scores encompassed by not more than one standard error of measurement below and above the obtained score. The standard error of measurement for a test may be found in the technical data section of the test manual.
 - b. Any final determination of the level of intellectual functioning shall be based on multiple sources of information and shall include more than one formal measure of intelligence administered by a qualified psychological examiner. There may be children with IQ scores below 70 who do not need special education. Interpretation of results should take into account factors that may affect test performance, such as socioeconomic status, native language,

and cultural background and associated disabilities in communication, sensory, or motor areas. Significantly subaverage intellectual functioning must be verified through a written summary of at least one structured observation that demonstrates the child's inability to progress in a typical, age-appropriate manner and with consideration for culturally relevant information, medical, and educational history.

2. Deficits in adaptive behavior are defined as significant limitations in a child's effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal independence, or social responsibility and especially school performance that is expected of the individual's age-level and cultural group, as determined by clinical judgment.
 - a. The child demonstrates significantly subaverage adaptive behavior in school and home, and, if appropriate, community environments. These limitations in adaptive behavior shall be established through the use of standardized adaptive behavior measures normed on the general population, including people with disabilities and people without disabilities. On these standardized measures, significant limitations in adaptive behavior are operationally defined as performance that is at least two standard deviations below the mean of either (i) one of the following three types of adaptive behavior: conceptual, social, or practical, or (ii) an overall (composite) score on a standardized measure of conceptual, social, and practical skills. Documentation must include information from at least two sources. The first source shall be someone from the local school who knows the child, and the second source shall be someone who knows the child outside of the school environment such as a parent, guardian, or person acting as a parent.
 - b. Interpretation of results should consider the child's cultural background, socioeconomic status, and any associated disabilities that may limit or impact the results of the adaptive behavior measures.
3. Deficits in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior must have existed prior to age 18.
4. A child must not be determined to be a child with an Intellectual Disability if the determinant factor for that determination is
 - a. lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including the essential components of reading instruction,
 - b. lack of appropriate instruction in math,
 - c. lack of appropriate instruction in written expression,
 - d. limited English proficiency,
 - e. visual, hearing, or motor disability,
 - f. emotional disturbances,

- g. cultural factors,
- h. environmental or economic disadvantage,
- i. atypical educational history (multiple school attendance, lack of attendance, etc.).

Eligibility and Placement

A child may be classified as having an intellectual disability (at one of the levels listed below) when a comprehensive evaluation indicates deficits in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior shall be considered equally in any determination that a child is eligible for services in the area of intellectual disability. A comprehensive educational evaluation shall be administered to determine present levels of academic functioning. The report shall be prepared for each child to provide an adequate description of the data collected and explicit pre-referral interventions prior to evaluation and to explain why the child is eligible for services in a program for children with intellectual disabilities. In situations where discrepancies exist between test score results from intellectual functioning, adaptive behavior and academic achievement, the eligibility report must contain a statement of specific factors considered which resulted in the decision of the eligibility team. Eligibility teams must establish that any limits in performance are not primarily due to the exclusionary factors and must document this in the eligibility report.

A child may be classified as having an intellectual disability at one of the levels listed below.

Mild Intellectual Disability (MID)

1. Intellectual functioning ranging between an upper limit of approximately 70 to a lower limit of approximately 55
2. Deficits in adaptive behavior that significantly limit a child's effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal independence, or social responsibility, and especially school performance that is expected of the individual's age level and cultural group, as determined by clinical judgment

Moderate Intellectual Disability (MOID)

1. Intellectual functioning ranging from an upper limit of approximately 55 to a lower limit of approximately 40
2. Deficits in adaptive behavior that significantly limit a child's effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal independence, or social responsibility, and especially school performance that is expected of the individual's age-level and cultural group as determined by clinical judgment

Severe Intellectual Disability (SID)

1. Intellectual functioning ranging from an upper limit of approximately 40 to a lower limit of approximately 25
2. Deficits in adaptive behavior that significantly limit a child's effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal independence or social responsibility, and especially school performance that is expected of the individual's age-level and cultural group as determined by clinical judgment.

Profound Intellectual Disability (PID)

1. Intellectual functioning below approximately 25
2. Deficits in adaptive behavior that significantly limit a child's effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal independence, or social responsibility and especially school performance that is expected of the child's age-level and cultural group, as determined by clinical judgment.

ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENT (OI)

Orthopedic impairment refers to a child whose severe orthopedic impairments adversely affect their educational performance to the degree that the child requires special education.

This term may include:

1. Impairment caused by congenital anomalies, e.g., deformity or absence of some limb
2. Impairment caused by disease (poliomyelitis, osteogenesis imperfecta, muscular dystrophy, bone tuberculosis, etc.)
3. Impairment from other causes, e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures

Secondary disabilities may be present, including, but not limited to, visual impairment, hearing impairment, communication impairment, and/or intellectual disability.

Eligibility and Placement

Evaluation for initial eligibility shall include the following.

1. A current medical evaluation from a licensed doctor of medicine
2. The evaluation report used for the initial eligibility shall be current within one year. The evaluation shall indicate the diagnosis/prognosis of the child's orthopedic

impairment, along with information as applicable regarding medications, surgeries, special health care procedures, and special diet or activity restrictions.

3. A comprehensive educational assessment indicating the adverse effects of the orthopedic impairment on the child's educational performance
4. Assessments shall document deficits in pre-academic or academic functioning, social/emotional development, adaptive behavior, motor development, or communication abilities resulting from the orthopedic impairment. When assessment information indicates significant deficit(s) in cognitive/academic functioning, a psychological evaluation shall be given.

Children served in a program for orthopedic impairments should be functioning no lower than criteria outlined for mild intellectual disabilities programs. For those children with orthopedic impairments served in other special education programs due to the severity of their sensory or intellectual disability, support by the OI teacher regarding the implications of the child's orthopedic impairment may be appropriate.

OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRMENT

Other Health Impairment means having limited strength, vitality or alertness including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that

1. is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, or heart condition, hemophilia, Lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, or Tourette Syndrome,
2. adversely affects a student's educational performance.

In some cases, heightened awareness to environmental stimulus results in difficulties with starting, staying on, and completing tasks; making transitions between tasks; interacting with others; following directions; producing work consistently; and organizing multi-step tasks.

Eligibility

Evaluation for initial eligibility shall include the following:

1. The medical evaluation from a licensed doctor of medicine, or in the case of ADD and ADHD an evaluation by a licensed doctor of medicine or licensed clinical psychologist, should be considered by the child's Eligibility Team as part of the process of determining eligibility. The evaluation report shall indicate the diagnosis/prognosis of the child's health impairment, along with information as applicable regarding medications, special health care procedures, and special diet

or activity restrictions. The evaluation report used for initial eligibility shall be current within one year and must document the impact of the physical condition on the vitality, alertness, or strength of the child. In cases of illness where the child's physical health and well-being are subject to deterioration or change, this report shall be updated as frequently as determined by the IEP Committee. A medical diagnosis does not automatically include or exclude a child from the determination of eligibility.

2. A comprehensive developmental or educational assessment to indicate the effects of the health impairment on the child's educational performance. Assessments shall document deficits in pre-academic or academic functioning, adaptive behavior, social/emotional development, motor, or communication skills resulting from the health impairment. When assessment information indicates significant deficits in cognitive/academic functioning, a psychological evaluation shall be given.
3. A child must not be determined to be a child with Other Health Impairment if the determinant factor for that determination is
 - a. lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including the essential components of reading instruction,
 - b. lack of appropriate instruction in math,
 - c. lack of appropriate instruction in writing,
 - d. limited English Proficiency,
 - e. visual, hearing or motor disability,
 - f. intellectual disabilities,
 - g. emotional disturbances,
 - h. cultural factors,
 - i. environmental or economic disadvantage,
 - j. atypical educational history (attendance at multiple schools, lack of attendance).

Placement and Service Delivery

1. A child meeting eligibility criteria can be served by any appropriately certified teacher in any educational program, as specified in the child's individualized education plan (IEP)
2. According to State Board of Education Rule 160-1-3-.03 Communicable Diseases, the district shall allow a child infected with a communicable disease to remain in their educational setting unless they currently present a significant risk of contagion as determined by the district after consultation with the child's physician, a knowledgeable public health official and/or a physician designated by the LEA (at the LEA's option).

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY (SDD)

The term significant developmental delay refers to a delay in a child's development in adaptive behavior, cognition, communication, motor development, or emotional development to the extent that, if not provided with special intervention, the delay may adversely affect a child's educational performance in age-appropriate activities. The term does not apply to children who are experiencing a slight or temporary lag in one or more areas of development, or a delay which is primarily due to environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage or lack of experience in age-appropriate activities. The SDD eligibility may be used for children from ages three through nine (the end of the school year in which the child turns nine).

Eligibility

1. **Initial eligibility must be established, and an IEP in place, on or before the child's seventh birthday.** SDD eligibility is determined by assessing a child in each of the five skill areas of adaptive development, cognition, communication, physical development (gross and fine motor), and social/emotional development. Any child who scores at least 2 standard deviations below the mean in one or more of the five areas or 1½ standard deviations below the mean in two or more areas shall meet eligibility for SDD.
2. For children who are kindergarten age or older, initial eligibility shall also include documented evidence that the impact on educational performance is not due to
 - a. lack of appropriate instruction in reading or literacy readiness, including the essential components of reading instruction,
 - b. lack of appropriate instruction in math or math readiness skills,
 - c. limited English proficiency,
 - d. visual, hearing or motor disability,
 - e. emotional disturbance,
 - f. cultural factors,
 - g. environmental or economic disadvantage.

The application of professional judgment is a critical element at every stage of eligibility determination: as test instruments are selected, during the evaluation process, in the analysis of evaluation results, as well as the analysis of error patterns on standardized, teacher made or other tests.

3. All five skill areas shall be assessed using at least one formal assessment. In those areas in which a significant delay is suspected, at least one additional formal assessment must be utilized to determine the extent of the delay. All formal assessments must be age appropriate, and all scores must be given in standard deviations.

4. For children eligible under SDD with hearing, visual, communication, or orthopedic impairments, a complete evaluation must be obtained to determine if the child also meets eligibility criteria for deaf/hard of hearing, visual impairments, speech and language impairments, or orthopedic impairments. Students with sensory, physical, or communication disabilities must receive services appropriate for their needs, whether that specific eligibility is determined.

Placement and Service Delivery

1. Preschool-aged (3-5) children meeting eligibility criteria as SDD and needing special education services may receive those services in a variety of placement options, as determined by the child's IEP Team and participation by other agencies, such as, but not limited to
 - a. a regular early childhood setting; Head Start programs; Georgia Pre- K classes; community daycares; private preschools,
 - b. a separate early childhood special education setting,
 - c. day school,
 - d. a residential facility,
 - e. a service provider location,
 - f. home.
2. School-aged children with SDD shall be served by any appropriately certified teacher in any educational program designed to meet the needs of the child, as specified by the child's IEP team.

SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY (SLD)

1. Specific learning disability is defined as a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not apply to children who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; intellectual disabilities; emotional or behavioral disorders; or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.
2. The child with a specific learning disability has one or more serious academic deficiencies and does not achieve adequately, according to age, to meet State-approved grade-level standards. These achievement deficiencies must be directly related to a pervasive processing deficit and to the child's response to scientific, research-based interventions. The nature of the deficit(s) is such that classroom

performance is not correctable without specialized techniques that are fundamentally different from those provided by general education teachers, basic remedial/tutorial approaches, or other compensatory programs. This is clearly documented by the child's response to instruction as demonstrated by a review of the progress monitoring available in general education and Student Support Team (SST) intervention plans as supported by work samples and classroom observations. The child's need for academic support alone is not sufficient for eligibility and does not override the other established requirements for determining eligibility.

Exclusionary Factors

1. A child must not be determined to be a child with a specific learning disability if the determinant factor for that determination is
 - a. lack of appropriate instruction in reading, to include the essential components of reading instruction (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension),
 - b. lack of appropriate instruction in math,
 - c. lack of appropriate instruction in writing,
 - d. limited English proficiency,
 - e. visual, hearing or motor disability,
 - f. intellectual disabilities,
 - g. emotional disturbances,
 - h. cultural factors,
 - i. environmental or economic disadvantage,
 - j. atypical educational history (such as irregular school attendance or attendance at multiple schools).

Required Data Collection

In order to determine the existence of a Specific Learning Disability, the group must summarize the multiple sources of evidence to conclude that the child exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement or both, relative to age, State-approved grade-level standards and intellectual development. Ultimately, specific learning disability is determined through professional judgment using multiple supporting evidence that must include:

1. Data are collected that include
 - a. at least two current (within twelve months) assessments such as the results of the CRCT or other state-required assessment, norm-referenced achievement tests, or benchmarks indicating performance that does not meet expectations for State-approved grade-level standards,

- b. information from the teacher related to routine classroom instruction and monitoring of the child's performance. The report must document the child's academic performance and behavior in the areas of difficulty,
- c. Results from supplementary instruction that
 - i. has been or is being provided that uses scientific, research, or evidence-based interventions selected to correct or reduce the problem(s) the student is having and was in the identified areas of concern,
 - ii. has been implemented as designed for the period of time indicated by the instructional strategy(ies). If the instructional strategies do not indicate a period of time the strategies should be implemented, the instructional strategies shall be implemented for a minimum of 12 weeks to show the instructional strategies' effect or lack of effect that demonstrates the child is not making sufficient progress to meet age or State-approved grade-level standards within a reasonable time frame.
- d. the research-based interventions used and the data-based progress monitoring results are presented to the parents at regular intervals throughout the interventions,
- b. includes any educationally relevant medical findings that would impact achievement,
- c. After consent is received from the parents for a comprehensive evaluation for special education determination the following must occur:
 - i. An observation by a required group member
 - ii. Documentation that the determination is not primarily due to any of the exclusionary factors
 - iii. Current analyzed classroom work samples indicating below level performance as compared to the classroom normative sample
 - iv. Documentation of a pattern of strength and weaknesses in performance and/or achievement in relation to age and grade level standards must include
 - a. A comprehensive assessment of intellectual development designed to assess specific measures of processing skills that may contribute to the area of academic weakness. This assessment must be current within twelve months and
 - b. Current Response to Intervention data-based documentation indicating the lack of sufficient progress toward the attainment of age or State-approved grade-level standards.

Eligibility Determination

As appropriate, a language assessment as part of additional processing batteries may be included.

1. The child who is eligible for services under the category of specific learning disability must exhibit the following characteristics: a primary deficit in basic psychological processes and secondary underachievement in one or more of the eight areas along with documentation of the lack of response to instructional intervention as supported by ongoing progress monitoring.
2. Deficits in basic psychological processes typically include problems in attending, discrimination/perception, organization, short-term memory, long-term memory, conceptualization/reasoning, executive functioning, processing speed, and phonological deficits. Once a deficit in basic psychological processes is documented, there shall be evidence that the processing deficit has impaired the child's mastery of the academic tasks required in the regular curriculum. Though there may exist a pattern of strengths and weaknesses, evidence must be included documenting that the processing deficits are relevant to the child's academic underachievement as determined by appropriate assessments that are provided to the child in his/her native language. Though a child may be performing below age or State-approved grade level standards, the results of progress monitoring must indicate that the child is not making the expected progress toward established benchmarks. This is indicated by comparing the child's rate of progress toward attainment of grade level standards.
3. Underachievement exists when the child exhibits a pattern of strengths and weakness in performance, achievement, or both, relative to age, State-approved grade level standards and intellectual development and when a child does not achieve adequately toward attainment of grade level standards in one or more of the following areas:
 - a. Oral expression: use of spoken language to communicate ideas
 - b. Listening comprehension: the ability to understand spoken language at a level commensurate with the child's age and ability levels
 - c. Written expression: the ability to communicate ideas effectively in writing with appropriate language
 - d. Basic reading skills: the ability to use sound/symbol associations to learn phonics in order to comprehend the text
 - e. Reading comprehension: the ability to understand the meaning of written language based in child's native language
 - f. Reading fluency skills: the ability to read and process a text with appropriate rate and accuracy

- g. Mathematics calculation: the ability to process numerical symbols to derive results, including, but not limited to, spatial awareness of symbol placement and choice of sequence algorithms for operations required
 - h. Mathematical problem solving: the ability to understand logical relationships between mathematical concepts and operations, including, but not limited to, correct sequencing and spatial/symbolic representation.
4. Progress monitoring includes the data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals, reflecting the child's progress during instruction. When reviewing progress monitoring data, those students that exhibit a positive response to the research-validated instruction being provided by general education cannot be considered as having a specific learning disability even though they may show deficits on achievement tests in the specified areas. In addition, children whose achievement in classroom academics indicates performance that is commensurate with pervasive weaknesses that are not indicative of a pattern of strengths and weaknesses may not be considered as having a specific learning disability.
 5. One group member responsible for determining specific learning disability must conduct an observation of the child's academic performance in the regular classroom after the child has been referred for an evaluation and parental consent for special education on evaluation is obtained. The observation of the child is conducted in the learning environment, including the regular classroom setting, to document the child's academic performance and behavior in the areas of difficulty. The observation must include information from the routine classroom instruction and monitoring of the child's performance.

The SLD Eligibility Group

1. The determination of whether a child suspected of having a specific learning disability is a child with a disability must be made by the child's parents and a team of qualified professionals that must include:
 - a. the child's regular teacher; or if the child does not have a regular teacher; a regular classroom teacher qualified to teach a child of their age,
 - b. a highly qualified certified special education teacher, and
 - c. a minimum of one other professional qualified to conduct individual diagnostic assessments in the areas of speech and language, academic achievement, intellectual development, or social-emotional development and interpret assessment and intervention data (such as school psychologist, reading teacher, or educational therapist). Determination of the required group member should be based on the data being reviewed and the child's individual needs.

2. Each group member must certify in writing whether the report reflects the member's conclusions. If it does not reflect the member's conclusion, the group member must submit a separate statement presenting the member's conclusions.

SPEECH/LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT

Speech or language impairment refers to a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, language, or voice impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. A speech or language impairment may be congenital or acquired. It refers to impairments in the areas of articulation, fluency, voice, or language. Individuals may demonstrate one or any combination of speech or language impairments. A speech or language impairment may be a primary disability, or it may be secondary to other disabilities.

1. *Speech Sound Production Impairment* (e.g., articulation impairment) is atypical production of speech sounds characterized by substitutions, omissions, additions, or distortions that interferes with intelligibility in conversational speech and obstructs learning successful verbal communication in the educational setting. The term may include the atypical production of speech sounds resulting from phonology, motor, or other issues. The term speech sound impairment does not include:
 - a. inconsistent or situational errors,
 - b. communication problems primarily from regional, dialectic, and/or cultural differences,
 - c. speech sound errors at or above age level according to established research-based developmental norms, speech that is intelligible and without documented evidence of adverse effect on educational performance,
 - d. physical structures (e.g., missing teeth, unrepaired cleft lip and/or palate) are the primary cause of the speech sound impairment,
 - e. children who exhibit tongue thrust behavior without an associated speech sound impairment.
2. *Language Impairment* is impaired comprehension and/or use of spoken language which may also impair written and/or other symbol systems and is negatively impacting the child's ability to participate in the classroom environment. The impairment may involve, in any combination, the form of language (phonology, morphology, and syntax), the content of language (semantics) and/or the use of language in communication (pragmatics) that is adversely affecting the child's educational performance. The term language impairment does not include:

- a. children who are in the normal stages of second language acquisition/learning and whose communication problems result from English being a secondary language unless it is also determined that they have a speech language impairment in their native/primary language,
 - b. children who have regional, dialectical, and/or cultural differences,
 - c. children who have auditory processing disorders not accompanied by language impairment,
 - d. children who have anxiety disorders (e.g., selective mutism) unless it is also determined that they have a speech language impairment. There must be a documented speech-language impairment that adversely affects the educational performance for these children to qualify for special education services.
3. *Fluency Impairment* is the interruption in the flow of speech characterized by an atypical rate or rhythm, and/or repetitions in sounds, syllables, words, and phrases that significantly reduces the speaker's ability to participate within the learning environment. Excessive tension, struggling behaviors, and secondary characteristics may accompany fluency impairments. Secondary characteristics are defined as ritualistic behaviors or movements that accompany dysfluencies. Ritualistic behaviors may include avoidance of specific sounds in words. Fluency impairment includes disorders such as stuttering and cluttering. It does not include dysfluencies evident in only one setting or reported by one observer.
4. *Voice/Resonance Impairment* is the interruption in one or more processes of pitch, quality, intensity, or resonance resonance that significantly reduces the speaker's ability to communicate effectively. Voice/Resonance Impairment includes aphonia or the abnormal production of vocal quality, pitch, loudness, resonance, and/or duration, which is inappropriate for an individual's age and/or gender. The term voice/resonance impairment does not refer to
- a. anxiety disorders (e.g., selective mutism),
 - b. differences that are the direct result of regional, dialectical, and/or cultural differences,
 - c. differences related to medical issues not directly related to the vocal mechanism (e.g., laryngitis, allergies, asthma, laryngopharyngeal reflux, acid reflux of the throat, colds, abnormal tonsils or adenoids, short-term vocal abuse or misuse, neurological pathology),
 - d. vocal impairments that are found to be the direct result of or symptom of a medical condition unless the impairment impacts the child's performance in the educational environment and is amenable to improvement with therapeutic intervention.

Evaluation, Eligibility, and Placement

All special education rules and regulations related to evaluation, eligibility, and placement must be followed, including:

Evaluation:

1. The child's response to prior evidenced-based interventions is documented prior to referral for a comprehensive evaluation.
2. A comprehensive evaluation shall be performed by a certified or licensed Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) for consideration of speech-language eligibility. Following receipt of a clear hearing and vision screening and medical clearance for voice (as appropriate) the evaluation consists of an initial screening of the child's speech sounds, language, fluency, voice, oral motor competency, academic, behavioral, and functional skills using either formal or informal assessment procedures to assist in determining if the child is a child with a disability followed by an in-depth evaluation of each area suspected of being impaired, using at least one formal test and/or procedure.
3. A full and individual initial evaluation for each area suspected of being a disability must be provided and considered prior to the child's eligibility for speech-language services. This may include assessments in the areas of health (e.g., ENT, otolaryngologist, ophthalmologist, and optometrist), vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities.
4. The evaluation is sufficient to identify all the child's special education and related service needs, whether commonly linked to the disability category in which the child has been referred or classified.
5. Children with voice/resonance impairment must have a medical evaluation to rule out physical structure ecology by a medical specialist either prior to a comprehensive evaluation or as part of a comprehensive evaluation. The presence of a medical condition (e.g., vocal nodules, polyps) does not necessitate the provision of voice therapy as special education or related service nor does a prescription for voice therapy from a medical doctor. A written order from a medical practitioner is a medical opinion regarding the medical evaluation or treatment that a patient should receive. When directed to a school, these medical orders should be considered by the team as a part of the eligibility process. The team, not a medical practitioner, determines the need for an evaluation for special education services based on documented adverse effect of the voice impairment on the child's educational performance.

6. A variety of assessment tools and strategies must be used to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child, including information provided by the parent. Information from the evaluation is used to determine whether the child is a child with a disability and the content of the child's IEP including information related to enabling the child to be involved in and progress in the general education on curriculum (or for a preschool child, to participate in appropriate activities).

Eligibility:

Determining eligibility for speech-language impaired special education on services includes three components:

1. The Speech-Language Pathologist determines the presence or absence of speech-language impairment based on Georgia rules and regulations for special education.
2. Documentation of an adverse effect of the impairment on the child's educational performance.
3. The team determines that the child is a child with a disability and is eligible for special education and appropriate specialized instruction needed to access the student's curriculum.

Eligibility shall be determined based on the documented results of at least two or more measures or procedures, at least one of which must be formal, administered in the area of impairment and documentation of adverse effect.

A speech-language disorder does not exist if

1. environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage cannot be ruled out as primary factors causing the impairment,
2. a child exhibits inconsistent, situational, transitory, or developmentally appropriate speech- language difficulties that children experience at various times and to various degrees.
3. the child has communication difficulties but not necessarily speech or language impairments. The speech-language program may not be the appropriate service delivery model to adequately meet the child's educational needs. For this reason, all children who are suspected of having communication problems shall be the subject of a Student Support Team (SST) to problem solve and implement strategies to determine and limit the adverse effect on the child's educational performance.

For nonverbal or verbally limited children and those with autism and/or significant intellectual, sensory, or physical disabilities, a multidisciplinary team of professionals shall provide a functional communication assessment of the child to determine eligibility for

speech-language services. The multidisciplinary team shall consist of professionals appropriately related to the child's area of disability.

A child is eligible for placement in a speech-language program, if following a comprehensive evaluation; the child demonstrates impairment in one or more of the following areas:

1. Speech sound
2. Fluency
3. Voice
4. Language that negatively impacts the child's ability to participate in the classroom environment.

The present adverse effect of the speech-language impairment on the child's progress in the curriculum, including social and/or emotional growth, must be documented in writing and used to assist in determining eligibility.

Placement:

Placement in the speech-language program shall be based on the results of the comprehensive assessment, and eligibility, along with all other pertinent information. Children shall not be excluded from a speech-language program based solely on the severity of the disability. Cognitive referencing (i.e., comparing language scores to IQ scores) is not permissible as the only criteria for determining eligibility for speech-language impaired services.

Communication Paraprofessionals- A communication paraprofessional is an adjunct to the Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) and assists with certain duties and tasks within the speech-language program. The communication paraprofessional is under the supervision of a certified or licensed SLP. The communication paraprofessional cannot carry their own caseload, nor do they increase the certified SLP's caseload outside of a self-contained classroom. The primary responsibility for the delivery of services, as indicated on the IEP, remains with the certified or licensed SLP. Children who receive services from the communication paraprofessional shall also receive services from the supervising SLP and/or licensed or certified SLP a percentage of the time designated in the IEP for speech-language services, but no less than one hour per month. Each LEA should develop and implement procedures for the training, use and supervision of communication paraprofessionals.

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)

Traumatic Brain Injury refers to an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects the child's educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head

injuries resulting in impairments which are immediate or delayed in one or more areas, such as cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem solving, sensory, perceptual and motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, speech, and information processing. The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative in nature, brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

Eligibility

Evaluation for eligibility shall include the following.

1. A summary of the child's pre-injury functioning status. This information may be available through previous formal evaluations, developmental assessments, achievement tests, classroom observations, and/or grade reports.
2. Verification of the TBI through the following:
 - a. A medical evaluation report from a licensed doctor of medicine indicating that TBI has occurred recently or in the past, or
 - b. Documentation of TBI from another appropriate source, such as health department or social services reports, or parents' medical bills/records.
3. A neuropsychological, psychological, or psychoeducational evaluation that addresses the impact of the TBI on the following areas of functioning:
 - a. Cognitive, including areas such as memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem-solving, speed of information processing, cognitive endurance, organization, receptive and expressive language and speed of language recall
 - b. Social/Behavioral, including areas such as awareness of self and others, interaction with others, response to social rules, emotional responses to everyday situations, and adaptive behavior
 - c. Physical/Motor, including areas such as hearing and vision acuity, speech production, eye-hand coordination, mobility, and physical endurance

Deficits in one or more of the above areas that have resulted from the TBI and adversely affect the child's educational performance shall be documented.

Placement and Service Delivery

The identification of TBI for educational programming does not dictate a specific service or placement. The child with TBI shall be served by any appropriately certified teacher in any educational program, as specified in the child's individualized education program (IEP) Team minutes.

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT AND BLINDNESS

A child with a visual impairment is one whose vision, even with correction, adversely impacts a child's educational performance. Examples are children whose visual impairments may result from congenital defects, eye diseases, or injuries to the eye. The term includes both visual impairment and blindness as follows.

1. Blind refers to a child whose visual acuity is 20/200 or less in the better eye after correction or who has a limitation in the field of vision that subtends an angle of 20 degrees. Some children who are legally blind have useful vision and may read print.
2. Visually impaired refers to a child whose visual acuity falls within the range of 20/70 to 20/200 in the better eye after correction and has a limitation in the field of vision that adversely impacts educational progress.
 - a. Progressive visual disorders: Children, whose current visual acuity is greater than 20/70, but who have a medically indicated expectation of visual deterioration may be considered for vision impaired eligibility based on documentation of the visual deterioration from the child's optometrist or ophthalmologist.

Eligibility and Placement

1. A current (within one year) eye examination report shall be completed and signed by the ophthalmologist or optometrist who examined the child. A report from a neurologist in lieu of the optometrist/ophthalmologist report is acceptable for students who have blindness due to a cortical vision impairment.
2. A clinical low vision evaluation shall be completed by a low vision optometrist for children who are not totally blind if the student is under the age of 8 and/or has a severe cognitive and/or physical disability that would make the use of low vision aids unfeasible. A functional vision evaluation may be used instead of a low vision evaluation to establish eligibility.
3. The low vision evaluation should be completed by age 10 for children who do not have one during eligibility determination prior to age 8 unless other circumstances apply.
4. The low vision evaluation is often difficult to schedule within the 60-day timeline, therefore, if children meet all other eligibility requirements, the eligibility report shall document the date of the scheduled upcoming low vision evaluation and the team may proceed with the eligibility decision.
5. Once the low vision evaluation has occurred the eligibility information shall be updated, and as appropriate, the IEP. **The low vision evaluation must**

occur within 120 days of receipt of parental consent to evaluate to determine eligibility for visual impairment.

6. A comprehensive education evaluation shall be administered to determine present levels of functioning. The impact of the visual impairment on the child's educational performance shall be considered for eligibility.
 - a. Educational assessments may include cognitive levels, academic achievement, and reading ability. Educational assessments related to vision must be completed by a teacher certified in the area of visual impairments.
 - b. In some cases, comprehensive psychological evaluations may be indicated and must be completed by appropriately certified personnel.
7. Braille instruction is always considered critical to appropriate education for a child who is blind. Children identified with visual impairments shall be evaluated to determine the need for braille skills. The evaluation will include the present and future needs for braille instruction or the use of braille. For children for whom braille instruction and use is indicated, the individualized education program (IEP) shall include the following:
 - a. Results obtained from the evaluation conducted for the purpose of determining the need for braille skills,
 - b. How instruction in braille will be implemented as the primary mode for learning through integration with other classroom activities,
 - c. Date on which braille instruction will commence,
 - d. The length of the period of instruction and the frequency and duration of each instructional session,
 - e. The level of competency in braille reading and writing to be achieved by the end of the period and the objective assessment measures to be used,
 - f. For those children for whom braille instruction is not indicated, the IEP shall include a statement with supporting documentation that indicates the absence of braille instruction will not impair the child's ability to read and write effectively.

Copies of the complete psychological evaluation as well as a copy of the Eligibility Determination will be provided to parents, as well as a copy of the IEP, if appropriate. If parents do not attend the eligibility meeting, the case manager or school psychologist will contact the parents to determine the preferred method for delivering the documents. Methods include sending the documents via the student, email, regular United States Postal Service mail, or certified mail.

B. Determination of Eligibility by An Eligibility Team (qualified professionals and parents)

Upon completion of the administration of assessments and other measures as a part of an evaluation, a group of qualified professionals and the parent(s) of the child (Eligibility Team) determine whether the child is a child with a disability and what the educational needs of the child are. Parents are an integral part of the process and are involved with all evaluations. Meetings are scheduled in an attempt to accommodate parent schedules. When necessary, conference calls are arranged for parents who have sudden emergencies or have problems with transportation to the school.

The screening of children by a teacher or specialist to determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation shall not be considered to be an evaluation for eligibility for special education and related services. It is best practice for student referrals to be preceded by evidenced-based academic and/or behavioral interventions for students aged three to twenty-one.

An eligibility determination cannot occur until the existing data is reviewed to determine whether exclusionary factors related to specific eligibility categories are present.

C. Exclusionary factors for Eligibility

All areas of disability include the following exclusionary factors for eligibility:

1. Lack of appropriate instruction in reading
2. Lack of appropriate instruction in mathematics
3. Limited English proficiency
4. Lack of attendance in school

Eligibility determination for special education services occurs only when a student's response to both core instruction and supplemental interventions does not result in movement toward achieving benchmarks resulting in grade level performance. Likewise, a student may be considered for special education if the individual response to intensive interventions produces meaningful growth, but that growth requires significant and ongoing resources to maintain.

Eligibility determinations must be made using the convergence of data from multiple sources to document each of the following:

Grade level differences, such as a large performance difference compared to peers and benchmark expectations in specific areas (data from statewide testing, district level benchmarks, etc.).

Rate of learning difference, such as a large difference in rate of learning compared to the trajectory toward the benchmarks when provided with high quality interventions implemented over a significant period (CBM, progress monitoring, tiered support, etc.).

Adverse educational impact, such as a review of the individual student's qualitative and quantitative data that indicates the need for specially designed instruction.

Exclusionary factors, such as those that rule out more significant impairments and absence of meaningful instructional opportunities.

D. Documentation of eligibility/ineligibility: Variety of appropriate sources and well documented

Every section of the eligibility report is completed at every eligibility meeting, regardless of if a child is determined to be eligible for special education or found not eligible. The eligibility report must be comprehensive enough to serve as the evaluation report when necessary. Meeting notes are taken at meetings and are typed directly on the eligibility report with detailed information regarding evaluation results and discussion from meeting participants.

A variety of evaluation tools and strategies to gather relevant academic, functional, and developmental information about the child, including information provided by the parent, is all discussed and documented within the eligibility report.

E. Evaluation Report and Determination provided to parents

Many times, a parent will request a copy of the Evaluation Report prior to the eligibility meeting in order to read and understand the results of the evaluation. The law does not require that the parent be provided with a copy prior to the eligibility decision; however, on occasion, it is appropriate to provide it prior to a meeting. Other times, the report is not provided until a time in which the evaluation specialist can meet with the parent to explain the results of the evaluation. Many of the assessments that are administered as part of the evaluation have results that are reported in numbers that may have little meaning to a parent or others until an explanation is also provided. If the results are confusing or upsetting to the parent, it may be necessary to conduct a meeting to discuss the results of the evaluation and then convene a later meeting for the eligibility decision. Whether it be before the eligibility meeting, per the parent's request, or after, a copy of the Evaluation Report and the Determination/Eligibility Report will always be provided to parents.

Independent Educational Evaluations

If a parent disagrees with the results of a completed evaluation done by the Barrow County School System, the parent may request an outside independent educational evaluation (IEE) paid for by the district. The Barrow County School System must agree to pay for the independent evaluation or begin due process procedures to show that the district's evaluation is adequate. If there is a due process hearing and the district's evaluation is judged to be sufficient, then it will not have to pay for an IEE. A parent is entitled to only one independent educational evaluation at public expense each time the public agency conducts an evaluation with which the parent disagrees. The qualifications of the independent evaluator must be the same as those required of the district evaluators. The district may set a reasonable limit on the cost of the independent evaluation.

A parent does not have the right to an independent evaluation at public expense until they have allowed the district to conduct its own evaluation. Then, if the parent disagrees with the results of the evaluation, they may request an IEE. The parent always has the right to obtain an outside IEE at their own expense, before or after the district's evaluation. As long as the evaluation was conducted by someone who meets the qualifications for district evaluations, the district must consider the results of the parentally obtained evaluation. (See State Rule 160-4-7.09 (4) for a complete explanation of IEEs in the Procedural Safeguards/Parent Rights)

BCSS Professional Learning, Supervision, and Technical Assistance

Existing BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: The Special Education Director, district special education coordinators, school psychologists, program specialists, and school-level IEP facilitators will provide ongoing professional learning for special education policies and procedures throughout each school year regarding on *Eligibility Determination and Categories of Eligibility*. The Director of Special Education provides training to building-level administrators during monthly, instructional leadership meetings. A report is provided quarterly to each school summarizing total referrals for initial special education evaluations. The report breaks down all initial referrals to special education by number of students qualifying for special education and placement percentage. School psychologists provide training to each school's special education department on procedures for initial referrals to special education and for reevaluations. Furthermore, district special education coordinators will provide training to schools during school-level team meetings.

New BCCS Special Education Teachers: Teachers new to the Barrow County School System are trained in special education policies and procedures through a new teacher training provided by the district special education coordinators and program specialists at the beginning of each school year. They also participate in ongoing professional learning that is provided for existing teachers, as described above, as well as professional learning that is provided by administration and other support staff. Additionally, new teachers are assigned a veteran

mentor teacher in their school building to provide support and guidance regarding *Eligibility Determination and Eligibility Categories* throughout the school year. IEP facilitators and school psychologists also work closely with new teachers and mentors to ensure the process is adequately functioning and to give additional clarity and support regarding policy and procedure.

Evidence of Training: Professional learning will be documented through agendas, sign in sheets, and beginning of year Policy and Procedure Review documents. This documentation will be stored electronically on the Microsoft platform, and originals will be housed in the Special Education Administrative Assistant's office.

Supervision and Monitoring: Monitoring Procedures: The Director of Special Education monitors *Eligibility and Categories of Eligibility* by reviewing the associated data and their trends. The Director of Special Education collaborates with the Director of Student Data and Services, as well as other district leaders by reviewing eligibility data and their trends for students with disabilities. If concerns arise, the Special Education Director will meet with the district leadership team and/or school-level administration to provide technical assistance. District special education coordinators, program specialists, and school-level IEP facilitators monitor compliance by reviewing eligibility determination paperwork.

Technical Assistance: Teachers who require additional technical assistance with policies and procedures regarding *Eligibility Determination and Categories of Eligibility* will be provided with technical assistance and support through trainings, one-on-one conferences, webinars, and/or professional learning plans from the Director of Special Education, district special education coordinators, program specialists, and/or designated school staff (e.g. assistant principals, special education IEP facilitators, etc.). If teachers continue to have difficulty despite the technical assistance they receive, building-level administrators will be notified so they may determine next steps to ensure remediation and compliance.

State Rule: 160-4-7-.06—Individualized Education Program (IEP)

A. Definitions of the IEP Team

The IEP Team is a group of individuals that is responsible for developing, reviewing, or revising an IEP for a child with a disability. The IEP serves as the framework for determining the meaning of the term “free appropriate public education” in the least restrictive environment, a term frequently referenced in the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). IEPs must be developed and reviewed annually and must be in effect at the beginning of each school year. The IEP may be reviewed more than once a year if the parent or the district requests a review.

B. Required sections of the IEP:

1. Present Level of Performance:

The present level of academic achievement and functional performance section establishes the starting point or baseline that is used to develop the entire IEP. It includes a description of the child’s current academic, developmental, and/or functional strengths and needs; results of the initial or most recent evaluation; and the results of district or statewide assessment.

2. Assessments and identified needs (academic, functional, developmental):

This section of the IEP should document any assessments (formal, informal, and/or anecdotal) used to determine the present level of academic, functional, and/or developmental performance. This establishes the baseline for the entire IEP. The remainder of the IEP is based on the information in this section.

3. Effect of the disability:

This section should describe individual characteristics of the child’s disability that affect their classroom performance. Examples of specific characteristics for a specific learning disability may include short-term memory problems, poor organizational skills, and auditory processing problems, etc. This section must indicate how classroom instruction is impacted by the specific characteristics or deficits of the disability. Merely stating the student’s eligibility category does not adequately describe the impact on involvement and progress in the general education curriculum. Statements should reflect individual needs and not be applicable to a large group of students.

4. Parental concerns/input:

This should include any concerns the parents/guardians voiced during the meeting as well as any ongoing communication regarding the child's academics, behavior, performance toward goals, etc. If the parent/guardian is not in attendance, this information should be drawn from on-going communication throughout the school year. Please avoid indicating that the parent has no concerns.

5. Consideration of special factors:

Consideration of special factors must be considered for all students with an IEP. The factors to consider are accessible formats, assistive technology, behavior intervention plan, blind or visually impaired, communication needs, deaf or hard of hearing, and limited English proficiency. If needs are determined in any of these areas, the IEP must include a description of the supports and/or services that will be provided to the child.

6. Consideration of assistive technology:

Assistive technology will be considered on an as-needed basis. Assistive technology can include but is not limited to adaptive reading tools, communication devices, adaptive writing tools, etc. Assistive technology devices are identified in the IDEA as "any item, piece of equipment or product system, whether commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of children with disabilities." An exclusion was added to the definition of an assistive technology device in the 2004 Reauthorization of IDEA to address surgically implanted devices such as cochlear implants. Specifically, it was stated that an assistive technology device "does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted, or the replacement of such device."

7. Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP):

A functional behavior assessment (FBA) should be conducted for students who have behavior concerns documented in their IEP. This assessment is a process of gathering information in regard to student behavior for the purpose of determining the function of problematic behaviors. The FBA assists the team in developing a BIP. A BIP is an action plan designed, implemented, and periodically reviewed to assist students with interfering behaviors at school. An FBA must be completed prior to the team developing a BIP. Any student who has behavior that impedes their learning, or the learning of others, should have an FBA/BIP. In Barrow, students who initially qualify for the area of EBD should have a BIP in their IEP.

8. Measurable Annual Goals:

IEP annual goals are written to address an individual student's deficits to enable a student to make progress in grade level standards. All students are expected to be working toward grade level standards, so it is not necessary to list those standards in the IEP. The goals should address the needs and skill deficits described in the present level of academic achievement and functional performance that will enable the child to progress in the grade level standards-based curriculum. The goals should be written in measurable form and should describe what the student can be reasonably expected to accomplish within one school year.

9. Benchmarks/Short-Term Objectives for Students on Alternative Assessment:

At times a parent may request short term objectives for a particular area of the IEP even though they may not be required. The Barrow County School System will develop short-term objectives when requested by a parent or when the IEP team feels they are needed for the student. In the last reauthorization of the IDEA and the latest Georgia State Regulations, short-term objectives are not required for all students in special education. Only those students who learn through Alternate Content Standards (and will take the GAA 2.0) must have short-term objectives. However, there is nothing that prohibits any student from having short-term objectives or benchmarks written into their IEP.

All other IEPs for students who participate in standardized tests such as the Georgia Milestone Assessment (EOG/EOC) can be written with measurable annual goals only. These goals should be written using the SMART method, meaning they must be specific, measurable, achievable within a year, realistic, and time bound.

10. Criteria for Measurement of Goals/Objectives:

Criteria for mastery of goals and objectives are determined by the IEP team given the data provided in the teacher's present level of performance. Accuracy, duration, and frequency of trials are all topics for discussion by the IEP team when setting criteria for measurement and mastery.

11. Progress reporting and schedule:

Progress will be reported every nine weeks in accordance with the start date of the IEP. Teachers should check their GO-IEP Dashboards weekly for upcoming progress reports that are due. The BCSS requires quantitative data to document progress toward goals. Progress reports for students with disabilities are to be completed in collaboration with all service providers.

12. Plan for services (special education, related services, modifications/accommodations, positive behavior supports) with frequency, locations, and duration of services:

A continuum of placements will be considered by the IEP team for school-aged students with disabilities and must include service type, frequency, and location.

Related services are also documented here. Related services mean transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education, and includes, but is not limited to audiological services, psychological services, speech-language pathology, occupational and physical therapy, social work services, counseling services, orientation and mobility services, interpreting services, school nursing services, etc.

These decisions are driven by the student data reported in the present level of performance. All IEP components are reviewed and updated on an annual basis, but the committee can and should reconvene as needed.

13. Explanation for exclusion of participation with non-disabled peers:

All IEPs must include an explanation of why the student is unable to participate with non-disabled peers, if applicable. This section should be specific to the student and their needs, not a restatement of their services or disability. *This section of the IEP should also indicate why the general education setting will not meet the student's needs.*

14. Testing accommodations or modifications:

This section of the IEP is about district and statewide assessments. This should only identify the accommodations/modifications the student must have in order to participate in the classroom or district assessments. Testing accommodations should only be recommended if they are also the student's instructional accommodations, and some instruction accommodations may not be appropriate for testing.

Accommodations can be made to the setting (i.e., small group, study carrel), scheduling (i.e., extended time, optimal time of day), presentation (large print, color overlays, repeating directions), and response (i.e., scribe, Braille). The IEP committee makes the final determination in the promotion/retention of students who do not pass the state testing requirement.

15. Consideration of ESY:

Extended School Year (ESY) are special education services that are provided beyond the normal school year. ESY is not summer school but may be provided during the summer. The individual needs of the child shall be considered and may include such factors as the severity of the disability, the age of the child, transitional needs, rate of progress or regression that may limit the child's ability to achieve IEP goals/objectives, relative importance of the IEP goals at issue, whether the child is at a critical point of instruction such as emerging skills, and whether any delays or interruptions in services occurred during the school year. The IEP team must consider ESY for each student at least once per year. Please be mindful that if you defer an ESY decision, an IEP amendment will be required before the end of the school year.

ESY goals, objectives, transportation forms, and shared spreadsheet information must be submitted to the ESY Coordinator by the suggested due date to assist in planning and scheduling.

16. Adaptive Transportation:

Adaptive transportation is for students with disabilities who cannot access regular transportation. The determination of adaptive transportation is an IEP team decision and should be considered on at least an annual basis. For most BCSS schools, adaptive transportation should be listed on the services page as two 30 minutes segments per day with an explanation under the transportation tab. The adaptive transportation form should be completed by the Caseload Teacher at EACH annual review or with an IEP amendment and the updated copy should be emailed to overseeing area manager at AHStransport@barrow.k12.ga.us or WBHStransport@barrow.k12.ga.us. The school-level IEP Facilitator will keep a notebook of these forms for quick reference.

*Please note that an alternative school placement is **not** a reason to provide adaptive transportation. If the student was not already on adaptive transportation, they should not be given the service solely due to an alternative school placement.

C. Transition Services:

1. Beginning no later than 9th grade or age 16, whichever comes first:

The successful transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school environments should be a priority of every IEP team. The purpose of a Transition

Service Plan is to assist students in building the skills and supports they need to reach their post-school goals. Transition requires support from multiple sources so the student and their family can make choices, develop connections, and access services. The plan details the student's needs based on age-appropriate assessments, course of study, and the diploma type the child plans to earn. The Transition Service Plan should be developed no later than the IEP to be in effect when the student begins ninth grade or turns 16 or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team and updated annually.

2. Appropriate post-secondary goals:

These goals should be based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills

3. Transition services required to meet goals:

A course of study should focus on instructional and educational classes and experiences that will assist the student in preparing for transition from secondary education to post-secondary life. This should relate directly to the student's post-secondary outcome goals and should show how a planned course of study is linked to these goals. The course of study should be meaningful to the student's future and should motivate the student to reach successful post-school outcomes.

4. Student involvement: preferences and interests:

Students should provide an assessment of the skills and interests related to education, employment, training, and independent living skills (as appropriate) and should be conducted in conjunction with the development of the transition components. The initial transition assessment may be prior to the eighth grade and could occur when a re-evaluation consideration is conducted. It should also be ongoing and fluid. Assessment tools that clearly describe a student's strengths and weaknesses and document a student's interests and perceptions about their skills should be utilized. Surveys and interviews work well for this type of assessment. Six characteristics should be considered when conducting a transition assessment. The transition assessment should be child-centered, be continuous, occur in many places, involve a variety of people, have understandable data, and be sensitive to cultural diversity.

5. Representative of participating agency:

Participation should include those who will help the student achieve the goals stated. Documentation that these persons were invited to the transition IEP meeting and that the parent and student (if over 18) were notified of their

possible attendance must be kept. Parent permission must be provided as well for outside agencies to be invited and attend the IEP meeting.

D. Transfer of Rights

At the IEP meeting before the student turns 18, a statement that the student has been informed of their rights that will transfer to the student upon reaching the age of 18 must be documented. The IEP should also document, at age 18, that the rights have been transferred. Once the rights have transferred to the student at age 18, the district must provide any notice required to both the child and the parent. All rights given to the parent transfer to the student.

E. Excusal of IEP Team Members

Certain circumstances may allow a required member of the IEP team to be excused. Members may be excused from the meeting by signed consent from the parents. The excusal reason should be documented in the excusal form generated from GO-IEP. Please note that the general education teacher requirement cannot be excused from an eligibility meeting. Someone must fulfill that role or the meeting will have to be rescheduled.

Only the required members of the team require an excusal. If team members need to leave during a meeting, stop and ask the parent whether they want to continue the meeting. If the parent wants to excuse the team member, the meeting can proceed and that should be documented in the meeting notes. If the parent does not want to proceed without the team member, the meeting must be rescheduled. This should also be documented in the meeting notes.

F. Transition of children birth through age 2—Part C

FAPE provision by 3rd birthday: Children with disabilities may be served by Babies Can't Wait, as well as other agencies (e.g., Georgia Pines), from birth to age 3. If a child is receiving services prior to age 3 through the BCW program, then both the program and the Barrow County School System have an obligation to work together to transition the child to the school program by the child's 3rd birthday. If a child was previously receiving BCW services, the child should have eligibility for special education determined and, if eligible, an IEP developed and in place by age three in order to ensure FAPE provision.

Referrals from Parent/Guardian, Child Care Provider, etc.

Children suspected of having disabilities who are not receiving services and/or supports from the local school district may be referred by parents/guardians, childcare providers, early regular childhood providers, or other individuals. For these students, Barrow County School System will complete a comprehensive developmental evaluation within 60 days of written parental consent. Following completion of the evaluation, an eligibility and/or IEP meeting will be held.

Team members will include the following: parent/guardian, Regular Early Child Education Provider, Preschool Special Education Teacher or other special education representative, Preschool Program Coordinator from Barrow County Schools and other persons, such as the Speech-Language Pathologist, as deemed appropriate.

Referrals from Babies Can't Wait (BCW)

Babies Can't Wait coordinates and facilitates the referral process to the local school district through a transition conference. A parent or guardian must consent to allow BCW to contact the local district.

Children being referred from BCW are children with disabilities who are approaching the age of three, transitioning from BCW, have an Individualized Family Service Program (IFSP) and identified as being potentially eligible for preschool special education service.

The transition conference may be held as early as nine months but no later than 90 days prior to the child's 3rd birthday. Individuals participating in the transition meeting should include the following: parent/guardian, BCW Coordinator, local school district representative, and other persons, as appropriate per individual cases. The transition team reviews the IFSP and other documents that pertain to the child's disability. Following the transition conference and once vision/hearing screening information has been obtained, Barrow County Schools obtains parental/guardian written consent to conduct a comprehensive evaluation. Following the evaluation, an eligibility and/or IEP meeting will be held. If eligible, the student's IEP must be implemented on or before his/her 3rd birthday.

G. Parent Participation in IEP: notification and invitation

The parents of a student with a disability are necessary participants in the development of the IEP. It is important that the parents provide information about their views of the student's progress or lack of progress, as well as express any concerns about the overall educational development of the child. Parents provide important knowledge about how the student behaves and performs outside the school setting.

Parents should be involved in every part of the development of the annual IEP that should include:

1. a description of the student's academic, developmental, and functional performance,
2. a description of how the student will be included in the general curriculum,
3. the annual goals for the student, along with a description of how those goals will be measured,
4. a statement of what special education and related services are needed by the student; a discussion of how the student will participate in district and statewide assessments or why an alternate assessment is appropriate.
5. the accommodations and/or modifications that are appropriate for instruction and assessment,
6. a discussion of the transition services (when appropriate).

The parent must be notified of the proposed date, time and location of an IEP meeting to give sufficient time to make arrangements to attend or contact the school to reschedule the meeting. Best practice is to give parents at least 10 days notice. The notice must be generated from GO-IEP and should include:

1. the purpose of the meeting (including transition, if appropriate),
2. the proposed date, time, and location of the meeting,
3. the names (whenever possible) and positions of the people that the system will invite or have invited to attend.

The parent may request to reschedule the IEP meeting (thus it's best to schedule well in advance of the due date) or to participate virtually or by telephone if they cannot attend in person.

H. IEP/IFSP

Each student's IEP or IFSP will be reviewed at least once annually but may be revisited or amended during the school year as needed. The IEP/IFSP team will work together to ensure that the current placement and IEP goals are appropriate. The IEP will be conducted within 30 days of determination. The current IEP/IFSP and any changes or amendments to the existing IEP will be available to all service providers.

After the annual IEP/IFSP meeting, the IEP/IFSP may need to be changed. This can be done by holding another IEP/IFSP meeting or by mutual agreement between the parents and the school district to make changes to the written document without a meeting. The parents always retain the right to request a meeting for any and all changes or amendments to the IEP/IFSP. Regardless of the method of changing the IEP/IFSP, the parent must be provided with a copy of the changes and a written explanation of those changes in a timely manner.

The Barrow County City District ensures that

1. a meeting to develop an IEP or IFSP for a child is conducted within 30 days of a determination that the child needs special education and related services,
2. as soon as possible following development of the IEP or IFSP, special education and related services are made available to the child in accordance with the child's IEP/IFSP.

Each IEP for a student with a disability is accessible to each regular education teacher, special education teacher, related services provider, and any other service provider who is responsible for its implementation through the Student Information System/GO-IEP, and each teacher and provider is informed of their specific responsibilities related to implementing the child's IEP; and the specific accommodations, modifications, and supports that must be provided for the child in accordance with the IEP. It is the Case Manager's duty to ensure all teachers who work with the child have access to this information.

I. Inter- and Intra-state transfers of students with IEPs

In-State Transfers

If a child with a disability transfers to the BCSS from another school system in Georgia, the district (in consultation with the parents) will provide a free and appropriate public education to the child (including services comparable to those described in the child's IEP from the previous school system), until the IEP is adopted from the previous school system or until BCSS develops, adopts, and implements a new IEP that meets all IEP requirements set forth in State Board of Education rules. All eligibilities will be reviewed by district staff to ensure alignment with Georgia eligibility requirements.

Out-of-State transfers

If a child with a disability transfers from out of state and has an IEP that is current, the BCSS (in consultation with the parents) will provide the child with a free and appropriate education including services as outlined in the previous school system. All paperwork for transferring students with disabilities will be requested by the special education records clerk. Once all has been received, the school psychologist will review the file in conjunction with the district special education coordinator to determine if the evaluation information aligns with Georgia eligibility requirements for special education services. The student will be placed in the appropriate program based upon records received from the previous school system. All paperwork will be loaded into GO-IEP and the district coordinator will notify the school's IEP facilitator and caseload teacher on how to proceed with the transfer student's eligibility (i.e., accept eligibility, need to re-evaluate, etc.).

J. FERPA and transmittal of the IEP

To facilitate the transition of a child who transfers to the BCSS, staff will take reasonable steps to promptly obtain the child's records, including the IEP, supporting documents, and any other records relating to the provision of special education or related services to the child, from the previous LEA in which the child was enrolled. The BCSS will attempt to get parental consent for the records; however, FERPA does not require prior parental consent to disclose educational records to officials of another school where the student seeks or intends to enroll.

When a student transfers to the BCSS, the following steps should occur.

1. All paperwork for transferring students with disabilities will be requested from the previous school by the BCSS Special Education Records Clerk.
2. The records clerk will email the transfer paperwork to the IEP Facilitator of the receiving school. Should the receiving school acquire the paperwork first, the IEP Facilitator will scan the paperwork to the Records Clerk.
3. The Records Clerk will review in-state transfer paperwork to verify all necessary components are present (in consultation with the school psychologists and district coordinators), such as eligibility paperwork, and override the timelines. District coordinators will review all out-of-state transfers in consultation with the school psychologists and override the timelines.
4. IEP facilitators will assign a case manager and prompt them to schedule an IEP meeting for transfer students. Transfer meetings are to be scheduled and held within 10 school days of receiving adequate transfer paperwork.
5. The case manager will upload the transfer paperwork into GO-IEP. For out-of-state students, the Records Clerk will upload the transfer paperwork.
6. While waiting on the IEP meeting, a Consent for Services must be acquired if not already sent by the former school district. If the student is from out-of-state, every attempt to receive this original consent must be made. If this cannot be obtained, work with the parents to get a new Consent for Services on file through the GO-IEP platform. We must always have a Consent for Services on file.
7. From the first day of attendance and to the best of the district's ability, students will receive IEP services that most closely match the transfer IEP until the scheduled transfer IEP meeting has arrived. Adjustments to the IEP can be made at the transfer IEP meeting if necessary.
8. Only pertinent school staff will be notified of the student's disability status and will receive copies or portions of the child's IEP (accommodations, BIP, etc.). These staff include the child's teacher(s), school administrators, school counselors, paraprofessionals, etc.

9. At the transfer IEP meeting an amendment will be written to the transfer IEP, or if necessary, a new IEP will be developed for the student.

K. Review and Revision of the IEP

The Barrow County School System ensures that the IEP Team:

1. reviews the child's IEP periodically, but not less than annually, to determine whether the annual goals for the child are being achieved,
2. revises the IEP, as appropriate, to address
 - a. any lack of expected progress toward the annual goals and in the general curriculum, if appropriate,
 - b. the results of any re-evaluations conducted,
 - c. information about the child provided to, or by, the parents,
 - d. the child's anticipated needs,
 - e. other matters.
3. consolidates IEP team meetings to the greatest extent possible,
4. considers special factors described above,
5. includes a regular education teacher of the child, as a member of the team, who must participate in the review and revision of the IEP of the child.

Sometime revising the IEP may be due to failure to meet transition objectives. If a participating agency, other than the school system, fails to provide the transition services described in the IEP, the Barrow County School System will reconvene the IEP team to identify alternative strategies to meet the transition objectives for the child set out in the IEP.

The following requirements do not apply to children with disabilities who are convicted as adults under State law and incarcerated in adult prisons (Department of Corrections):

1. Participation of children with disabilities in state and district wide assessments
2. The requirements related to transition planning and transition services do not apply to children whose eligibility under Part B of the IDEA will end, because of their age, before they will be eligible to be released from prison based on consideration of their sentence and eligibility for early release.

The IEP team of a child with a disability who is convicted as an adult and incarcerated in an adult prison may modify the child's IEP or placement if the State has demonstrated a bona fide security or compelling penological interest that cannot otherwise be accommodated. The IEP requirements in this rule and the least restrictive environment requirements do not apply with respect to the modifications described above.

After the annual IEP meeting, there may be a need to update/change the IEP. This can be done by reconvening the IEP team to amend or, by a mutual agreement between the parent and system, to make changes to the written document without a formal meeting. The parent always retains the right to request a meeting for any and all changes to the IEP. Regardless of the method of changing the IEP, the parent must be provided with a copy of the changes in a timely manner and an explanation of these changes. Please note that placement decisions cannot be made through an informal, non-meeting amendment.

1. Amendment without a formal meeting
 - a. Following communication with parents, if both the school and parents agree that a meeting is not necessary to amend the IEP, an amendment can be made. A formal notice of meeting still must be generated in GO-IEP with the accurate amendment date.
 - b. The Caseload Manager should write a note stating there was no face-to-face meeting on the notice of meeting when submitting the paperwork to the Special Education Records Clerk. Parents must be provided with an updated copy of the IEP. It is the BCSS procedure to document the changes on the IEP and a brief description in the meeting notes section.
2. Amendment with a formal meeting
 - a. Professional judgement should be used when determining whether to have a formal or informal meeting. A formal notice of meeting must be generated for all amendment meetings.
 - b. Document any changes to the IEP and also detail these changes in the meeting notes.

EL IEP Procedures:

In most instances, a student with a disability who is also an English Learner (EL) should receive services through both the special education program and the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program. The fact that an EL student has a disability does not negate the need for language assistance to support the student's developing English proficiency. However, a small number of students who are eligible for both special education and ESOL may need to have their language needs addressed in a manner other than direct ESOL services. If, based on the severity of the student's disability, the IEP team determines that the student's needs are best met by providing language assistance in the special education setting, indirect language assistance services may be considered.

ELs with a current eligibility of specific learning disability or speech-language impairment are not eligible for indirect language assistance services and should receive services through both special education and ESOL.

The plan for providing language assistance to support the student's developing English proficiency, including the persons responsible for language assistance and the frequency of collaborative meetings, must be delineated in the student's IEP in the *Consideration of Special Factors* section. Any student whose IEP team determines that indirect language assistance services is most appropriate must have one or more IEP goals specifically related to the development of English proficiency.

The ESOL teacher and the special education teacher must meet on a monthly basis (August through May) to monitor the student's progress in language development and to address areas of concern related to language development. Also, the ESOL teacher and special education teacher must communicate and collaborate on a regular basis throughout the school year as necessary in order to support the student's language development needs. Documentation of these collaborative meetings should be kept by both service providers.

Hospital Homebound Services

Hospital/Homebound (HHB) services are designed to provide continuity of educational services between the classroom and home or hospital for students in Georgia public schools whose medical needs, either physical or psychiatric, do not allow them to attend school for a limited period of time.

Requirements:

1. Date of referral from licensed physician indicates that the student has a medically diagnosed physical condition and will be restricted to the home or hospital but is physically able to participate in educational instruction.
2. Referral form indicates the projected length of absence from school to be 10 consecutive school days or longer, or the student has a chronic health condition causing the student to be absent for intermittent periods of time during the school year.
3. For identified special education students, the date of the IEP review where hospital/homebound services were recommended.

BCSS Instructions for Requesting Hospital/ Homebound Services for Special Education Students

1. The IEP Facilitator or District Coordinator will provide the appropriate HHB paperwork request form as soon as the parent indicates the child will be having surgery, recuperating from an accident, or has a chronic or long-term illness. The parent must sign the referral form.
2. The Physician must complete the request form indicating the length, or projected length, of hospital/homebound services and reason. Parents may choose to sign the HHB request form and take it to their child's Physician, or the form can be faxed from the PDC to the Physician for completion. The Physician's office can then fax the

request to the director of special education at the PDC. The fax number is on the HHB request form.

3. If a completed HHB request is received, send the form to your District Special Education Coordinator as soon as possible to ensure approval by the Director of Special Education and the assignment of a teacher. Please note that the student does not have to be absent for ten days before the form is completed or before services are requested. It is NOT necessary for a student to be absent prior to the request for these services. This service is for those students who will be absent 10 days or more because of illness, surgery, accident, etc.
4. Once HHB services have been approved by the Director of Special Education, an IEP meeting must be held at the student's school to review and consider the medical referral information and to make changes to the IEP, including placement in the Hospital/Homebound setting, as appropriate.
5. Copies of the completed form should be uploaded into GO-IEP and copies distributed to the registrar and/or attendance secretary, and the assigned teacher.
6. District special education program specialists will then complete the HHB spreadsheet on the Microsoft platform reflecting the student's information, the teacher providing the service, and the service start and end dates.
7. The Hospital Homebound Teacher is expected to keep a log of all visits and include the signature of the adult present during the session.

REMINDER: An adult must be present at all times per State Rule #160-4-2.31.

8. BE SURE TO KEEP THE STUDENT ON ROLL AND MAKE SURE GRADES AND/OR CREDITS ARE RECORDED, AND STUDENT IS MARKED "PRESENT."
9. The assigned teacher should keep in communication with the attendance secretary/registrar to ensure the student is properly coded for attendance.
10. Upon completion of assignments, work and/or tests, the HHB teacher will return the work to the classroom teacher(s) for appropriate action and grading.
11. HHB services are provided for students who are pregnant with documentation from a licensed physician.
12. HHB services are not provided for students who are diagnosed as having a communicable disease.
13. Some students may require HHB services on an "as needed" basis throughout the school year due to a chronic health condition. If the student's chronic health condition causes the student to be absent a total of 10 days during the year, with multiple absences of at least 3 consecutive days the student may receive intermittent HHB services. Caseload managers should contact the district coordinator if these concerns arise.

BCSS IEP Document Procedural Notes:

Case managers will complete a draft of IEP paperwork and notify the LEA representative and their designated administrator five days before the scheduled IEP or RDR meeting. Initial IEPs are excluded from this requirement; however, teachers should prepare for the meeting by sketching out what FAPE could look like for a student should they qualify for special education and related services.

After the IEP meeting, first and second year teachers will submit their paperwork to the department chair for feedback. Once the IEP is ready to be finalized, the department chair will finalize the document. Veteran caseload teachers (3+ years) will be assigned a peer to review their IEPs. After this, department chairs will check the first few IEPs for accuracy. Once these are consistently compliant, veteran caseload teachers will be responsible for finalizing their own IEPs and RDRs.

Paperwork will be audited by coordinators and program specialists. Should the need for technical assistance arise, it will be provided by program specialists and the document will be amended for corrective purposes.

BCSS Professional Learning, Supervision, and Technical Assistance

Existing BCSS Special Educations Teachers and Staff: The Special Education Director, district special education coordinators, program specialists, and school-level IEP facilitators will provide ongoing professional learning for policies and procedures regarding IEP compliance throughout the school year. The Director of Special Education provides training to building-level administrators during principal or assistant principal meetings and/or direct consultations with administration. District special education coordinators and program specialists provide training during preplanning and monthly school-level special education meetings. Teachers, paraprofessionals, transportation, and other support personnel are trained yearly at their assigned campus regarding their student's IEP, BIP, and accommodations.

New BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: New teachers to BCSS are trained in IEP compliance and procedures through new teacher training provided by district special education coordinators at the beginning of the year. New teachers are also assigned a veteran mentor teacher in the building to provide support and guidance throughout the school year. In addition, new teachers are coached by IEP facilitators in IEP development for their first two years in the field. New paraprofessionals and other BCSS staff members are trained yearly through the special education department at their assigned campus.

Evidence of Training: Professional learning will be documented through agendas, sign in sheets, and beginning of year Policies and Procedures Review documents. This documentation will be

stored electronically on the Microsoft platform, and the originals will be housed in the special education administrative assistant's office.

Supervision and Monitoring: School-level IEP facilitators and building-level administrators monitor teacher compliance regarding IEP development and follow through. IEP drafts are shared with LEA representatives for each IEP meeting so content can be reviewed, and feedback can be given in advance. Furthermore, district coordinators and program specialists will conduct IEP audits for IEPs throughout the district and deliver feedback on those audits. Corrections will be made as needed.

Technical Assistance: Those staff members who demonstrate difficulty with IEP compliance will be provided with technical support through conferences, webinars, and/or professional learning plans. Staff members who continue to have difficulty despite technical assistance will be reported to the building-level administrator, who will determine the next steps.

State Rule:160-4-7.07—Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

A. LRE requirements: Written policies and procedures exist

The Barrow County School System has written policies and procedures to ensure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities in Georgia shall be educated with children who are not disabled. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular class environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

To the greatest extent appropriate, a parent has the right to have their child placed in general education classrooms. Also, a parent has the right for their child to participate in all school programs and activities with other children without disabilities. To the greatest extent appropriate the Barrow County School System must make accommodations (supports) and modifications (changes) so the child can participate in all school programs and activities.

1. The parent has the right for their child to participate in non-classroom and extracurricular activities (such as lunch, recess, counseling, sports, and clubs) to the same extent as a non-disabled child as much as possible and/or appropriate.
2. The parent has the right for the IEP team to consider a variety of different special education services to meet the needs of their child in the least restrictive environment.
3. The parent has the right to request supplementary aids and services provided to allow their child to remain in regular classes as much as appropriate before considering whether to remove the child from the general education classroom.
4. The parent has the right to have their child placed in the neighborhood school unless the IEP team determines the student's needs can only be met at a different school due to service/program differences.

B. Annual IEP Placement Determination

Special education is a service and not a place. So, in determining the educational placement of a child with a disability, including a preschool child with a disability, the Barrow County School System ensures that the placement decision is made:

1. by a group of persons (the IEP team), including the parents, and other persons knowledgeable about the child,
2. an explanation of the evaluation data, and the placement options,
3. and is made in conformity with the LRE provisions contained in this rule.

After the IEP team has reviewed all required information and developed an IEP, it must make the decision as to where services need to be delivered to enable the student to receive a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

The IEP Team always begins by considering how the goals can be met in the regular education setting. The Team should determine the education services, related services, supplementary aids and services, and assistive technology that are necessary for the child to stay in the regular education setting, continue to have access to the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE), and meet the goals in the IEP. Examples might include use of an assistive technology device, a behavior intervention plan, support from a paraprofessional or sign language interpreter, or changes in the physical environment, such as use of positioning devices for a child with an orthopedic impairment. The IEP Team determines the child's needs, services, supports, and/or accommodations that are required to make progress in regular education settings.

The IEP Team can consider placing the child outside of regular education setting only when the IEP Team has evidence that even with the use of supplemental aids and services, education in regular education setting will not be successful. If the child is placed in a setting other than regular education settings for a portion of the school day, high expectations for achievement on the GSE and a plan for moving back into less restrictive settings should continue to be in place.

LRE Decision Process

1. Develop IEP goals (and objectives, if needed) to target deficits identified in the PLAAFP.
2. Determine whether the goal or objective can be taught in a regular education setting.
3. Consider Accommodations & Modifications/Personnel Supports/Environmental Changes needed for the student to be successful in the regular education setting.
4. Determine the alternative placement or community setting where those goals and objectives that cannot be taught in a regular education setting can be taught
5. Determine additional settings or activities that will provide opportunities for interaction with nondisabled peers.
6. Review progress monitoring data specific to goals and objectives.

C. Full continuum of alternative placements

The Barrow County School System ensures that the full continuum of alternative placements includes options that must be available such as general education classes, special education classes, separate schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions. Provisions for supplementary aids, services, and supports such as resource rooms or specialized instruction in a small group, and/or instruction from itinerant teachers who provide services in several schools, must be made available. It is critical that any decision regarding placement consider a student's access to non-disabled peers and the intensity of specialized instruction required and ensure that a full continuum was considered prior to making a final

recommendation. The IEP goals and data must drive special education placement options. The least restrictive environment MUST be chosen as the model for each student based on their individual needs. The following service models move from least restrictive to most restrictive.

Service Option	Personnel	Description of Service
Regular Education	Regular Education Teacher, no special education support	A child with a disability is served in the regular education class with no additional personnel support from special education.
Additional Supportive Services	Para, interpreter, job coach, other assistive personnel, or other teacher (not special education)	A child with a disability receives service from personnel other than a certified Special Education Teacher in the regular education classroom (i.e., para, interpreter, or job coach).
Direct Service: Consultative	Regular Education Teacher and Special Education Teacher who provides direct service according to the Consultative Delivery Model	A child with a disability receives direct service from the Special Education Teacher in the regular education classroom, the amount of time determined by the IEP team.
Direct Service: Collaborative	Regular Education Teacher and Special Education Teacher who provides direct service according to the Collaborative Delivery Model	A child with a disability receives direct service from the Special Education Teacher in the regular education classroom for less than 100% of the segment.
Direct Service: Co-teaching	Regular Education Teacher and Special Education Teacher who provides direct service according to the Co-teaching Delivery Model	A child with a disability receives direct service from the Special Education Teacher in the regular education classroom for 100% of the segment each time this class meets.
Instruction for Individuals or Small Groups Outside the Regular Education Classroom	Special Education Teacher	A child with a disability received direct service from the Special Education Teacher in a special education classroom.
Separate Day School or Program	Special Education Teacher	A child with a disability receives direct service from the Special Education Teacher in a special education classroom in a separate school or program.
Home-Based Instruction	Special Education Teacher	A child with a disability receives direct service from the Special Education Teacher at the child's home. Home-based instruction may be used as a short-term

		placement option on occasions when the parent and LEA agree at an IEP meeting.
Residential Placement In-State or Out-of-State	Special Education Teacher	Child with a disability receives direct service from the Special Education Teacher in a residential setting as determined by the IEP team.
Hospital Homebound Instruction	Special Education Teacher	Child with a disability has a medically diagnosed condition restricting them to hospital or home. They receive direct services from a special education teacher.

When considering if home instruction, modified day, modified week, or one-on-one supportive instruction is appropriate for a student, please consult with your school’s program specialist or district coordinator and invite them to the IEP meeting if the decision is to proceed with the proposal.

A continuum of placements will be considered by the IEP team for school-aged students with disabilities and must include the following:

Support in general education settings

1. Support services
2. Personnel supports from paraprofessionals, interpreters, or others
3. Support from itinerant teachers

Direct special education services

1. Consultative services
2. Collaborative services
3. Co-teaching services
4. Support from an itinerant teacher

Other placement options, including

1. Special education small group classes
2. Special Schools
3. Private Schools
4. Home Instruction: home-based instruction services may be provided for reasons other than medical concerns, and because the IEP Team determines that the home is the most appropriate setting. It is to be used as a short-term placement option with the

expectation that the child will be transitioned back to the school setting as quickly as possible.

- a. A free and appropriate public education (FAPE) is provided and includes access to the general curriculum and an opportunity to make progress toward the goals and objectives included in the IEP,
- b. Home-based services must be reviewed no less than quarterly by the IEP team,
- c. All IEPs that require home-based placements will include a reintegration plan for returning to the school setting.

5. Hospital/homebound

- a. Hospital/homebound instruction may be used for students who have a medically diagnosed condition that will significantly interfere with their education and requires them to be restricted to home or a hospital for a period of time.
- b. The LEA provides hospital/homebound instruction only when the LEA has received a completed medical referral form signed by a physician. The form must state that it is anticipated that the child is unable to participate in instruction and will be absent for at least ten consecutive school days or has a chronic health condition that will cause absences over an intermittent time period.
- c. When that situation occurs, the IEP Team meets to review the IEP, consider the medical referral, and make necessary changes to the IEP as appropriate.

6. Residential Services

Hospital Homebound Services.

The Barrow County School System requires that a completed medical referral form signed by a physician be obtained. The form must state that it is anticipated that the student is unable to participate in instruction and will be absent for at least ten consecutive school days or has a chronic health condition that will cause absences over an intermittent time period. When that situation occurs, the IEP team meets to review the IEP, consider the medical referral, and make necessary changes to the IEP to support the student.

When the IEP team considers hospital/homebound services, it is important to note that the final determination of services, the setting, and delivery method rests with the IEP team. The medical referral provides a medical opinion on the student's treatment; however, the referral is not a guarantee that hospital/homebound services will automatically be provided. The medical opinion must be considered by the IEP team as part of determining the services and setting(s) for the student. If the IEP team places the student in the hospital/homebound setting, it should also include a plan in the IEP for reintegrating the student into the school setting in the future. If a student with a disability is hospitalized outside of their home-school district, the responsibility

for the student's hospital/homebound services remains with the school district in which the student lives. The district where the student lives may contract with the hospital to provide instructional services, contract with the district in which the hospital is located, or contract directly with appropriately certified teachers in that geographic area.

Many times, it is very helpful for the team to have the practitioner who provided the hospital/homebound referral participate via a conference call in the IEP team meeting.

D. Location of Services

All BCSS schools provide special education and related services to students with disabilities; however, some services are only offered in particular schools. If it is determined that a student requires services located outside of their home school in the BCSS, the IEP Team should consider specialized transportation to that program.

Please see the Preschool and School Age placement and services information in sections E and F below.

E. Preschool Placements and Services

The BCSS PREP (Preschool Readiness Education Program) program, is provided at the following schools:

1. Austin Road Elementary: 1 classroom
2. Auburn Elementary: 1 classroom
3. Bethlehem Elementary: classroom
4. Statham Elementary: 2 classrooms
5. Winder Elementary: 2 classrooms

F. School-Age Placements and Services

PACE-1 (Program for Adapted & Community Education)

Students receiving these services typically function in the MID range.

Bethlehem Elementary School

Bramlett Elementary School

Holsenbeck Elementary School

Bear Creek Middle School

Haymon-Morris Middle School

Russell Middle School

Westside Middle School

Apalachee High School

Winder-Barrow High School

PACE-2 (Program for Adapted & Community Education)

Students receiving these services typically function in the MOID range.

Kennedy Elementary School

Winder Elementary School

Haymon-Morris Middle School

Russell Middle School

Apalachee High School

Winder-Barrow High School

PACE-3 (Program for Adapted & Community Education)

Students receiving these services typically function in the SID/PID range.

Kennedy Elementary School

Bear Creek Middle School

Haymon-Morris Middle School

Apalachee High School

Winder-Barrow High School

RISE (Responsibility & Independence through Social-emotional Education)

Students receiving these services typically require more intensive behavior support.

Auburn Elementary School

County Line Elementary School

Russell Middle School

Westside Middle School

Winder-Barrow High School

Lighthouse Program [Georgia Network for Education and Therapeutic Support (GNETS)]

County Line Elementary School

Russell Middle School

Winder-Barrow High School

Barrow Autism Spectrum Exceptionalities- General Curriculum (BASE-G)

Austin Road Elementary School

County Line Elementary School

Russell Middle School

Winder-Barrow High School

Barrow Autism Spectrum Exceptionalities- Adapted Curriculum (BASE-A)

Auburn Elementary School

Austin Road Elementary School

Winder Elementary School

Yargo Elementary School

Haymon-Morris Middle School

Apalachee High School

Academic Preparatory Program (APP)

Winder-Barrow High School

Student Transition Enrichment Program (STEP)

Sims Academy

Project SEARCH Transition Program

Chico's FAS

Youth Employment Services (YES)

Sims Academy

G. Non-Academic and Extracurricular Settings

The Barrow County School System ensures that each child with a disability participates with nondisabled children in non-academic and extracurricular services and activities (including meals, recess periods, and other services and activities) to the maximum extent appropriate to meet the needs of that child. The school system ensures that each child with a disability has supplementary aids and services determined by the child's IEP to allow children with disabilities an equitable opportunity for participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities.

Nonacademic and extracurricular services may include counseling services, athletics, transportation, health services, recreational activities, special interest groups or clubs sponsored by the school, and employment of students, including both employment by the public agency and assistance in making outside employment available.

The Barrow County School System ensures that supplementary aides and services determined appropriate by the IEP team are provided in order to allow children with disabilities an equitable opportunity for participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities.

BCSS Professional Learning, Supervision, and Technical Assistance

Existing BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: The Director of Special Education, district special education coordinators, program specialists, and school-level IEP facilitators will provide ongoing professional learning regarding policies and procedures for the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and the continuum of services provided through the Barrow County School System. The Director of Special Education provides this training annually to school-level administration. Existing special education teachers will be updated regarding LRE during monthly school-level special education meetings. All staff members who will be serving as an LEA representative or designee will be trained regarding their roles and responsibilities during an IEP meeting.

New BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: New special education teachers to the BCSS will be trained in special education policies and procedures, including least restrictive environment (LRE), through a new teacher training provided by the district special education coordinators and/or program specialists. Additionally, new teachers will be assigned a veteran mentor teacher in their building who will provide support in regard to serving students in their least restrictive environment.

Evidence of Training: Professional learning regarding LRE will be documented through agendas and sign in sheets. This documentation will be stored electronically on the Microsoft platform

and the originals will be housed in the Special Education Administrative Assistant's office.

Supervision and Monitoring Procedures: School-level IEP facilitators and building-level administrators monitor teacher compliance regarding the least restrictive environment (LRE) through draft submission before IEP meetings, conferencing with teachers, and participating in the IEP process. District staff monitor by way of regularly attending IEP meetings and having scheduled IEP audits. In addition, the Director of Special Education shares the LRE percentage on an annual basis with school administration and school-level IEP facilitators. This information is used in the school improvement planning process.

Technical Assistance: If BCSS staff are not considering the continuum of services, additional training and technical support (conferences, assigned webinars, 1:1 training, etc.) will be provided by the Director of Special Education, district special education coordinators and/or program specialists.

State Rule: 160-4-7-.08—Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information

A. Confidential Information

Confidentiality is one of the rights afforded to parents in the Parent Rights document (procedural safeguards). Confidentiality of educational records is a basic right shared by all children in public schools and their parents. These fundamental rights are described in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act or FERPA of 1974, which applies to all students, not just those with disabilities. All district personnel (including contracted employees) are governed by confidentiality requirements and receive training each year and information regarding the law.

Written and dated parent consent must be obtained before personally identifiable information can be disclosed to unauthorized individuals, organizations, or agencies (unless otherwise authorized to do so under FERPA). Personally identifiable information includes the following:

1. The name of the student, the student's parent, or other family member,
2. The student's address,
3. Any personal identifier such as the student's social security number or student number,
4. Any personal characteristics or other information that would make it possible to identify the student.

FERPA allows parents to inspect and review all educational records of their child maintained by an educational agency that receives federal funds. This includes all public schools and most private schools. The school must comply with a request to inspect records within a reasonable amount of time, and in no case more than 45 days after the request has been made.

B. Access Rights and Required Procedures

All special education folders are kept and maintained in the Special Education Office. Confidential information is stored in file cabinets and drawers that can be locked. All official files are located at the Barrow County School System Central Office.

Each special education folder has the child's name on the top of the folder and all personnel reviewing records signs the access sheet indicating the staff member's name and date, and purpose of the review.

The following are authorized to access special education records: the Director of Special Education, district special education coordinators, special education program specialists, school administrators, school psychologists, special education administrative assistants, special education teachers, speech-language pathologists, and related service providers.

1. *Student Records:* For students enrolled in special education, any reference to special education status documented in a student's permanent records would place the record under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) confidentiality requirements. It is mandated that reference to special education status be maintained in a separate supplemental file and not specifically by reference on the student's permanent record.
2. Verbal references to a student's special education program should be restricted only to professionals working directly with the student. There will be no documentation that the student receives special education services on the official transcript.
3. *General Requests for Records by Parents:* The official Special Education Records are maintained at the Central Office in the Special Education Department. All requests for records beyond a copy of the current IEP must be handled at the county office. The Special Education Records Clerk will communicate with the parents and set up a time that the records can be picked up. Parents must show their ID and sign that records were received.
4. *General Requests for Records by Other Systems:* When a new student enrolls, the registration department gets a parent signature on a Confidential Release of Records form. This form is then given to the Special Education Records Clerk to obtain records if it is indicated on the form that the student was served in special education. The Special Education Records Clerk contacts the previous system on the date that the request is made. When a student moves, the Special Education Records Clerk forwards special education records to the new school once authorization is received.
5. *Social Security Administration (SSI) Request for Records:* The school system frequently receives requests from the Social Security Administration for records on special education students. When schools receive requests from this agency, teachers or staff should
 - a. complete their portion of the form include copies of grades, discipline, etc.,
 - b. retain a copy for their records and send all documentation to the Central Office Special Education Department,

From there, the Special Education Records Clerk will make copies and send all requested records along with the teacher questionnaire to the Social Security Administration.

C. Amendment of Records at Parent Request

Parents who believe that information contained in the education records collected, maintained, or used are inaccurate or misleading or violate the privacy or other rights of the student may request that the Barrow County School System amend the information in question. The school

system will make a determination and decide whether to amend the information in accordance with the request within a reasonable amount of time of receipt of the request. If the school system decides to refuse to amend the information in accordance with the request, it will inform the parents of the refusal and advise the parents of the right to a hearing. The system will, on request, provide an opportunity for a hearing to challenge information in education records to ensure that it is not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of the child.

When the school gets official documentation of legal name changes, school staff make a copy of the legal document that describes the change and sends it to the Special Education Records Clerk for documentation and correction.

D. Results of Hearing

If, as a result of the hearing, the school system decides that the information is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of the student, the information will be amended accordingly, and the parents will be informed in writing.

If, as a result of the hearing, the school system decides the information is accurate and not misleading, or not otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of the student, the system will inform the parents of their right to place in the record a statement commenting on the information and setting forth the reasons for disagreeing with the decision of the school system.

Any explanation placed in the records of the student will be maintained by the Barrow County School System as part of the records of the student as long as the record or contested portion thereof is maintained by the school system. If the records of the child, or the contested portion thereof, are disclosed by the school system to any party, the explanation will also be disclosed to the party.

E. Parent Consent

Parental consent is obtained before personally identifiable information is disclosed to other parties unless the disclosure is authorized without parental consent. Prior consent is not required to release information to the following parties or in these situations:

1. Parents or eligible children
2. Other Barrow County School System officials, including teachers, legally constituted cooperating agencies or other agencies providing shared services whom the system has determined to have legitimate educational interests
3. Officials of another school, school system, or institution of post-secondary education in which the child seeks or is eligible to enroll, upon condition that the student's

parents be notified of the transfer, receive a copy of the record, if desired, and have the opportunity for a hearing to challenge the content of the record

4. Authorized Federal, State or local representatives in connection with an audit or evaluation of Federal or State supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements which relate to those programs (The information is protected in a manner that does not permit personal identification of individuals by anyone except the officials referred to above and must be destroyed when no longer needed)
5. In connection with a child's application for or receipt of financial aid for which the child has applied or which the student has received, if the information is necessary
6. State and local officials or authorities to whom this information is specifically allowed to be reported or disclosed pursuant to a State statute concerning the juvenile justice system
7. Organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, educational agencies or institutions to develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; administer student aid programs; or improve instruction (Information may only be disclosed if the study is conducted in a manner that does not permit personal identification of parents and students by individuals other than representatives of the organization, and the information is destroyed when no longer needed.)
8. Accrediting organizations to carry out their accrediting functions
9. In compliance with a judicial order or a lawfully issued subpoena, the Barrow County School System will make a reasonable attempt to notify the child's parents of the judicial order or subpoena before releasing the records, unless the disclosure is in compliance with a Federal grand jury subpoena or other subpoena issued for law enforcement purposes and the court or other issuing agency has ordered that the existence or the contents of the subpoena or the information furnished in response to the subpoena not be disclosed.
10. Disclosure in connection with a health or safety emergency, if the knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the child or other individuals
11. The disclosure is information the school system has designated as "directory information," and the school system has given public notice to parents and eligible students of the types of personally identifiable information that the school system has designated as directory information; a parent's or eligible student's right to refuse to let the school system designate any or all of those types of information about the student as directory information; and the period of time within which a parent or eligible student has to notify the school system in writing that they do not want any or all of those types of information about the student designated as directory information

12. Officials within the Department of Human Resources, Department of Corrections, Department of Juvenile Justice, and the Department of Labor for the purpose of making appropriate educational decisions regarding placements.

F. Safeguards

The Barrow County School System protects the confidentiality of personally identifiable information at collection, storage, disclosure, and destruction sites. The Superintendent or designee ensures the confidentiality of any personally identifiable information. Access of unauthorized persons to personally identifiable information without the parent's consent is forbidden. All persons collecting or using personally identifiable information have received training or instructions regarding department policies and procedures concerning personally identifiable information. The system maintains, for public inspection, a current listing of the names and positions of school system employees who may have access to personally identifiable information.

G. Destruction of Confidential Information

The Barrow County Public School System archives and stores special education student records from the Special Education Department for a limited time according to the Common Records Retention Schedules for school systems, under the [Georgia Archives University System of Georgia](#). All special education records for students reaching the age of 22 years are scheduled for destruction after July of that calendar year.

BCSS Professional Learning, Supervision, and Technical Assistance

Existing BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: The Special Education Director, district special education coordinators, program specialists and school-level IEP facilitators will provide ongoing professional learning for special education policies and procedures regarding *Confidentiality* throughout each school year. The Director of Special Education provides training to building-level administrators during monthly, instructional leadership meetings. The Director of Student and Data Services reviews all policies regarding confidentiality and student records for each campus and meets with school administration to ensure district policies are clear and are followed in accordance with all regulations. Teachers are trained by building-level administrators on the Code of Ethics for Educators at the beginning of each school year, including rules and regulations regarding confidentiality.

New BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: Teachers new to the Barrow County School System are trained in special education policies and procedures through a new teacher training provided by the district special education coordinators and program specialists at the beginning

of each school year. This includes training regarding student records and confidentiality. They also participate in ongoing professional learning that is provided for existing teachers, as described above, as well as professional learning that is provided by administration and other support staff. Additionally, new teachers are assigned a veteran mentor teacher in their school building to provide support and guidance regarding IEP compliance, student records, and confidentiality throughout the school year. IEP facilitators also work closely with new teachers and mentors to ensure the process is adequately functioning and to give additional clarity and support regarding student records and confidentiality policy and procedure.

Evidence of Training: Professional learning will be documented through agendas, sign in sheets, and beginning of year Policy and Procedure Review documents. This documentation will be stored electronically on the Microsoft platform, and the originals will be housed in the Special Education Administrative Assistant's office.

Supervision and Monitoring Procedures: The Director of Student Data and Services along with the Director of Special Education, and the Director of Planning and Personnel monitors district and individual school compliance with student records and confidentiality policy. The Director of Special Education collaborates with the Director of Student Data and Services and the Director of Planning and Personnel, as well as other district leaders by investigating any claims of a violation of confidentiality policies and procedures. If concerns arise, the Special Education Director will meet with the district leadership team and/or school-level administration to provide technical assistance. Also, school-level IEP facilitators and building-level administrators monitor teacher compliance regarding confidentiality. Additionally, teachers are asked to sign off on the BCSS Special Education Beginning of year Policy and Procedure Review Documents Checklist and that they have received Code of Ethics training, verifying understanding of their responsibilities as it pertains to confidentiality and student records throughout the school year.

Technical Assistance: Teachers who require additional technical assistance with policies and procedures regarding confidentiality and student records will be provided with technical assistance and support through trainings, one-on-one conferences, webinars, and/or professional learning plans from the Director of Special Education, district special education coordinators, program specialists and/or designated school staff (e.g., principals, assistant principals, special education IEP facilitators, counselors, etc.). If teachers continue to have difficulty despite the technical assistance they receive, building-level administrators will be notified so they may determine next steps to ensure remediation and compliance.

State Rule: 160-4-7-.09—Procedural Safeguards and Parent Rights

A. When parent rights must be provided to parents

The Parent Rights in Special Education (Parent Rights) notice provides the foundation for ensuring that a child with a disability has access to a FAPE. The Parent Rights notice, also called procedural safeguards notice, provides parents with the opportunity to understand their rights, the rights of their child, and the procedures for resolving differences. This document should also help facilitate communication between parents and BCSS personnel. The Parent Rights notice outlines the rights and safeguards available to parents of children with disabilities and students who have reached the age of majority (age 18) and are decision makers. A copy of the Parent Rights notice must be given to the parents (and students 18 or older) at least once in a school year. Additionally, a copy of the Parent Rights notification must also be given upon:

1. initial referral or parent request for evaluation
2. receipt of the first state complaint in a school year
3. receipt of the first request for a due process hearing in a school year
4. notification by the local educational agency to the parent of the decision to remove the child from their current placement and the removal constitutes a change of placement under the discipline provisions of IDEA and State rules because of a violation of a code of student conduct
5. prior to accessing a child's or parent's public benefits or insurance for the first time
6. parental request.

The Parent Rights notice should be written in language understandable to the general public and provided in the native language of the parent or other mode of communication (e.g., braille or sign language) used by the parent, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. For foreign languages, the BCSS will translate the notice orally through Language Line or the use of contract translators.

Parents/Guardians may elect to receive the Procedural Safeguard/Parent Rights notice by electronic mail, an option made available to all parents/guardians by the Barrow County School System.

B. Content of Parent Rights

The content of the notice includes a full explanation of all the procedural safeguards available relating to:

1. Prior written notice
2. Parental consent

3. Access to education records
4. Complaint Process: the opportunity to present and resolve complaints through the State complaint procedures and a due process hearing including:
 - a. The time period in which to file a complaint or due process hearing
 - b. The opportunity for the agency to resolve the complaint
 - c. The difference between the due process hearing and the state complaint process, including the jurisdiction of each procedure, what issues may be raised, filing and decisional timelines, and relevant procedures.
5. The availability of mediation
6. The student's placement during the pendency of any due process hearing
7. Procedures for children who are subject to placement in an interim alternative educational setting
8. Independent educational evaluations
9. Requirements for unilateral placement by parents of children in private school at public expense
10. Due process hearings, including requirements for disclosure of evaluation results and recommendations; appeals of due process hearings, including the time period in which to file those actions
11. Attorneys' fees
12. Notice provided in a language understandable to the parents: the native language of the parent is used unless it is clearly not feasible to do so.

C. Parental Opportunity to Review Records

The Barrow County School System provides an opportunity for the parents of a child with a disability to inspect and review all education records relating to the identification, evaluation, educational placement, and provision of FAPE to the child.

The rights include the right to a response from the local education on agency to reasonable requests for explanations and interpretations of the records, the right to request the local education on agency to provide copies of the records, and the right to have a representative of the parent to inspect and review the records. The local education agency may presume that the parent has these rights unless the school system has been advised that the parent does not have the authority due to State law governing, guardianship, separation, and divorce.

All rights of parents to examine education records shall transfer to the child at age 18.

The Barrow County School System ensures that parents

1. receive notice before the school initiates or changes (or refuses to initiate or change) the identification, evaluation, educational placement of the child, or the provision of FAPE to the child,
2. receive notice of places to contact for assistance in understanding the procedural safeguards/parents' rights,
3. receive procedural safeguards notice and a full explanation of the procedural safeguards.

D. Parental Participation in Meetings

The parents of a child with a disability are afforded an opportunity to participate in meetings with respect to the identification, evaluation, educational placement, and the provision of a FAPE to the child.

1. A meeting does not include informal or unscheduled conversations involving BCSS personnel and does not include conversations on issues such as teaching methodology, lesson plans, or coordination of service provision.
2. A meeting does not include preparatory activities that BCSS personnel engage in to develop a proposal or to respond to the parent's proposal that will be discussed at a later meeting.
3. The BCSS shall ensure that a parent of each child with a disability is a member of any group that makes decisions on the educational placement of the parent's child.
 - a. If the parents cannot participate in a meeting in which a decision is to be made relating to the educational placement of their child, the BCSS shall use other methods to ensure their participation, including individual or conference telephone calls or video conferencing.
 - b. A placement decision may be made by a group without the involvement of the parent(s) if the BCSS is unable to obtain their participation in the decision. In this case, the BCSS must have a record of its attempts to ensure their involvement, including information that is consistent with State Board of Education Rule 160-4-7-.6—Individualized Education Program.
 - a. A minimum of three attempts to hold meetings to involve the parent will be made through different avenues to include but not limited to sending the notice of meeting via email, certified mail, and through the school social worker.
 - b. These attempts must be thoroughly documented before the meeting can proceed without the parent.

- c. The BCSS makes reasonable efforts to ensure that the parents understand and are able to participate in any group discussions relating to the educational placement of their child, including arranging for an interpreter for parents with deafness or whose native language is other than English.

E. Independent Educational Evaluations

When a parent of a student with a disability disagrees with an evaluation conducted by the Barrow County School System, the parent has the right to request that the school system fund an independent educational evaluation. An independent educational evaluation is an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not an employee of the school system. Any results obtained through this independent evaluation must be considered by the school system in any eligibility or placement decision. School-level administrators and teachers are asked to notify the District Special Education Coordinator IMMEDIATELY upon request of an independent educational evaluation by a parent.

The School System is under strict time constraints once a parent makes this request.

As used in this section, “independent educational evaluation” means an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the local education agency responsible for the education of the child with a disability in question. As used in this section, “public expense” means that the local education agency pays for the full cost of the evaluation (limit not to exceed \$350.00) or ensures that the evaluation is otherwise provided at no cost to the parents.

The parent(s) has/have the right to an independent educational evaluation at public expense if the parent(s) disagree(s) with an evaluation conducted/obtained by the BCSS, subject to the conditions described below:

1. If a parent requests an independent educational evaluation at public expense, the local education agency must, without unnecessary delay either initiate an impartial due process hearing to show that the evaluation is appropriate or ensure that an independent educational evaluation is provided at public expense, unless the local education agency demonstrates in a hearing that the evaluation obtained by the parent did not meet agency criteria.
2. If the final decision is that the local education agency’s evaluation is appropriate, the parent(s) still has/have the right to an independent educational evaluation but not at public expense.
3. If a parent requests an independent educational evaluation, the Barrow County School System may ask for the parent’s reason why they object to the public evaluation. However, the explanation by the parent may not be required and the

local education agency may not unreasonably delay either providing the independent educational evaluation at public expense or initiating an impartial due process hearing to defend the local education agency's evaluation.

4. The Barrow County School System will provide to the parents, upon request, information about where an independent educational evaluation may be obtained and the local education agency's criteria applicable for independent educational evaluations. Contact the District Special Education Coordinator for information regarding IEEs.

If the parent obtains an independent educational evaluation at public or private expense, the results of the evaluation

1. shall be considered by the local education agency, if it meets state and local education agency criteria, in any decision made with respect to the provision of FAPE to the child,
2. may be presented by either party as evidence at an impartial due process hearing under these Rules regarding that child.

If the administrative law judge or hearing officer conducting the impartial due process hearing requests an independent educational evaluation as part of a hearing, the cost of the evaluation shall be at public expense. Whenever the State or BCSS pays for an independent educational evaluation, the criteria under which the evaluation is obtained, including the location of the evaluation and the qualifications of the examiner, shall be the same as the criteria which the State or BCSS uses when it initiates an evaluation. Except for the criteria described in this rule, the BCSS may not impose conditions or timelines related to obtaining an independent educational evaluation at public expense.

A parent is entitled to only one independent educational evaluation at public expense each time the BCSS conducts an evaluation with which the parent disagrees.

F. Parental Consent

The BCSS is required to obtain informed written consent for any action requested. Parental consent is voluntary and may be revoked at any time. Consent is required for the following actions:

1. to conduct an initial evaluation
2. to conduct a reevaluation
3. for the initial provision of special education and related services
4. before disclosure of personally identifiable information that is subject to confidentiality

Initial Evaluation

Barrow County School System makes reasonable efforts to obtain the informed consent from the parent for an initial evaluation to determine whether the child is a child with a disability, as well as consent for an initial placement.

For initial evaluations only, if the child is a ward of the state and is not residing with the child's parent, the Barrow County School System is not required to obtain informed consent from the parent for an initial evaluation to determine whether the child is a child with a disability if

1. despite reasonable efforts to do so, the local education agency cannot discover the whereabouts of the parent of the child,
2. the rights of the parents of the child have been terminated in accordance with state law,
3. the rights of the parent to make educational decisions have been subrogated by a judge in accordance with state law and consent for an initial evaluation has been given by an individual appointed by the judge to represent the child.

If the parent of a child does not provide consent for initial evaluation or the parent fails to respond to a request to provide consent, the BCSS may, but is not required to, pursue the initial evaluation by utilizing the procedural safeguards of mediation or due process hearings. The BCSS does not violate its obligations under Child Find if it declines to pursue the evaluation.

Note: Consent for initial evaluation shall not be construed as consent for initial provision of special education and related services.

Re-evaluation

The Barrow County School System obtains informed parental consent prior to conducting a re-evaluation of a child with a disability. Except for an initial evaluation, initial placement, and re-evaluation, consent is not required as a condition of any benefit to the parent(s) or child.

Services

The Barrow County School System (responsible for making FAPE available to a child with a disability) will obtain informed consent from the parent of the child before the initial provision of special education and related services to the child. If the parents of a child fail to respond or refuse to consent to services, the BCSS may not utilize the procedural safeguards of mediation or a due process hearing in order to obtain agreement that service may be provided.

If the parents of the child do not provide consent for the initial provision of special education and related services, or the parents fail to respond to a request to provide

consent for the initial provision of special education and related services, the BCSS will not be considered in violation of the requirement to make FAPE available to the child for which the BCSS sought consent.

The BCSS is not required to convene an IEP team meeting or develop an IEP for the child for whom the BCSS requests consent.

The BCSS provides notice consistent with Rule 160-4-7-.06 (11)(a) to ensure that parents of children with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in meetings described above. When a student transfers to the BCSS, caseload teachers will get a Consent for Services signed at the first IEP meeting.

G. Parent Refusal for Consent/Revocation

Parents have the right to request revocation of consent for services for their child with a disability. If a parent requests to revoke consent, then the school must notify their District Special Education Coordinator so that all steps of Prior Written Notice are followed. Often the parent may not understand all ramifications of this choice; therefore, the process must be explained so they understand the rights they would be giving up when revoking consent. The following information is given to the parent of the child requesting revocation of special education services.

1. Upon parent request, all special education services would be eliminated for their student. These services include special transportation, other related services such as occupational therapy and physical therapy, benefits from other public and private programs, testing accommodations, and provision of assistive technology.
2. The revocation may impact the student's high school graduation requirements and diploma options.
3. The IEP developed for their student and their eligibility/redetermination report has deemed him or her eligible for special education and in need of services.
4. By revoking Consent for Placement, the parent would be giving up the procedural safeguards available under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
5. The revocation of parental Consent for Placement means that the Barrow County School System is not deemed to have "knowledge of disability" under IDEA and that all rules and timelines for student discipline (including suspension, expulsion, and manifestation) that apply to general education students would apply to their student.
6. The parent is not allowed to revoke "partial" consent for only some of the services provided by the IEP. If the parent and the Barrow County School System disagree about whether a Free and Appropriate Public Education would be provided with or

without the provision of a service, the parent may use the due process procedures outlined in Special Education Parental Rights to obtain a ruling regarding the services. Consent for services is consent for special education.

BCSS Procedure for Revocation of Consent

1. Contact the school's District Special Education Coordinator to set up a meeting to review the revocation paperwork with the parents.
2. The parent must be offered a reevaluation when asking to revoke consent.
3. If the parent does not want to proceed with an evaluation and would rather revoke consent, they must be provided **Prior Written Notice** and the **Revocation of Consent for the Provision of Special Education and Related Services** document from the Georgia DOE website.
4. After consent is revoked, the exit date should be reported to the school's registrar on the student's FTE form.

H. Parent Consent Not Required

The school system need not obtain informed parental consent if it can demonstrate that

1. it made reasonable efforts to obtain such consent,
2. the child's parents failed to respond.

Parental consent is not required before:

1. reviewing existing data as a part of an evaluation or reevaluation,
2. administering a test or other evaluation that is administered to all children unless consent is required of parents of all children.

The school system may not use a parent's refusal to consent to one service or activity under subparagraph (d) – (f) of paragraph 6 of this rule to deny the parent or child any other service, benefit, or activity of the BCSS.

If the parent of a child who is homeschooled or placed in a private school by the parents at their own expense does not provide consent for the initial evaluation or reevaluation, or the parent fails to respond to a request to provide consent, the BCSS may not use the consent override procedures described in this rule. The BCSS is not required to consider the child as eligible for services. To meet the reasonable efforts requirement in the consent section of this rule, the BCSS must document its attempts to obtain parental consent.

Prior Written Notice

Prior Written Notice by the Barrow County School System must inform the parents in writing and within a reasonable time of any actions being proposed or actions the BCSS refuses to initiate. These include any of the following.

1. Identification (process to determine eligibility)
2. Evaluation (nature and scope of assessment procedures)
3. Educational placement (educational placement of children including graduation)
4. FAPE (the provision of a free appropriate public education to children).

Prior Written Notice must contain:

1. a description of the action refused or proposed by the BCSS;
2. an explanation of why the BCSS refuses or proposes to take the action;
3. a description of the evaluation procedure, assessment, records, or report used as a basis for the proposed or refused action;
4. a statement that the parents have the protections of the procedural safeguards and if this notice is not an initial referral for evaluation, how a copy of the procedural safeguards can be obtained;
5. sources for the parents to contact to understand the procedural safeguards;
6. a description of other options the IEP Team considered and the reasons why those options were rejected; and
7. a description of other factors that are relevant to the BCSS's proposal or refusal.

I. Parent Training

Parents may be helped:

1. to understand the special needs of their child and information about child development,
2. to acquire the necessary skills to support the implementation of their child's IEP if determined by the IEP Team as a related service,
3. in obtaining community resources.

To enhance support provided to BCSS parents, the parent mentor will:

1. enhance communication and collaboration between families, educators, and the community leading to success for students,
2. attend required workshops and conferences to increase knowledge of special education and the needs of parents,
3. prepare publications, website, and social media updates related to activities for parents and disseminate information for parents of newly identified students with disabilities,

4. educate parents on available resources for their children,
5. collaborate with local groups to secure resources, to acquire volunteers for the Special Education Department events, and provide information about parent engagement updates on a periodic or as needed basis,
6. work with leaders of Navigator Team, Parent Advisory Council (PAC), Northeast Georgia Area Transition Team (NEGATT), and local school parent groups to facilitate activities for parents,
7. provide training for general and special education personnel to work with parents to be an effective advocate for children,
8. collaborate with the Family Engagement Specialist to support district-wide family engagement,
9. conduct and evaluate surveys to assess the needs of parents at their local school(s) and/or district and use results to develop plans to improve parent satisfaction.

BCSS Professional Learning, Supervision and Technical Assistance

Existing BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: The Special Education Director, district special education coordinators, program specialists and school-level IEP facilitators will provide ongoing professional learning for special education policies and procedures regarding *Procedural Safeguards and Parent Rights* throughout each school year by way of monthly department meetings and quarterly IEP facilitator meetings. Additionally, the Director of Special Education provides training to building-level administrators during preplanning and/or at regularly scheduled principal and assistant principal meetings.

New BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: New teachers to the Barrow County School System are trained in special education policies and procedures with regards to *Procedural Safeguards and Parent Rights* through a new teacher training provided by the district special education coordinators and program Specialists during preplanning each school year. New teachers also participate in ongoing professional learning that is provided for existing teachers, as described above, as well as professional learning that is provided by administration and other support staff throughout the school year. Additionally, new teachers are assigned a veteran mentor teacher in their school building to provide support and guidance regarding *Procedural Safeguards and Parent Rights* throughout the school year. Building-level IEP facilitators work closely with new teachers and mentors to ensure clarity and support regarding the distribution, explanation, and implementation of *Procedural Safeguards and Parent Rights*.

Evidence of Training: Professional learning will be documented through agendas, sign in sheets, and beginning of year Policy and Procedure Review documents. The documentation will be stored electronically on the Microsoft platform, and all originals are housed in the Special Education Administrative Assistant's office.

Monitoring Procedures: The Director of Special Education collaborates with all Barrow County School System special education stakeholders to ensure *Procedural Safeguards* are followed. School-level IEP facilitators, program specialists, and special education coordinators hold meetings with teachers and each other to discuss and monitor compliance with the rules regarding the distribution, explanation, and implementation of *Procedural Safeguards*.

Technical Assistance: Teachers who require additional technical assistance with policies and procedures regarding *Procedural Safeguards* will be provided with technical assistance and support through trainings, one-on-one conferences, webinars, and/or professional learning plans from the Director of Special Education, district special education coordinators, program specialists and/or designated school staff (e.g., assistant principals, special education IEP facilitators, etc.). If teachers continue to have difficulty despite the technical assistance they receive, building-level administrators will be notified so they may determine next steps to ensure remediation and compliance.

State Rule: 160-4-7-.10—Discipline

A. Relationship of General Code of Conduct to IEP

Parents, students, educators, and administrators need to know the Barrow County School System's Code of Conduct and students with disabilities should be expected to follow the rules that are in effect for all of the students in the school system. The Barrow County School System adopts and fully accepts the Georgia Rules for Special Education.

The Code of Student Conduct for the Barrow County School System applies to all children unless a child's IEP specifically states otherwise. The Barrow County School System ensures that the parents and the child with a disability receive notice of the rules and regulations applicable to children with disabilities with respect to child management, discipline, and suspension/expulsion upon the child's entry into a special education program or at the annual IEP review.

The Barrow County School System is a PBIS-Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports-school system. Each school created a code of conduct and program that supports the PBIS researched-based interventions.

B. Interim Alternative Settings 10-Day Rule

The Barrow County School System personnel consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether a change in placement, consistent with the other requirements of this rule, is appropriate for a child with a disability who violates a code of student conduct. School personnel may remove a child with a disability who violates a code of student conduct from their current placement to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting, such as the Barrow County Alternative Education Program or other setting, or suspension, for not more than 10 consecutive school days (to the extent those alternatives are applied to children without disabilities), and for additional removals of not more than 10 consecutive school days, in that same school year, for separate incidents of misconduct (as long as those removals do not constitute a change of placement under this rule). After a child with a disability has been removed from their current placement for 10 school days in the same school year, during any subsequent days of removal, the school system will provide services to the extent required under this rule.

Students with disabilities who are in In-School Suspension (ISS) must continue to have access to the general curriculum and to progress toward the goals in the IEP in order for ISS not to be considered a removal and count toward the 10 days of suspension.

Students with disabilities should be expected to follow the code of conduct. A student with a disability who has an IEP in effect can be removed to out-of-school suspension (OSS),

another setting, or an appropriate interim alternative educational setting, just as any other student without a disability can, for up to a total 10 school days, for violations of the code of conduct or school rules. The 10 days can be consecutive or cumulative and can occur during one school year. It is not necessary for the IEP team to meet when this occurs. Likewise, it is not necessary for a manifestation determination to be completed, a functional behavior assessment to be conducted, a behavior intervention plan to be developed, or for any special education services to be provided if the removal is for 10 or fewer school days in the school year.

When frequent disciplinary actions add up to more than 10 school days in a school year, or when frequent disciplinary actions clearly indicate a pattern that is a change in placement, the IEP team must determine appropriate services that allow the student to continue to participate in the general education curriculum and progress toward meeting the goals outlined in the student's IEP, although in another setting.

After a student has been removed for 10 school days in the same school year and a subsequent removal is not for more than 10 consecutive days and is not a change in placement, then district personnel and at least one of the student's teachers must determine the extent of services needed so the student can continue to participate in the general education curriculum and progress toward meeting the goals outlined in the student's IEP, although in another setting.

C. Manifestation Determination

Within 10 school days from the beginning of a disciplinary action that either exceeds 10 school days in a row or that constitutes a pattern of removals (a change in placement), the student's IEP team must meet to determine whether the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the student's disability, or whether the conduct was a result of the district's failure to implement the student's IEP.

In making this determination, the district, the parent, and relevant members of the IEP team (as determined by the parent and the district) will review:

1. The student's current IEP
2. The student's current behavior intervention plan
3. The student's most recent evaluation information and/or eligibility report
4. Teacher observations
5. Any other relevant information provided by parents.

If the IEP team finds that the student's behavior was caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the student's disability, or that the behavior was a direct result of the district's failure to implement the IEP, then the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability and the child must be returned to the placement from which the child was removed, except in cases involving weapons, serious bodily injury, or illegal drugs or

controlled substances, unless the parent and the LEA agree to a change in placement. If the student's conduct is a manifestation of the child's disability and the student does not have a behavior intervention plan, the IEP team must conduct a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and implement a behavior intervention plan based on the FBA to address the behavioral violation. If the student already has a behavior intervention plan that addresses the conduct in question, the IEP team must review and modify it as necessary to address the behavior.

If the IEP team finds that the student's behavior was not a manifestation of the student's disability, the same disciplinary actions can be imposed on the student with a disability as those imposed on any student, including expulsion. However, the student must continue to receive educational services so as to enable the child to participate in the general education setting and to progress toward meeting IEP goals, although in another setting; and receive, as appropriate, a functional behavioral assessment, and behavioral intervention services and modifications that are designed to address the behavior violation so that it does not recur.

D. Functional Behavior Assessment

A functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is a systematic process for defining a child's specific behavior and determining the reason why (function or purpose) the behavior is occurring. The FBA process includes examination of the contextual variables (antecedents and consequences) of the behavior, environmental components, and other information related to the behavior. The purpose of conducting an FBA is to determine whether a Behavioral Intervention Plan should be developed.

If the IEP Team has adequate information to develop a Behavior Intervention Plan, a Functional Behavior Assessment may not be required. Although not required, best practice is to conduct an FBA prior to the development of a BIP. In the case of a required FBA and BIP due to discipline procedures and the determination that the behavior in question was a manifestation of the child's disability, both an FBA and a BIP must be developed. If already completed, the FBA and BIP must be reviewed and revised as necessary.

E. Behavior Intervention Plan

A behavioral intervention plan (BIP) is a plan for a child with disabilities, included in the IEP when appropriate, which uses positive behavior interventions, supports and other strategies to address challenging behaviors and enables the child to learn socially appropriate and responsible behavior in school and/or educational settings.

F. Special Circumstances: Weapons, Illegal Drugs, Injury

Certain serious behavior problems can lead to a student's removal to an interim alternative educational setting for up to 45 school days, even if the conduct is determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability. These offenses are as follows.

1. *Weapons*: The student carries a weapon to or possesses a weapon at school, on school premises, or at a school function under the jurisdiction of the State or the LEA.
2. *Drugs*: The student knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs, or sells or solicits the sale of controlled substance, while at school, on school premises, or at a school function under the jurisdiction of the State or the LEA.
3. *Serious Bodily Injury*: The student has inflicted serious bodily injury upon another person while at school, on school premises, or at a school function under the jurisdiction of the State or the LEA.

*The interim alternative educational setting is determined by the IEP Team.

G. Provision of Notification of Change of Placement

On the date on which the decision is made to make a removal that constitutes a change of placement of a child with a disability because of a violation of the Barrow County School System Code of Conduct, the LEA must notify the parents of that decision and provide the parents the Procedural Safeguards Notice/Parent Rights in Special Education.

H. Appeal Process

The parent of a child with a disability who disagrees with any decision regarding placement or the manifestation determination under this rule may appeal the decision by requesting a hearing. The hearing is requested by filing a due process hearing request.

The district can appeal any decisions related to discipline if the district believes that maintaining the current placement of the student is substantially likely to result in injury to the student or others.

If an appeal by a parent or district occurs,

An expedited due process hearing occurs within 20 school days of the date the hearing is requested. A determination must be made by the administrative law judge within 10 school days after the hearing.

If appealing the hearing officer's decision on an expedited due process hearing,

The parent or the district may appeal the administrative law judge's opinion consistent with Rule 160-4- 7:10—Dispute Resolution.

I. Placement During Appeal

When the parent proceeds with the appeal process, the child will remain in the interim alternative educational setting (IAES) pending the hearing decision or until the expiration of the 45 school-days' time period if the infraction involved illegal drugs, controlled substances, weapons, or serious bodily injury, unless the parent and the district agree otherwise. The child does not stay put in their special education placement that was in place prior to the IAES.

J. Protections for Children Not Yet Eligible

The child may assert protections under this rule, if BCSS had prior knowledge the child is a child with a disability. The BCSS is deemed to have knowledge that a child was a child with a disability if any of the following occurred prior to the behavior that precipitated the disciplinary action.

1. The parent expressed concern in writing to the teacher or administrator that the child was in need of special education services.
2. The parent requested a special education evaluation for the student.
3. The teacher or other BCSS personnel expressed specific concerns about the student's behavior patterns to an administrator.

The BCSS is not deemed to have knowledge that a child is a child with a disability if the parent refused services or the child has been evaluated and found ineligible for services. However, if a child was found ineligible for services, and subsequently the parent expressed concern that the child was in need of special education services; or the parent requested an evaluation for special education services; or BCSS personnel expressed specific concerns about a pattern of behavior to the Special Education Director or other BCSS personnel before the disciplinary action, the BCSS is deemed to have knowledge that the child is a child with a disability and the child is entitled to protections under this rule.

If a parent requests an evaluation of a child during the time in which a child is subjected to disciplinary measures, the evaluation must be conducted in an expedited manner. Until the evaluation is completed, the child remains in the educational placement determined by the BCSS authorities, which can include suspension or expulsion without educational services. If the child is determined to be a child with a disability, the BCSS must provide special education and related services.

K. Referral to Law Enforcement and Judicial Authorities

The BCSS may report criminal acts committed by a child with a disability. Nothing in this rule prohibits the BCSS from reporting criminal activity allegedly committed by a child with a disability.

L. Change of Placement Due to Disciplinary Removal

A change of placement occurs if the disciplinary removal is for more than 10 consecutive days or if the removal is part of a series of removals that constitutes a pattern. The BCSS determines on a case-by-case basis whether a pattern of removals constitutes a change of placement. This determination is subject to review through due process hearings and judicial proceedings. A pattern of removals occurs when

1. a series of removals totals more than 10 school days in a year,
2. the behavior is substantially similar to previous incidents that required removal,
3. the length of each removal, the total amount of time the child has been removed, and the proximity of the removals to one another have been considered.

BCSS Horizon Program

The *Horizon Program* is the BCSS's Alternative Education Program. Should a student with a disability be placed at the Horizon Program for punitive reasons after the Manifestation Determination Review (MDR), they must still receive IEP services. After the MDR, a special education administrator will schedule a transfer IEP meeting to ensure the IEP is reviewed and amended, as needed and determined by the IEP team. The BCSS must ensure the student continues to receive educational services so as to enable the child to participate in the general education setting and to progress toward meeting IEP goals, although in another setting.

Procedures for students served at the Horizon Program:

1. While a student is placed at the Horizon Program, it is the home school Caseload Teacher's responsibility to ensure that paperwork timelines are met. Caseload teachers and Horizon Program teachers must collaborate to complete Progress Reports, IEPs, Reevaluation Data Reviews, and Eligibility meetings.
2. One exception to this rule is if a student is assigned to the Horizon Program for more than a semester plus one month. If a student is assigned for that duration or longer, a Horizon Program Special Education Teacher will take over as case manager; however, caseloads will be capped per school.
 - a. Two per middle school
 - b. Three per high school
3. Annual Reviews

- a. Although caseloads will change if a student is placed at the Horizon Program for more than a semester plus one month, should an annual review be due within the first two months of the transfer, the home school Caseload Teacher will be responsible for developing all aspects of the IEP in collaboration with Horizon Program staff.
 - b. If an IEP lapses at 61+ days after transfer to the Horizon Program, the Horizon Caseload Teacher will develop the annual review.
4. Reevaluation Data Reviews (RDR)
- a. When using the 120-day calendar, if the local RDR timeline is due at 0-60 days, is past due, or recommended by the home school outside of the timeline, the home school will be responsible for overseeing and coordinating the RDR, in collaboration with Horizon staff, to ensure the meeting is held in compliance with state and federal laws.
 - i. If an evaluation is recommended, the home school Caseload Manager will oversee the collection of the referral packet contents in collaboration with Horizon staff.
 - b. When using the 120-day calendar, if the RDR local timeline is due 61+ days after transition to the Horizon Program, the Horizon Caseload Teacher will plan, schedule, and coordinate the RDR meeting.
 - i. If an evaluation is recommended, the Horizon caseload teacher is responsible for collecting and overseeing the referral packet process and will submit the packet to the home school's Program Specialist or School Psychologist in accordance with BCSS procedures.

BCSS Professional Learning, Supervision and Technical Assistance

Existing BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: The Special Education Director, district special education coordinators, program specialists, and school-level IEP facilitators will provide ongoing professional learning for special education policies and procedures regarding *Discipline* throughout each school year by way of monthly department meetings, quarterly IEP facilitator meetings, as well as professional learning on planning days. Additionally, the Director of Special Education will provide training to building-level administrators during preplanning and/or at regularly scheduled principal and assistant principal meetings.

New BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: New teachers to the Barrow County School System are trained in special education policies and procedures with regards to Discipline through a new teacher training provided by the district special education coordinators and program specialists during preplanning each school year. New teachers also participate in

ongoing professional learning that is provided for existing teachers, as described above, as well as professional learning that is provided by administration and other support staff throughout the school year. Additionally, new teachers are assigned a veteran mentor teacher in their school building to provide support and guidance regarding *Discipline* throughout the school year. Building-level IEP facilitators, district coordinators, program specialists, and administrators work closely with new teachers to ensure clarity and support regarding *Discipline*.

Evidence of Training: Professional learning will be documented through agendas, sign in sheets, and beginning-of-year Policy and Procedure Review documents. The documentation will be stored electronically on the Microsoft platform, and all originals are housed in the Special Education Administrative Assistant's office.

Supervision and Monitoring Procedures: The Director of Special Education collaborates with all Barrow County School System special education stakeholders, including administrators, to ensure appropriate policy and procedures are followed as it relates to *Discipline*. In addition, the Director of Special Education accesses the Data Dashboard within our Student Information System to monitor suspensions of our students with disabilities. Furthermore, spreadsheets are maintained at the district office tracking students who require an in-depth FBA and BIP, as well as documenting all students who have had an MDR to ensure proper procedures and policies are followed for those students. School-level IEP facilitators hold regular department meetings with their assigned program specialist to provide updated information related to discipline. Finally, program specialists and district coordinators collaborate with teachers and administrators on individual student cases to ensure compliance for our students.

Technical Assistance: Teachers and/or administrators who require additional technical assistance with policies and procedures regarding *Discipline* will be provided with technical assistance and support through trainings, one-on-one conferences, webinars, and/or professional learning plans in collaborations with administrators or direct supervisors, as well as the Director of Special Education. If any staff member continues to have difficulty despite the technical assistance they receive, building-level administrators or director supervisors will be notified so they may determine next steps to ensure remediation and compliance.

State Rule: 160-4-7-.11—Surrogate Parents

In order to provide every student eligible for special education with the protection of procedural due process, under circumstances where a student’s parents or guardians are not known or are unavailable, or a student is a ward of the State, that student will be assigned a surrogate (substitute) parent to represent the child regarding their rights and interests for any evaluation, meeting, or educational decision for special education services. Surrogate parents will receive special training and will act as the parent by giving consent and participating in IEP team/other meetings.

A. Efforts to Locate Parents

1. *Ward of the State*

Children who are in the custody of the Department of Family and Children’s Services (DFCS) and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) are considered “wards of the state,” or in Georgia, the term most often used is “in state custody.” Children in the custody of DJJ or DFCS that are residing in group homes, residential facilities, or emergency shelters may all qualify as wards of the state that need a surrogate parent. Children in the custody of DFCS who reside with a foster parent are also wards of the state; however, the foster parent can fit the definition of parent under the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA). Therefore, a foster parent can sign Consent to Evaluate and Consent for Provision of Services in Special Education without getting a surrogate parent or requiring that the foster parent attend training prior to signing.

Best practices in Barrow County School System will be to offer special education training to foster parents before they are asked to sign a consent for evaluation, consent for provision of services or make educational decisions in an IEP meeting. However, the training will NOT be mandatory for foster parents, but strongly encouraged. Barrow County School System also encourages the use of surrogates if the foster placement is projected to be a very short placement or if the foster parent has not had the child for a reasonable amount of time to make educational decisions without some guidance in special education terminology, etc.

For a child who is a ward of the State, a judge overseeing the child’s case may appoint a surrogate parent.

If the child is a ward of the state, then the following information must be gathered to determine if a surrogate parent is required—If the child is in the custody of DFCS, then the person enrolling the child should be asked if the child resides with

a foster parent. If the answer is YES, then the foster parent may sign the legal forms. If the answer is NO, then the school system will assign a surrogate parent to the case.

2. Homeless Youth

In the case of a child who is an unaccompanied homeless youth, appropriate staff of emergency shelters, transitional shelters, independent living program, and street outreach program may be appointed as temporary surrogate parents.

B. Appointment of Surrogate

All children with disabilities are entitled to FAPE under state regulations and federal special education laws. Included in these laws is a mandate that the parents of children with disabilities have the opportunity to participate actively in the educational decision-making process.

Unfortunately, some children with disabilities do not have parents who can fulfill this very important role, thus leaving their educational planning solely to representatives from their school district (LEA) or from other agencies. Federal law, the IDEA, Georgia rules and regulations, and minimum standards require that an individual must be appointed by the district as a surrogate parent to make decisions regarding the free appropriate public education of a child with a disability. A surrogate parent is needed when: no parent (as defined by the IDEA) can be identified; the public agency, after reasonable efforts, cannot locate a parent; the child is a ward of the State; or the child is an unaccompanied, homeless youth as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

1. LEA Determines Need

The Barrow County School System procedures for enrollment are specific and completed through centralized enrollment procedures monitored by the Barrow County School System Registration Department. The Barrow County School System determines the need of assigning a surrogate at the time of enrollment into the school system.

The Special Education staff and social workers collaborate with DFACS to provide all children with appropriate support.

2. LEA maintains List

Barrow County School System maintains a list of surrogate parent appointments. The current list of trained surrogate parents can be obtained from the Special Education Director.

C. Criteria for Surrogate Parent Selection

The person who is selected to be a surrogate parent may not be an employee of the State Education Agency, Local Education Agency or any agency that is involved in the education of or care of the child; may not have personal or professional interest that conflicts with the interest of the child they represent; and has knowledge and skills that ensure adequate representation of the child.

D. Surrogate Parent Responsibilities

The surrogate parent has no financial responsibility or other responsibility for the day-to-day care of the student. The surrogate parent must

1. protect the child's rights in the educational and decision-making processes, including the identification, evaluation, and placement of the student,
2. follow confidentiality requirements of Georgia Rules and federal law,
3. use discretion in the sharing of information,
4. participate in developing the student's IEP,
5. not be an employee of the "state, district or any other agency that is involved in the education or care of the child,"
6. have no interest that conflicts with the child they represent,
7. have the knowledge and skills that ensure adequate representation of the child.

BCSS Professional Learning, supervision, and technical assistance

Existing BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: The Special Education Director, coordinators and program specialists will provide ongoing professional learning each school year regarding special education policies and procedures related to *Surrogate Parents* to administration, special education teachers, social workers and registration staff. The Director of Special Education and coordinators provide up-to-date training and information regarding state rules at quarterly IEP facilitator meetings. Program specialists also provide additional professional learning to support best practices during monthly, special education department meetings. The Director of Special Education provides information and training to building-level administrators at regular, district leadership or principal meetings.

New BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: Teachers new to the Barrow County School System are trained in special education policies and procedures related to *Surrogate Parents* through a new teacher training provided by the District Special Education Administrative Team at the beginning of each school year. New teachers also participate in ongoing professional learning that is provided for existing teachers, as described above, as well as

professional learning that is delivered by other support staff such as the Parent Mentor. Additionally, new special education teachers are assigned a veteran, mentor teacher in their school building to provide support and guidance regarding state rules throughout the school year. Program specialists and IEP facilitators also work closely with new teachers and mentors to ensure the mentoring process is effective and to give additional clarity and support regarding state rule policy and procedure.

Professional learning will be documented through agendas, sign-in sheets, and/or end-of-year beginning of year Policy and Procedure Review documents. The documentation will be stored electronically on the shared drive, and the originals will be housed in the Special Education Administrative Assistant's office.

Supervision and Monitoring: The Special Education Director continuously communicates and consults with district special education staff and administrators when questions or concerns arise regarding surrogate parents in the BCSS.

Continuous communication and collaboration between the Director of Special Education, the special education coordinators, program specialists, IEP facilitators and special education teachers will take place to review and monitor compliance with state laws and other policies and procedures.

Technical Assistance: Special education teachers who require additional technical assistance with policies and procedures related to state law will be provided with technical assistance and support through trainings, one-on-one conferences, webinars, and/or professional learning plans from the Director of Special Education or other designated special education administrators in the Barrow County School System. If teachers continue to have difficulty despite the technical assistance they receive, the Special Education Director and/or building-level administrators will be notified so they may determine next steps to ensure remediation and compliance.

State Rule: 106-4-7-.12—Dispute Resolution

A resolution in a dispute with the Barrow County School System (BCSS) over the rights and services afforded to children with disabilities and their families can be accomplished several different ways. The quickest and most efficient method is to contact the Special Education Administration in the BCSS. The Special Education Director or district coordinators can often assist a family in working out the differences with minimal time and conflict. Parents or BCSS personnel may also initiate a Facilitated IEP (FIEP) team meeting with the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). When a resolution cannot be worked out locally, other processes are guaranteed to children with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These include (1) mediation, (2) formal complaints, and (3) a due process hearing.

IEP Team Meeting Facilitation

Individualized Education Program (IEP) team meeting facilitation is all about the student and helping the IEP team overcome the pressure and anxiety often associated with a contentious meeting. IEP Team Meeting Facilitation is an optional process, not required by the IDEA, that the Barrow County School System may provide to parents and schools. A facilitated IEP (FIEP) team meeting is the same as any other IEP team meeting, except that a facilitator joins the meeting. The IEP facilitator makes sure that the focus of the team remains on the best interests of the child. The facilitator is a skilled individual who has received specialized training in the area of conflict prevention and resolution through the IEP Team Meeting Facilitation process. The facilitator's primary goal is to assist team members in the thoughtful, productive construction of a quality IEP. This is achieved by encouraging and directing communication specific to the IEP and assuring that the members of the IEP team are empowered in their participation and invested in the IEP. The facilitator is not a member of the IEP team and cannot provide legal advice to any team member. Rather, the facilitator will help the IEP team create an agenda, ground rules, and desired outcomes, and address issues during the IEP team meeting that produce tension within the team so that the team is able to find its own solutions. The facilitator will also guide the discussions during the IEP team meeting by asking student focused questions.

An FIEP Team Meeting:

1. is voluntary, but must be agreed to by the parent and the BCSS,
2. is informal,
3. is helpful to guide communication among the IEP team,
4. is free to both the family and the school district,
5. is useful to prevent disputes,
6. has a high success rate.
7. can be used as often as needed.

Procedures for Requesting a Facilitated IEP Team Meeting

Parents or BCSS personnel may initiate the Facilitated IEP (FIEP) team meeting process by completing the IEP Team Meeting Facilitation Request form located on the GaDOE's website.

1. Both the parties (BCSS personnel and parents or student if 18 years or older) must agree to participate.
2. A complete and signed FIEP request form and Notice of Meeting must be submitted to the GaDOE at least 7-10 days before the scheduled IEP team meeting.
3. Upon approval, a facilitator will be provided at no cost to the parent or the BCSS.
4. Access to the FIEP Request form and other information regarding facilitated IEP team meetings is located on the GaDOE's website: [IEP Team Meeting Facilitation \(gadoe.org\)](http://gadoe.org)

A. Complaint Process

An organization or individual, including those from another state, may file a signed, written complaint alleging that the BCSS has violated requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The complaint must include facts on which the statement is based, suggested solutions to the problem, and the signature and contact information for the complainant, and, if alleging violations with respect to a specific child, the name and address of the child's residence and school (in the case of a homeless child or youth, available contact information for the child should be included as well as the name of the child's school).

Procedures for Filing a Complaint:

1. Formal complaints are filed in writing and sent to the LEA, the Barrow County School System, and the GaDOE Division for Special Education Services and Supports (DSESS). A formal complaint form, which may be used to submit a formal complaint, is located on the Formal Complaint web page on the GaDOE website. [Formal Complaints \(gadoe.org\)](http://gadoe.org)
2. In addition to the LEA having the opportunity to present a proposal, the mediation process is also available. Mediation is available at no cost. Mediation is a non-adversarial process conducted by a qualified and impartial mediator who is trained in effective mediation techniques to resolve disputes. If both parties choose to participate in the mediation process, the complaint investigation may still proceed. The timeline for the complaint may be extended if both parties agree to extend the timeline while they participate in mediation. If both parties agree to mediation, a written agreement will be developed and implemented. Mediation is legally binding in a State or District court. If an agreement is reached and the complainant withdraws their complaint, the complaint will be closed. If agreement is not reached or if the complainant does not withdraw their complaint, the complaint investigation will continue, and a decision of compliance will be made by the GaDOE.

3. Upon receipt of the first written complaint, the BCSS will provide a copy of procedural safeguards to the parent of a child with a disability.
4. If both parties indicate on the complaint form or through other means that they are interested in mediation, then the GaDOE will assign a mediator.
5. The BCSS must provide a written response to the GaDOE DSESS and also send a copy to the person filing the complaint (with some exceptions). The DSESS requests that the BCSS send this response within 10 days of receiving the formal complaint initiation letter. The DSESS will conduct an investigation to confirm details and to get clarification of the issues. The investigation may include interviews with the parties, observations, on-site visits, and other activities as indicated by the nature of the allegation.
6. The DSESS will give the complainant the opportunity to submit additional information in writing about the allegations of the complaint once it has seen the response from the BCSS. If both parties reach an agreement and resolve the complaint before the GaDOE investigation is complete, the complainant may withdraw the complaint and the complaint will be closed without making a determination regarding compliance. If both parties go to mediation and reach an agreement and the complainant withdraws the complaint, then the complaint will be closed without a decision regarding compliance. If mediation is used and an agreement is not reached or if the complainant does not withdraw the complaint, then the complaint investigation will continue.
7. Within 60 days of the receipt of the complaint, the DSESS will issue a written decision that addresses each allegation in the complaint and contains findings of fact and determinations of compliance or noncompliance. The timeline may be extended to accommodate for mediation (if both parties agree) or other exceptional circumstances with respect to a particular complaint. When a violation of the law or regulations has occurred, a resolution will be required. The resolution may include technical assistance activities, compensatory services, reimbursement, and other corrective actions to achieve compliance.
8. Complaints that the BCSS has failed to meet the requirements regarding children who are parentally placed in private schools must be filed under the complaint procedures outlined above.

B. Mediation Process

When the parent and the BCSS disagree about the education of a child with a disability, either may request mediation. An impartial or neutral person, called a mediator, assists the BCSS and the parent in clarifying the problem, exploring interests, discussing options, and reaching a mutually agreeable solution. The mediator does not tell either party how to resolve the dispute but works with both in the development of their solution. If an agreement is reached, it is

documented in writing and signed by all parties. The written agreement is a legally binding agreement and is enforceable in any Georgia court of competent jurisdiction, in a District Court of the United States, or through the formal complaint process. This informal and collaborative approach to problem solving can often foster a positive working relationship between the school district and the family.

Mediators are trained in conflict resolution, collaborative problem solving, and effective communication. In addition, mediators for special education are required to have knowledge and experience in the laws impacting the education of children with disabilities. The GaDOE has a set of qualified mediators under contract. When mediation is requested, a mediator will be assigned from that list.

MEDIATION:

1. is confidential,
2. is voluntary,
3. is informal,
4. occurs in a short period of time,
5. is free to both the family and the BCSS,
6. is less burdensome than a due process hearing or a formal complaint,
7. has a high success rate,
8. can result in a legally binding agreement.

Procedures for Mediation:

1. Either the parent and the student or the BCSS may request mediation.
2. The first step is to ask the other party if they are willing to mediate the disputed issues.
3. If a family member is requesting mediation, contact the BCSS Special Education Director or district coordinators. The BCSS personnel will complete and/or forward the request for mediation and submit it to the GaDOE. A mediation request form is located on the Mediation Requests web page on the GaDOE website, [Mediation Requests \(gadoe.org\)](http://gadoe.org/Mediation-Requests)
4. Upon receipt, the GaDOE assigns the request to a mediator.
5. The mediator will contact both parties to develop the timeline, set up the meeting location, and begin preparation.
6. Mediation will occur at a location, date, and time convenient to both parties.
7. Once parties have agreed to a date, time, and location, participants should be prepared to spend most of the day in mediation.
8. If a resolution is reached, the mediator will facilitate the agreement, and all parties will sign the mediation agreement.
9. After mediation, both parties are expected to carry out the activities they agreed to during the mediation as outlined in the agreement, which is a legally binding document.
10. If mediation is being requested as part of a due process hearing or formal complaint, the

mediation will neither delay nor deny the right to a due process hearing or the complaint investigation. However, discussions during mediation are confidential and they cannot be used as evidence in any due process hearing or civil proceeding.

Preparing for Mediation:

1. Be prepared to define the problem and explain any concerns.
2. Be prepared to state preferred resolutions.
3. Be prepared to share information that will help clarify and resolve the problem.
4. Be prepared to listen to the information and the points of view shared by others.
5. Be prepared to keep an open mind. (Multiple solutions to a problem are often possible.)
6. Be prepared to brainstorm with the other parties involved and to develop a creative solution to the problem.

C. Impartial Due Process Hearings

When the parent and the BCSS disagree over the identification, evaluation, placement, or provision of a FAPE for a child with a disability, either party may request a due process hearing. An impartial due process hearing is designed to provide an opportunity to resolve differences between concerned parties in the identification, evaluation, placement, or provision of a free appropriate public education for a child with a disability in a court setting. A hearing may be requested by either the BCSS or the family.

A due process hearing request must allege a violation that occurred not more than two years before the date the parent or the BCSS knew, or should have known, about the alleged action that forms the basis of the request, with some exceptions. The two-year timeline does not apply if the parent was prevented from filing a due process complaint due to specific misrepresentations by the school district indicating that it had resolved the problem forming the basis of the complaint, or if the school district withheld information from the parent that was required to be provided to the parent.

Due process hearings are provided at no cost to either party; however, each party is responsible for their costs associated with hiring legal counsel or expert witnesses, if they choose to do so, unless a court awards the recovery of these costs to a prevailing party. The BCSS must inform the parents of low cost legal and other relevant services available if the parent requests the information or whenever a due process hearing request is received by the BCSS.

Due process hearings are conducted by the Office of State Administrative Hearings (OSAH). Once a request is received by the GaDOE, the GaDOE forwards the request to OSAH and an administrative law judge (ALJ) will be assigned to conduct the due process hearing. OSAH will contact both parties and begin to set up the arrangements for the impartial due process hearing.

A due process hearing must be conducted and the decision issued within 45 days after the ALJ has been informed of one of the following events: (1) both parties agree in writing to waive the resolution meeting; (2) after either the mediation or resolution meeting starts, but before the 30-day resolution period ends, the parties agree in writing that no agreement is possible; or (3) if both parties agree in writing to continue the mediation at the end of the resolution period, but later, the parent or the BCSS withdraws from mediation. Extensions to the 45 days for a decision may be granted by the hearing officer at the request of either party.

Requesting an Impartial Due Process Hearing

1. The initiating party should inform the other party and the GaDOE of the request for a due process hearing.
2. The filing party is responsible for relaying the hearing request to the GaDOE.
3. The request is required to contain the name and residential address of the student, the name of the school and school district where the student is enrolled (include district contact information), as well as contact information for the family. The request must also contain a description of the problem and a proposed resolution. **The form provided by GaDOE should be used but is not required.** This form is located on the Due Process Hearing Requests web page of the GaDOE website. [Due Process Hearing Requests \(gadoe.org\)](http://gadoe.org) A hearing may not occur until the party or the attorney representing the party files a request that meets all of the requirements.
4. The BCSS may, but is not required to, assist the parent in completing the form as necessary to get a sufficient complaint notice.
5. Once received by the GaDOE, immediate contact will be made with the OSAH to assign the case to an ALJ.
6. The ALJ will contact the parties and begin to set up the logistics of the hearing.
7. An expedited due process hearing may be requested if the request is related to a manifestation determination or placement in an alternative educational setting.

Timeline

A due process hearing must be conducted and the decision issued within 45 days of the request for a hearing. If a resolution meeting or mediation is used, the timeline of 45 days begins at the conclusion of a 30-day resolution period, or earlier if the resolution meeting or mediation does not result in a settlement. Other extensions may be granted by the hearing officer at the request of either party.

An expedited due process hearing must be conducted within 20 school days of the request for a hearing and a decision issued within 10 school days after the hearing. If a resolution session or mediation is used, the timeline of 20 school days begins at the conclusion of the 15-day resolution period.

Responsibilities of the BCSS Upon Receipt of a Request for a Due Process Hearing

1. If the BCSS has not provided prior written notice to the requestor regarding the issues in the request, it must, within 10 days, provide such prior written notice.
2. If the BCSS has provided prior written notice, it must respond to the due process request within 10 days.
3. If the BCSS feels that the due process request is insufficient, the school district must notify the ALJ within 15 days of receiving the request. (The ALJ has 5 days to determine whether the request is sufficient. If sufficient, the timeline moves forward. If not sufficient, the parent must re-file the request.)
4. The BCSS must convene a resolution meeting within 15 days of receiving a parent's due process hearing request and prior to the initiation of a due process hearing. If the due process hearing request is filed as an expedited request, the BCSS must convene a resolution meeting within 7 days of receiving the due process request. Please see the "Resolution Meeting" section below for more information on this process.

Responsibilities of the Parent Upon Requesting or Receiving a Request for a Due Process Hearing

1. If the parent is the receiving party (not the party making the request), they must respond to the BCSS within 10 days of receiving notice of a due process request.
2. If the parent is the initiating party, they must provide sufficient information with the request to allow the BCSS to understand why the request is being made. **The form provided by GaDOE should be used but is not required.** This form is located on the Due Process Hearing Requests web page of the GaDOE website. [Due Process Hearing Requests \(gadoe.org\)](http://gadoe.org)
3. The parent should consider using the resolution meeting or mediation to resolve the differences.

Resolution Meeting

The BCSS must offer the option of a resolution meeting within 15 days of receiving a parent's due process hearing request and prior to the initiation of a due process hearing. If the due process hearing request is filed as an expedited request, the BCSS must offer the option of a resolution meeting within 7 days of receiving the due process request.

The BCSS must convene a resolution meeting with the parent and relevant members of the IEP team who have knowledge of the facts identified in the due process request. This meeting must include a representative of the BCSS who has decision-making authority on behalf of the school district. The resolution meeting may not include an attorney for the BCSS unless the parent is accompanied by an attorney. The parent and the BCSS determine the relevant members of the IEP team who will attend the meeting. The resolution meeting need not be held if the parent

and the BCSS agree in writing to waive the meeting, or the parent and the BCSS agree to use mediation instead of a resolution meeting to attempt to resolve the due process hearing request.

1. If agreement is reached, a written settlement agreement will be developed and signed by the BCSS and the family.
2. An agreement is binding after a 3-day review period in State or District Court or through the formal complaint process.
3. The agreement must be executed by the end of the 30-day resolution period or the due process hearing will proceed.
4. If no agreement is reached and the parties do not agree to mediate, the timeline for due process hearings (45 days) begins upon notice to the ALJ.

Procedures/Rights for a Hearing

1. The hearing will be conducted at a time and place convenient to the parent and the BCSS involved and at an impartial location.
2. The BCSS shall provide the parents with information about low-cost or no-cost legal services.
3. Parents have the right to request and obtain copies of all records concerning the child from the BCSS five or more business days prior to a hearing.
4. Either party may be accompanied and advised by legal counsel or another individual with knowledge or training related to the student about whom the hearing is being conducted.
5. Either party may present evidence at the hearing if disclosed to the other party at least five business days prior to the hearing.
6. Either party may compel the attendance of witnesses. One party must provide a list of witnesses to the other party at least five business days prior to the hearing.
7. Parents have the right to have the child present at the hearing.
8. Confidentiality of information shall be maintained even when in a hearing.
9. Parents in a hearing have a right to obtain relief that the ALJ determines appropriate, which may include payment for an independent evaluation, reimbursement for services, amendment of the IEP, change of the placement, or other relief as determined by the ALJ.
10. Both parties will receive a copy of the written ALJ decision from the hearing.
11. An appeal to a due process hearing must be filed within 90 days in a State or District Court.

Child's Status During the Hearing

1. When a hearing has been requested by either party, the child shall remain in their current educational placement unless the parent and the BCSS agree to an alternate

placement. This is commonly referred to as “stay put.”

2. If the hearing request is filed as an expedited hearing request, the child shall remain in the interim alternative educational setting pending the decision of the ALJ unless the parent and the BCSS agree otherwise.
3. If the hearing is the result of an initial admission to public school, the child shall be placed, with the consent of the parent, in the school program until completion of the hearing proceedings.
4. The current educational placement includes the services provided in the IEP and all related services.
5. Other special circumstances may apply, and the Georgia Rule (160-4-7-.18) should be reviewed to determine the student’s status pending a due process hearing.

BCSS Professional Learning, Supervision and Technical Assistance:

Existing BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: The Special Education Director, district special education coordinators, program specialists and school-level IEP facilitators will provide ongoing professional learning for special education policies and procedures regarding *Dispute Resolution* throughout each school year. The Director of Special Education provides training to building-level administrators during monthly instructional leadership meetings and principal meetings.

New BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: Teachers new to the Barrow County School System are trained in special education policies and procedures through a new teacher training provided by the district special education coordinators and program specialists at the beginning of each school year. They also participate in ongoing professional learning that is provided for existing teachers, as described above, as well as professional learning that is provided by administration and other support staff. Additionally, new teachers are assigned a veteran mentor teacher in their school building to provide support and guidance regarding *Dispute Resolution* throughout the school year. IEP Facilitators also work closely with new teachers and mentors to ensure the process is adequately functioning and to give additional clarity and support regarding dispute resolution policy and procedure.

Evidence of Training: Professional learning will be documented through agendas, sign in sheets, and beginning of year Policy and Procedure Review documents. The documentation will be stored electronically on the shared Microsoft Drive, and originals will be housed in the Special Education Administrative Assistant’s office.

Supervision and Monitoring Procedures: The Director of Special Education is involved in all dispute resolution cases. Data is reviewed on cases yearly to determine what actions need to be

taken to decrease disputes between the BCSS and parents. If concerns arise, the Special Education Director will meet with the district leadership team and/or school-level administrators regarding dispute resolution for further support and training.

Technical Assistance: Teachers and administrators who require additional technical assistance with policies and procedures regarding dispute resolution will be provided technical assistance and support through training, one-on-one conferences, webinars, and/or professional learning plans from the Director of Special Education, district special education coordinators, program specialists and/or designated school staff (e.g. assistant principals, special education IEP facilitators, etc.). If BCSS personnel continue to have difficulty despite the technical assistance they receive, the individual's supervisor will be notified so they may determine next steps to ensure remediation and compliance.

State Rule: 160-4-7-.13—Private Schools

A. LEA Privately Placed or Referred Students

When the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team decides that the most appropriate placement for a child is in a private school, the Barrow County School System (BCSS) continues to be responsible for making sure that the child receives the special education and related services included in the child’s IEP and that those services are provided at no cost to the parent.

The BCSS should make sure that the education provided at the private school meets the standards that apply to other children with disabilities and that the child and parent continue to have all the same rights that other children with disabilities and their parents have. LEAs should monitor compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for these children through procedures such as written reports, on-site visits, and parent surveys. Ultimately, the BCSS remains responsible for ensuring a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is provided when a child is placed in a private school by the school district.

The BCSS may apply for reimbursement grants if specific criteria are met. LEAs may apply for the state Residential and Reintegration Grant if a child is placed in a private residential facility that is approved by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) or if the child is reintegrating from a private residential facility. If the private residential facility is out of the state, the facility must be on the approved list of the state where the facility is located.

BCSS may also apply for the High Cost Fund Grant to receive funds for “high needs” children whose intensity, frequency, and diversity of the special education and related services needs exceed the typical needs of a child with a disability.

B. Parental Placement in Private School and Local Education Agency (LEA) Offer of FAPE

The BCSS is not required to pay for the cost of education, including special education and related services, for the child parentally placed at a private school, if the district made FAPE available for the child.

Private school placement may occur in three circumstances:

1. When the public school determines that it cannot provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE), the public school must identify and pay for a private school to provide services. This is at no cost to the parent.
2. A parent may remove the child from public school at any time and enroll the child in private school. Under certain circumstances the parent may request

reimbursement from the school district to pay for the private placement. The parents must tell the IEP team they disagree with the proposed IEP and placement and want the school district to reimburse them.

If the public school asks to evaluate the child during the 10-day period and the parents refuse, then reimbursement may be denied. If the parents want to be reimbursed for all the costs of private school and the district does not agree to it, the parties must go before a due process hearing officer to determine whether the public school provided FAPE.

3. The parent may choose to use a private school instead of public school at the parent's expense, in which case, FAPE is not an issue.

When the student is enrolled in private school by parent choice, the student and the parent lose their individual rights to special education services.

When students are parentally placed in private or home school, the school district may consider some services. These are determined yearly during the private and home school consultation. In addition, Georgia offers a Special Needs Scholarship Program that allows eligible students to transfer to another public school or to use a state-funded scholarship to attend an approved private school. More information on this program can be found on the GaDOE website at: [Special Needs Scholarship Program \(gadoe.org\)](http://gadoe.org)

C. Provision of Written Notice by Parent to Place in Private School

The parents may also notify the school district in writing, at least 10 days prior to removing the child from public school, that they disagree with the IEP and placement and want the school district to reimburse them for the private school tuition.

D. Reimbursement and Limitations on Reimbursement for Private School and Home School Placement

If the parents of a child with a disability, who previously received special education and related services in a local education agency/school system enroll the child in a private preschool, elementary school, or secondary school without the consent of or referral by the BCSS, a court or an administrative law judge (ALJ) may require the school system to reimburse the parents for the cost of that enrollment if the court or ALJ finds the school system had not made a FAPE available to the child in a timely manner prior to that enrollment, and the private placement is appropriate. A parental placement may be found to be appropriate by an ALJ or a court even if it does not meet the State standards that apply to education provided by the State or local education agency.

The cost of reimbursement described above may be reduced or denied if,

1. at the most recent IEP team meeting, the parents attended prior to the removal of the child from the BCSS, the parents did not inform the IEP team that they were rejecting the placement proposed by the school system to provide FAPE to their child and did not state their concerns or their intent to enroll the child in a private school at public expense,
2. at least 10 business days prior to the removal of the child from the BCSS, the parents did not give written notice to the school system that they were rejecting the placement proposed by the school system to provide a FAPE to the child and did not state their concerns or their intent to enroll the child in a private school at public expense.
3. prior to the parent's removal of the child from the school system, the system informed the parents through the notice requirements of its intent to evaluate the child, including a statement of the purpose and scope of the evaluation that was appropriate and reasonable, but the parents did not make the child available for evaluation.
4. there is a judicial finding of unreasonableness with respect to actions taken by the parents.

Exception to Limitation of Reimbursement:

The cost of reimbursement must *not be reduced or denied* for a parent's failure to provide the notice to the BCSS described above if

1. the school prevented the parents from providing the notice,
2. the parents were not provided a copy of the parent's rights under IDEA and therefore, had not been notified of the requirement to provide the notice described above.
3. the provision of notice would likely result in physical harm to the child.

The cost of reimbursement may, at the discretion of the court or administrative law judge, not be reduced or denied for a parent's failure to provide the notice to the school system described above, if

1. the parents are not literate or cannot write in English,
2. the provision of notice would likely result in serious emotional harm to the child.

E. Homeschooled Students

It is the responsibility of the BCSS to locate, identify, and evaluate all homeschooled children with disabilities. For the purposes of this manual and identification, homeschooled students are also considered parentally-placed private school students. The BCSS is required to carry out child find activities to locate, identify, and evaluate children who are homeschooled within

the jurisdiction of the district. The district must consult with parents of homeschooled children on an annual basis. These activities must be similar to activities undertaken for the children in the district and must be completed in a timely manner comparable to other children attending the district. The BCSS accepts responsibility to conduct child find activities for any of its residents, and those activities must include homeschooled students. When the student is enrolled in homeschooling by parent choice, the student and the parent lose their individual rights to special education services; however, provisions are made for the participation of private school children with disabilities in programs provided under Part B of the IDEA by providing children with special education and related services in accordance with this section. No homeschooled student with a disability has an individual right to receive some or all of the special education and related services that the child would receive if enrolled in a public school.

BCSS Procedures for Homeschooled Students

Parents of students with disabilities who are enrolled in home school are invited to an annual meeting with the Director of Special Education to discuss the learning needs of their students and supports available through the BCSS in accordance with state and federal guidelines.

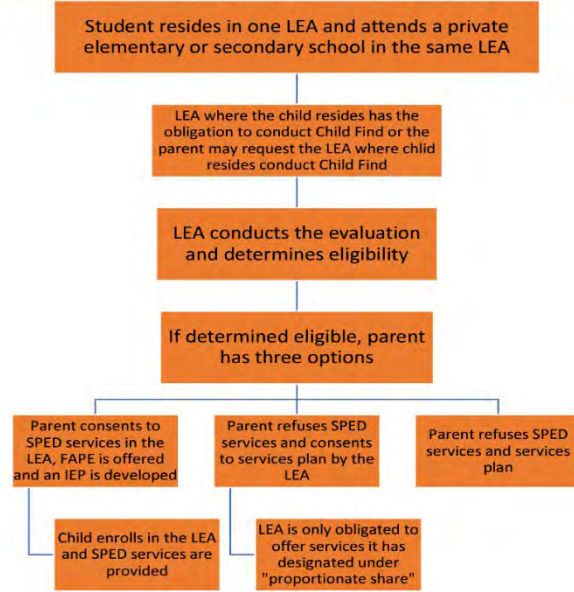
F. Child Find Process and Children in Private Schools

It is the responsibility of the BCSS to locate, identify, and evaluate all private schooled children with disabilities enrolled by their parents in private schools (including religious, elementary, and secondary schools) located within the school district. The BCSS consults with appropriate representatives of private school children with disabilities to carry out child find activities. These activities are similar to those undertaken for the public-school children and completed in a time period comparable to that for children attending public schools. Child find activities include any parentally placed children who attend a private school within the jurisdiction of the district, even if the student resides in a different district or in a state other than Georgia.

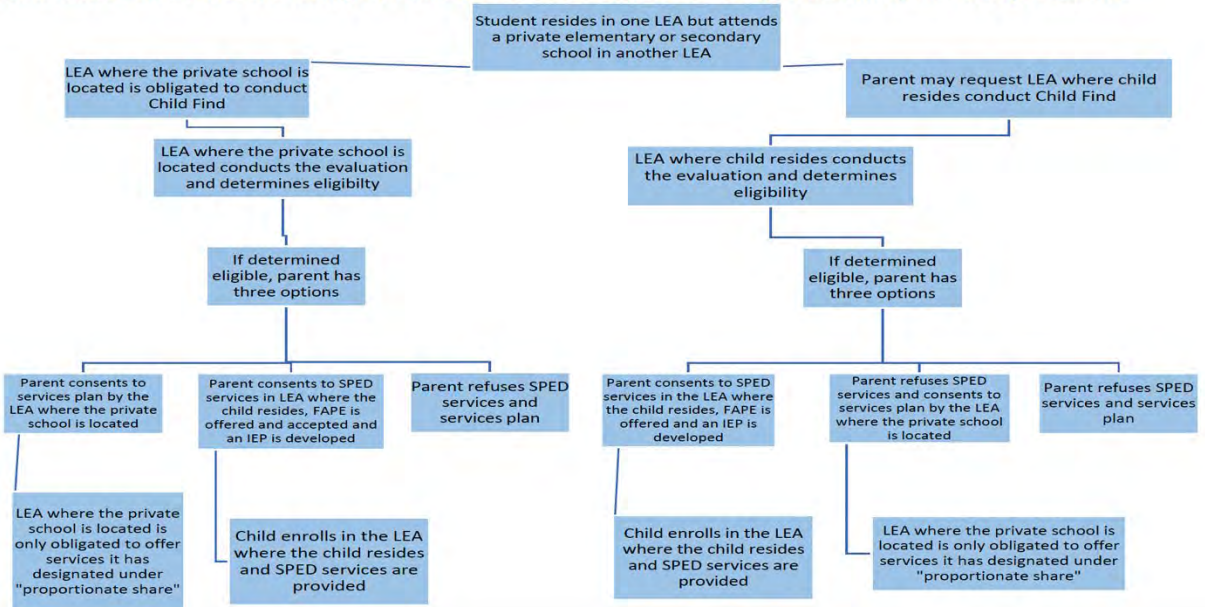
BCSS always accepts responsibility to conduct child find for any of its residents. When a child is enrolled in a private school in another district, then both districts have an obligation, and they work together so as not to delay access to the child find activities.

Below are flowcharts to assist in determining where child find and service responsibility falls for students.

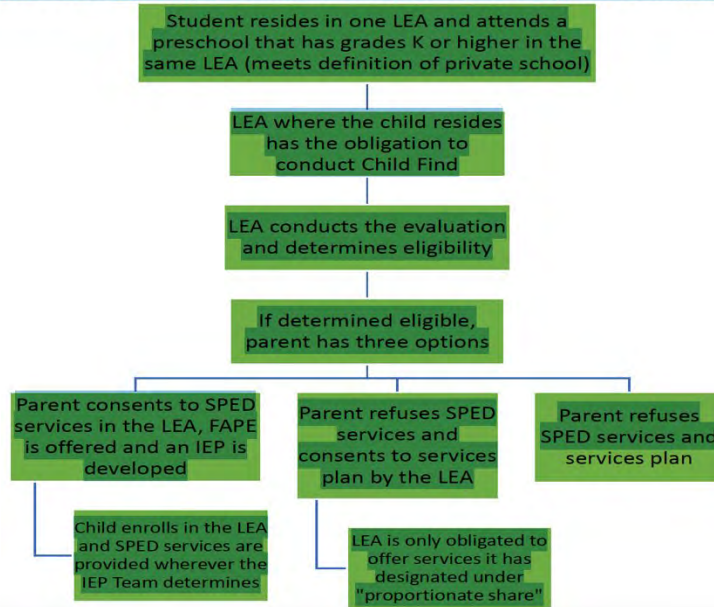
Flowchart 1: K-12 Child attending a Private School that is within the jurisdiction of the LEA of residence



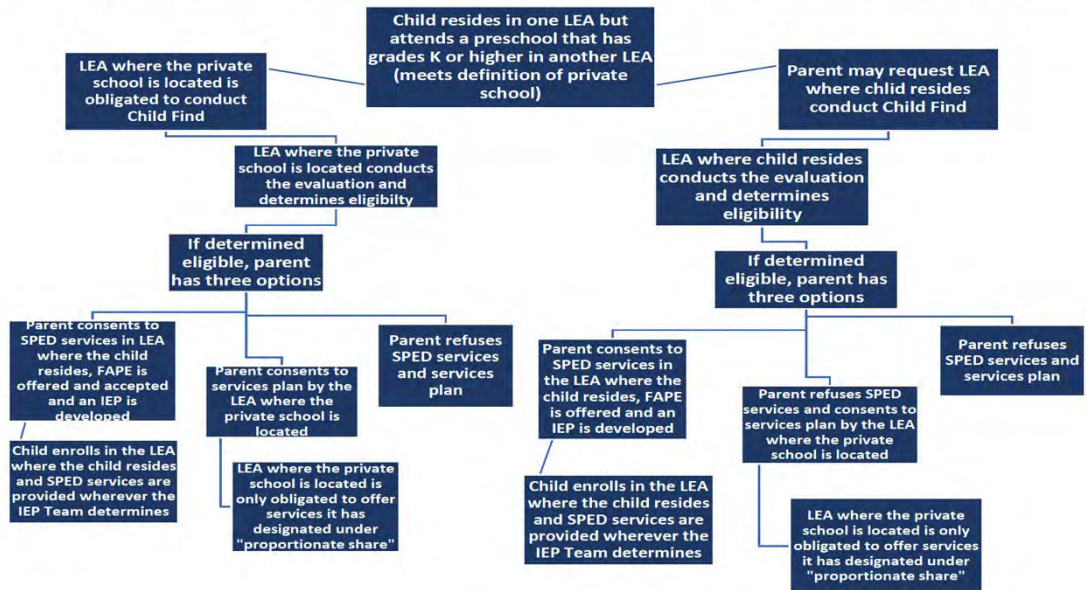
Flowchart 2: K-12 Child attending a Private School that is not within the jurisdiction of the LEA of residence



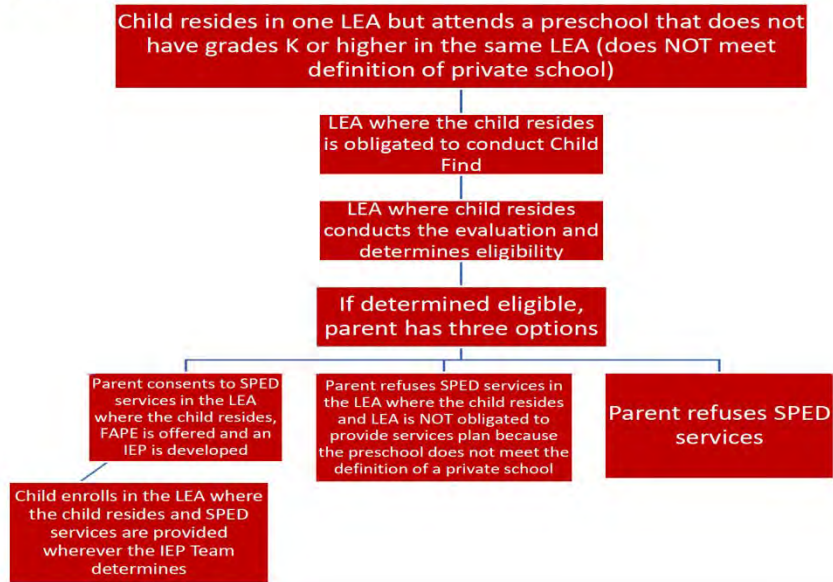
Flowchart 3: Preschool Child attending a Private School that is within the jurisdiction of the LEA of residence



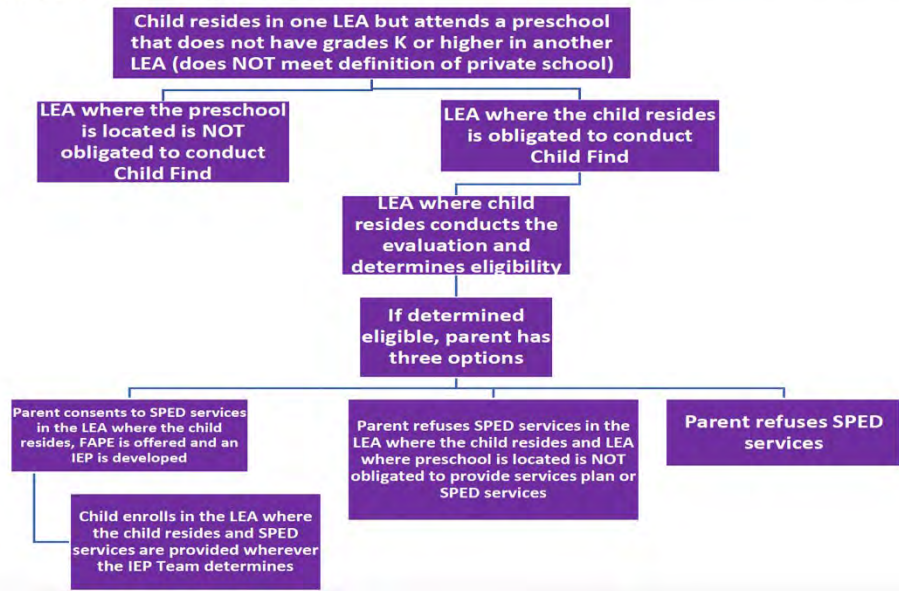
Flowchart 4: Preschool Child attending a Private School that is not within the jurisdiction of the LEA of residence



Flowchart 5: Preschool Child attending a Preschool that does not meet the definition of a private school that is within the jurisdiction of the LEA of residence



Flowchart 6: Preschool Child attending a Preschool that does not meet the definition of a private school that is not within the jurisdiction of the LEA of residence



BCSS Procedures for Evaluation for Private and Home School Students

1. The BCSS will schedule an SST meeting with the private school and/or parents following student registration for evaluation purposes only. This will be held at the child’s home school or a school closest to the private school. If

interventions are not in place, the school may advise both the parent and the private school personnel on appropriate interventions for the child's weaknesses.

2. The child will need a hearing and vision screening. The BCSS can conduct a hearing/vision screening at the home school (with consent), or parents may obtain hearing/vision screening from the child's physician or the health department.
3. The parent will also be asked to provide information about the child on the Confidential Parent Questionnaire and they will be asked to sign the Consent for Evaluation.
4. Parents and private schools are asked to provide documentation of interventions tried prior to referral. The feedback will help the evaluator identify the student's deficits in the area(s) of suspected disability. Although a child's receipt of interventions can provide a critical piece of information in helping to determine eligibility for special education, *the lack of interventions must not be a reason for determining that a child is not eligible for special education services.*
5. Once a request for an evaluation is received, the school psychologist schedules the evaluation.
6. The BCSS will evaluate private school/home school students within the Georgia Department of Education sixty (60) day timeline requirement.

Once testing is complete:

1. The appropriate special education coordinator is notified so an Eligibility and potential IEP meeting can be scheduled.
2. If the student is eligible for special education services, the IEP team will present what an offer of FAPE through BCSS could look like (if the student is a resident within the district) and offer these services if the parent enrolls the student into the BCSS.
3. If the parent chooses to enroll the child, the IEP team will project the implementation date of the IEP forward to a date when the child will be enrolled.
4. If the parent chooses to continue the student's placement in a private school, then the meeting notes and prior written notice will reflect this decision. When students are placed in private or home school, the school district may consider some services for the student through proportionate share.

G. Part B and Related Services for Private School Students

When the student is in a private school by parent choice, the student and the parent lose their individual rights to special education services. However, to the extent consistent with their number and location in the state, provisions are made for the participation of private school children with disabilities in special education programs and related services as provided under and in accordance with Part B of IDEA. No parentally-placed private school child with a disability has an individual right to receive some or all the special education and

related services that the child would receive if enrolled in a public school, and some children will not receive any services. The district will make the final decisions regarding services to be provided prior to the start of the school year. The BCSS is required to expend an amount in the same proportion of its total IDEA, Part B flow-through funding as the number of private school children with disabilities, ages 3-21, residing in its jurisdiction is to the total number of children with disabilities, ages 3-21, in its jurisdiction.

H. Provision of IEPs and Service Plans to Privately Placed Students

If a student with a disability is parentally placed in a private school, the parents have declined the BCSS's offer of FAPE through an IEP; therefore, students are only eligible for services provided through proportionate share. As such, an Individual Service Plan (ISP) will be developed for those students.

Regarding ISPs, the BCSS will:

1. ensure a representative of the private school attends the meeting. If the representative cannot attend, the BCSS shall use other measures to ensure participation, including individual or conference telephone calls.
2. initiate and conduct meetings to develop, review, and revise the ISPs of private and home-schooled students periodically, but not less than annually, in accordance with Georgia Rules.
3. ensure all service plans contain a statement of the special education and related services, and supplementary aids and services, to be provided to the child.

No parentally-placed private school child with a disability has an individual right to receive some or all of the special education and related services that the child would receive if enrolled in the district. The BCSS only has an obligation to provide these children an opportunity for equitable participation in the services funded with Federal Part B dollars that the district has determined, after consultation, to make available to its population of parentally-placed private school children with disabilities. These children with disabilities may receive a different amount of services than children in public schools. Some children will not receive any services. The district will make the final decision regarding services to be provided prior to the start of the school year.

Parentally-placed private school provisions are to be applied to preschool-aged children only when these children who are eligible for a service plan attend private nonprofit elementary school (grades K and higher).

Preschool students who attend private preschools within their district of residence are served by the district through an IEP. Parentally-placed private school preschool students who attend private preschools (that are not considered elementary or secondary schools) outside their residential district are not entitled to services from that district. The Barrow

County School System maintains records and reports to the GaDOE the following information related to parentally-placed private school children:

1. The number of children evaluated
2. The number of children determined to be children with disabilities
3. The number of children served.

I. Consultation Process with Private Schools for Child Count

The consultation process is important to ensure the provision of equitable services. Consultations with the representatives of private schools must be timely and meaningful. Consultation requirements include

1. how parentally-placed private school children suspected of having a disability can participate equitably in the Child Find process;
2. how the parents, teachers, and private school officials will be informed of the Child Find process;
3. how the determination of the proportionate share of federal funds available to serve the children with disabilities was calculated;
4. how the process will operate throughout the school year;
5. how, where, and by whom the special education and related services will be provided;
6. how funds will be apportioned if funds are insufficient;
7. how and when those decisions will be made;
8. how the district will provide to the private school officials a written explanation of the reason why it chose not to provide services directly or through a contract.

The Barrow County School System meets annually for a timely and meaningful consultation with private and homeschool representatives to determine the provision of equitable services (proportionate share) for students with disabilities who are parentally-placed in private school or home school.

The district must obtain a written affirmation signed by the representatives of the participating private schools as documentation of the consultation process and must be prepared to submit this documentation to the GaDOE upon request.

If the private school officials believe that the district did not engage in the consultation in a meaningful or timely manner or did not consider the views of the private school officials, it may submit a complaint through the Formal Complaint Process to the GaDOE. If the private school is not satisfied with the decision of the GaDOE, they may submit the complaint to the United States Department of Education (USDOE).

Additionally, consultations with parents of private school students and parents of home-schooled students will include the following.

4. Child Find activities are advertised yearly by newspaper, social media, and flyers. This is shared with private schools, the teachers, and parents of both students parentally-placed in private school and of home-schooled students.
5. Home Schooled reports are obtained through SLDS and letters are mailed to parents of private/home school students inviting them to participate in timely and meaningful consultation.
6. This consultation meeting includes discussion of how services can be provided with Proportionate Share funds as well as how the process will operate throughout the school year; how, where, and by whom the special education and related services will be provided; how funds will be apportioned if funds are insufficient; and how and when those decisions will be made.

J. Private School Representatives at IEPs

As ISPs or IEPs are initiated, developed, reviewed, and revised, the Barrow County School System will ensure that a representative of the private school attends the meeting. If the representative cannot attend, the Barrow County School System shall use other measures to ensure participation, including individual or conference telephone calls.

K. Equitable Services Determination and Limitations of Service

Equitable services will be provided. Services provided to private school children with disabilities will be provided by personnel who meet the same standards as personnel providing services in the public schools, except the personnel are not required to meet the highly qualified definition. However, parentally-placed private school children with disabilities may receive a different amount of services than children with disabilities in public schools. The Barrow County School System collaborates with private schools and parents to determine the most appropriate options in order to provide a student with FAPE.

L. Materials Provision: Secular, Neutral, Non-Ideological

Section 1120 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires that local educational agencies (LEA) provide to eligible private school students, their teachers, and their families, services that are equitable to the services being provided to similar students, their teachers, and their families, attending public schools. Services for private school students must be developed in meaningful consultation with private school officials. Services provided to private school students by an LEA must be secular, neutral, and non-ideological.

M. Location of Services and Transportation

The Barrow County School System Special Education staff works with the parent and the private school to determine options for locations of services and transportation. Services may be provided at the private school or children may be transported to the public school or community setting to receive services.

Transportation may be provided by the system, but it cannot transport the child from home to the private school. Transportation costs will be included in calculating whether the system has met the requirements of proportionate funding.

N. Provision of Property, Equipment, and Supplies to Private Schools

The Barrow County School System controls and administers the funds used to provide special education and related services, and holds title to and administers materials, equipment, and property purchased with those funds. The system ensures that the equipment and supplies placed in a private school are used only for special education purposes and can be removed from the private school without remodeling the private school facility. The school district will ensure all materials purchased for private school use will remain secular in nature, neutral, and non-ideological. The appropriate federal program coordinator will work cooperatively with private school officials to ensure equipment is properly maintained and is safeguarded from theft, damage, loss, and abuse. Equipment and supplies may be removed from a private school by the Barrow County School System if they are no longer needed for special education purposes or the removal is necessary to avoid their unauthorized use for other than special education purposes.

BCSS Professional Learning, Supervision, and Monitoring

Existing BCSS Teachers and Staff: The Special Education Director attends Georgia Department of Education professional learning throughout the school year and redelivers necessary information to applicable personnel in the Barrow County School System, including the district special education coordinators. Both the Special Education Director and the district special education coordinators will provide ongoing professional learning for policies and procedures for serving students in private schools. This includes professional learning on Individual Service Plans (ISPs) for staff who have students eligible for ISPs on their caseload. The Special Education Director meets with private school personnel and the Barrow County School System Special Education Administrative Assistant during the school year to train them on the proportionate share and consultation process. The Special Education Director and/or the

district special education coordinators will provide professional learning on proportionate share to any district personnel providing services to students in private school.

New BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: Professional learning for new staff is provided on an as needed basis when new staff will be providing services to students in private school or when students on a teacher's caseload is served through an ISP.

Evidence of Training: Evidence of all professional learning, including timely consultation documents, meeting agendas, and sign-in sheets, is housed in the Special Education Director's office.

Supervision and Monitoring Procedures: Service Plans will be developed and implemented for each private school student with disabilities who will receive services from the school district. The Barrow County School System will initiate and conduct meetings to develop, review, and revise service plans. All service plans are written in GO-IEP. An LEA Representative of the Barrow County School System will attend all private school meetings, read, and provide feedback on service plans and will monitor all plans. Additionally, the Barrow County School System Special Education Director will conduct timely consultations with private schools within the district in compliance with this state requirement. During each fiscal year, at the end of March, Proportionate Share fund balances are reviewed. If materials are purchased with Proportionate Share funds, materials/equipment are marked as such. If the Barrow County School System has not expended all of the funds required by the end of the fiscal year, the district must carry over funds for a period of one additional year to be used for Proportionate Share. The Barrow County School System will ensure that the Child Count is completed and accurate in October FTE-1 of each year.

Technical Assistance: Technical assistance will be provided to private school or BCSS staff as needed in matters related to private school practices, policy, and procedures by the Director of Special Education or their designee.

State Rule: 160-4-7-.14—Personnel, Facilities, and Caseloads

A. Maintenance of Credentials for Professional Employees

Maintenance of records of current credentials is the ongoing responsibility of any professional employed by or under contract with Barrow County School System (BCSS). The BCSS will recruit, hire, train, and retain an adequate supply of highly qualified (certified or licensed) personnel, including special education, related services, and leadership personnel, to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

Related service personnel (DHH, VI, O&M, Audiology, OT, PT) who deliver services in their discipline or profession must maintain current, State-approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the professional discipline in which those personnel are providing special education or related services, and these related service personnel must have not had certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary or provisional basis.

B. Classroom Size and Appropriateness

The BCSS provides classrooms of suitable size in distraction-free areas, as required by the type of program or services to be established, with appropriate furniture, materials, supplies, and equipment to meet the needs of the class or individual children to be served. The BCSS follows the Georgia State Board of Education Rule that mandates thirty-eight square feet to be provided for each child in the class with a variance of 10 percent depending upon the total number of personnel in the class at any time, the type of children and class, the kind and amount of furniture and equipment required, and the necessity for storage capabilities.

C. Maximum Class Size and Caseload by Eligibility Category

The Barrow County School System uses the Georgia Department of Education State Rule 160-4-7-.14 Appendix A—Class Sizes and Caseloads as an anchor point and guideline in determining appropriate class and caseload sizes.

As a charter school system in the state of Georgia, the BCSS makes the final determination on personnel allotments based on the provision of a free and appropriate public education and in the best interest of each student's needs through the IEP process. As such, the school system is permitted to waive maximum class sizes in special circumstances. The following includes information related to Appendix A, as referenced below.

APPENDIX A - CLASS SIZES AND CASELOADS

PROGRAM AREA	DELIVERY		MAXIMUM CLASS SIZE		CASE-LOAD
	Self-contained (SC)	Resource (R)	W/O Para	With Para*	
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES					
Mild	SC		10	13	14
	R		10	13	26
Moderate	SC		NA	11	11
Severe	SC		NA	7	7
Profound	SC		NA	6	6
EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS					
	SC		8	11	12
	R		7	10	26
SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES					
	SC		12	16	16
	R		8	10	26
VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS					
	SC		NA	6	7
	R		3	4	13
DEAF/HARD OF HEARING					
	SC		6	8	8
	R		3	4	11
DEAF-BLIND					
	SC		NA	6	7
	R				
SPEECH-LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENTS					
	SC		11	15	15
	R		7	NA	55
ORTHOPEDIC IMPAIRMENTS					
	SC		NA	11	11
	R		4	5	15

See Rule 160-5-1-.08 (Class Size) for specifics.

Note: Each *paraprofessional (para) is equivalent to 1/3 teacher and affects individual class size, caseload and system average proportionately. Three paras are the maximum number that can be used to increase the maximum class size for any special education class.

Note: If children from different programs/delivery models are within the same segment, the class size shall be determined by the program/delivery model with the smallest class size. The caseloads shall be determined by averaging the respective caseloads.

BCSS Professional Learning, Supervision, and Monitoring:

Existing BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: The Special Education Director, district special education coordinators, program specialists, and school-level IEP facilitators will provide ongoing professional learning for special education policies and procedures regarding *Personnel, Facilities, and Caseloads* throughout each school year by way of quarterly meetings with IEP facilitators and monthly meetings with each special education department. The Director of Special Education also provides training to building-level administrators at the beginning of the school year and during monthly instructional leadership or principal meetings.

New BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: Special education teachers new to the Barrow County School System are trained in special education policies and procedures through new teacher training provided by the district special education coordinators

and/or program specialists at the beginning of each school year. They also participate in ongoing professional learning that is provided for existing teachers, as described above, as well as professional learning that is provided by administration and other support staff. Additionally, new teachers are assigned a veteran mentor teacher in their school building to provide support and guidance regarding *Personnel, Facilities, and Caseloads* throughout the school year. IEP facilitators also work closely with new teachers and mentors to ensure the process is adequately functioning and to give additional clarity and support regarding *Personnel, Facilities, and Caseloads*.

Evidence of Training: Professional learning will be documented through agendas, sign in sheets, and beginning-of-year Policy and Procedure Review documents. This documentation will be stored electronically on the Microsoft platform, and originals will be housed in the Special Education Administrative Assistant's office.

Monitoring Procedures: The Director of Special Education collaborates with the Assistant Superintendent of Facilities to ensure that all classrooms and programs meet requirements set forth by the Georgia State Department of Education. Caseloads are updated as needed by IEP facilitators and they are reviewed by program specialists and district coordinators. If there are any questions or a discrepancy, the Director of Special Education will review and advise as well. IEP facilitators and program specialists monitor class sizes within their designated school(s) and collaborate with district coordinators should there be a concern regarding the size of a class. Furthermore, certification of special education teachers is monitored by program specialists, district special education coordinators, and the Director of Special Education in collaboration with the Director of Planning and Personnel for the district.

Technical Assistance: Teachers and other pertinent staff who require additional technical assistance with policies and procedures regarding *Personnel, Facilities, and Caseloads* will be provided with technical assistance and support through trainings, one-on-one conferences, webinars, and/or professional learning plans from the Director of Special Education, or their designee, in collaboration with administration of the school. If teachers or other staff continue to have difficulty despite the technical assistance they receive, building-level administrators or direct supervisors will be notified so they may determine next steps to ensure remediation and compliance.

State Rule: 160-4-7.15—Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Supports (GNETS)

A. The Lighthouse (GNETS) Purpose and Services

The Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS) is a service available within the continuum of supports for the Barrow County School System (BCSS) to consider when determining the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities, aged 5–21. The BCSS and Jefferson City Schools (JCS) are partnering to provide this service to their eligible students with disabilities at County Line Elementary School, Russell Middle School, and Winder-Barrow High School. In the BCSS, GNETS services are provided under the program name The Lighthouse.

The Lighthouse services are an option available within the continuum of supports that prevents children from requiring residential or more restrictive placements. Students receiving services through The Lighthouse are referred by the BCSS or JCS through the IEP process.

The Lighthouse provides therapeutic and behavioral supports as well as specialized instruction for students who exhibit intense social, emotional, and/or behavioral challenges. The severity, frequency, and/or duration of those challenges are such that the provision of special education and related services in the general education environment have not provided educational benefit. The Lighthouse’s comprehensive services promote progress on IEP goals and the general curriculum, preparing them for a variety of postsecondary educational or career options.

B. Consideration for The Lighthouse Services

An IEP team may consider The Lighthouse services for a student based upon the documented severity of frequency, intensity and/or duration of one or more characteristics in the emotional and behavioral disorder (EBD) disability category. This documentation must include a prior extension of less restrictive services and data that indicate such services have not enabled the child to benefit educationally.

Most students served by The Lighthouse are those with severe emotional and behavioral disorders. Other eligible students with disabilities may receive services through The Lighthouse when the frequency, intensity, and/or duration of their behaviors warrant intensive services as determined by the student’s IEP team. Students who are served by The Lighthouse are those requiring intensive therapeutic interventions and educational support that The Lighthouse is designed to provide.

Services through The Lighthouse in the Barrow County School System are for BCSS and JCS students who have a current IEP, are learning general curriculum standards, are exhibiting

significant behavioral concerns within the school setting, and may require more extensive, specialized services to make sufficient progress during the school year.

In addition to having a current IEP, the student must also have an FBA completed within the past year as well as a BIP which aligns to an appropriate FBA. The BIP must target the behaviors of concern, there must be evidence of BIP revisions, and the data must show the BIP was implemented with fidelity across all relevant school settings. Evidence-based interventions must be provided to the student for a significant length of time, and data must indicate such interventions have not enabled the student to benefit educationally. Progress monitoring data is aligned with IEP goals, and goals are aligned with the BIP. Documentation shows that other less restrictive options on the special education continuum were provided to the student, yet they did not impart educational benefit. In addition to the above, a comprehensive evaluation must have been completed within the last three years and is still educationally relevant to the student.

The IEP team must determine that The Lighthouse services are necessary for students to receive FAPE. Removal from the general education setting will occur only when the nature or severity of the student's social, emotional, and/or behavioral challenges are such that education in a general education setting, with the use of supplementary services and intensive individualized interventions, cannot be achieved. Once a student is receiving Lighthouse program services, the IEP team will assess at least annually whether the student is ready to transition to a less restrictive setting. Progress monitoring data aligned with IEP goals will be reviewed to determine if the student is ready to receive FAPE in a less restrictive environment.

Children receiving The Lighthouse services are taught coping skills, behavior regulation, and adaptive behaviors, with a keen focus on developing positive interpersonal relationships with others. These services are implemented with greater intensity and frequency than what is typically delivered in other BCSS programs, including behavior support classes. The Lighthouse will be staffed to meet the needs of a unique population of students requiring intensive individualized supports, including providing appropriate therapeutic services. The staff receives specialized training in skills designed to deescalate major disruptive behaviors and assist students with meeting their IEP goals. The Lighthouse staff will collaborate with professionals from a variety of agencies to enhance students' social, emotional, behavioral, and academic development based on their IEPs.

When considering if a referral to The Lighthouse is appropriate for a student, please notify and consult with your school's District Special Education Coordinator, who will consult with The Lighthouse Coordinator. In addition, please use the Northeast Georgia RESA Lighthouse Consideration Packet Checklist to guide you. All referrals must be approved by the Director of Special Education or their designee.

Move In/Transfers

Students who move in from another GNETS program, or a similar setting from in or out-of-state, or who are released from a long-term hospitalization or residential treatment, should have an IEP meeting to consider if The Lighthouse services are appropriate for the student as they transition to the BCSS or JCS.

C. Continuum of The Lighthouse Service Delivery and Environments

The Lighthouse continuum of services by environment may be delivered as follows:

1. Consultative services provided by The Lighthouse personnel in the student's home school and/or service school.
2. Services provided for one segment or more in The Lighthouse small group setting.
3. Services provided for the full day in The Lighthouse small group setting.

D. Local Education Agency (LEA) Duties and Responsibilities

The LEA of the student, the Barrow County School System or Jefferson City Schools, in collaboration with the partnering school district will:

1. ensure FAPE is provided to students recommended for The Lighthouse in their least restrictive environment,
2. convene IEP meetings as required,
3. conduct Functional Behavior Assessments for any student considered for The Lighthouse,
4. create a Behavior Intervention Plan for any student considered for The Lighthouse,
5. collaborate with The Lighthouse staff and school administration to determine opportunities for students to have access to general education activities.
6. maintain and report student record data,
7. provide student outcome assessments and other relevant data to The Lighthouse director or designee,
8. monitor student IEP goals annually to determine progress,
9. provide ongoing professional learning opportunities and best practices for teachers to support students who exhibit social, emotional and/or behavioral challenges,
10. allocate supports and resources, which may include in-kind services, to facilitate flexible models of service delivery and best practices for equitable educational support, as appropriate,
11. to the maximum extent possible, collaborate with community service providers to deliver mental health services and/or family support for students,
12. collaborate with Lighthouse program staff to examine student records and discuss the coordination of service provisions for students being considered for GNETS services,

13. provide The Lighthouse staff access to longitudinal data for all students receiving services in the program, ensuring teachers can access records for students on their rosters,
14. monitor facilities for safety and accessibility for students served in The Lighthouse,
15. provide transportation to and from The Lighthouse, as required,
16. provide needed staff for evaluations and eligibility determination of their respective students.

BCSS Professional Learning, Supervision, and Monitoring:

Existing BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: The Special Education Director, district coordinators, and The Lighthouse Coordinator will provide ongoing professional learning for special education policies and procedures related to The Lighthouse throughout the school year and as needed. District staff provide up-to-date training and information regarding The Lighthouse at quarterly IEP facilitator meetings. Program specialists also provide additional professional learning to support best practices regarding The Lighthouse during regularly scheduled, school-level special education department meetings. Lastly, the Director of Special Education provides training to building-level administrators at district leadership or principal meetings.

New BCSS Special Education Teachers and Staff: Teachers new to the BCSS are trained in special education policies and procedures related to The Lighthouse through new teacher training provided by the district coordinators and program specialists at the beginning of each school year. New teachers also participate in ongoing professional learning that is provided for existing teachers, as described above, as well as professional learning that is provided by administration and other support staff such as school psychologists, behavior support staff, and The Lighthouse Coordinator. Additionally, new special education teachers are assigned a veteran mentor teacher in their school building to provide added support and guidance regarding The Lighthouse throughout the school year. Program specialists and IEP facilitators also work closely with new teachers and mentors to ensure the mentoring process is effective and to give additional clarity and support regarding The Lighthouse policy and procedure.

Evidence of Training: Professional learning will be documented through agendas, sign-in sheets, and/or beginning-of-year Policy and Procedure Review documents. This documentation will be stored electronically in Microsoft Drive, and the originals will be housed in the Special Education Administrative Assistant's office.

Supervision and Monitoring Procedures: District coordinators, in collaboration with The Lighthouse Coordinator, ensure all procedures are followed when referring a student to The

Lighthouse by reviewing student data, completing observations, and monitoring referral paperwork before it is submitted to the Special Education Director, and subsequently The Lighthouse Director. The Special Education Director, district coordinators, and The Lighthouse Coordinator work closely with special education teachers and administrators when questions or concerns arise regarding students who are currently served in the program or when considering a referral. Continuous communication and collaboration between the Special Education Director or designee and The Lighthouse Coordinator will take place to review and monitor compliance with The Lighthouse practices and procedures.

The Lighthouse Coordinator will attend all IEP meetings for students served in the program as well as IEP meetings for students where services are being considered. A district coordinator or program specialist of the student's school district will attend all IEP meetings for students who receive The Lighthouse services. District special education staff and The Lighthouse Coordinator will collaborate with The Lighthouse teachers on the development of the IEP and provide feedback until an appropriate draft is ready for the IEP meeting.

If a comprehensive reevaluation is requested, The Lighthouse Coordinator will collaborate with Lighthouse program staff and district staff in gathering all required components of the evaluation referral packet. Lastly, the Special Education Director or designee will monitor timelines and progress for all students receiving services through The Lighthouse and serve as a liaison between the JCS, BCSS, and The Lighthouse.

Technical Assistance: Special education staff and administrators who require additional technical assistance with policies, practices, and procedures related to The Lighthouse will be provided with technical assistance and support through trainings, one-to-one conferences, webinars, and/or professional learning plans from the Director of Special Education, designated district special education administrators, and/or other appropriate school staff (e.g. principals, assistant principals, IEP facilitators, etc.). If staff continue to have difficulty despite the technical assistance they receive, the Special Education Director, building-level administrators, and/or direct supervisors will be notified so they may determine the next steps to ensure remediation and compliance.

BCSS Special Education Implementation Manual Glossary

State Rule: 160-4-7-.21—Definitions

Accommodation: A change in instruction or setting that enables students to demonstrate their abilities in the classroom or assessment/test setting. Accommodations are designed to provide equity, not advantage, for students with disabilities. Accommodations include assistive technology as well as alterations to presentation, response, scheduling, or settings. When used appropriately, they reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student’s disability but do not reduce or lower the standards or expectations for content. Accommodations that are allowed and appropriate for assessments do not invalidate assessment results.

Adapted Physical Education (APE): APE is physical education that has been modified so students with disabilities who are unable to participate in regular PE can participate in a modified or adapted PE.

Alternative Teaching: A co-teaching model used in a class when several students need specialized instruction. One teacher takes responsibility for the large group while the other teacher works with the smaller group.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA): ABA is a scientifically designed teaching method that utilizes rewards to teach specific behaviors and skills and reduce unwanted behaviors.

Assistive Technology (AT): The systematic application of technology, engineering methodologies, or scientific principles to meet the needs of and address the barriers confronted by persons with developmental disabilities in areas including education, employment, supported employment, transportation, independent living, and other community living arrangements.

Assistive Technology Device: Any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of students with disabilities. Low- and high-technology devices may be purchased, constructed, or modified to meet the student's needs. Examples of commonly used devices are a pencil grip, Boardmaker, specialized software, or low or high voice output devices.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): A condition in which a child exhibits signs of developmentally inappropriate hyperactivity, impulsivity, and inattention. These characteristics are usually present before the age of 7. ADHD is similar to “Attention Deficit Disorder” except emphasis is placed on hyperactivity. The appropriate terms are ADHD-predominately inattentive type or ADHD-predominately hyperactivity type. There is no longer an ADD diagnosis.

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD): Students with ASD exhibit evidence of delay, arrests or inconsistencies in developmental rates and sequences in motor, sensory, social cognitive, or communication skills. Difficulties may also exist in social interaction and participation, the use of verbal/nonverbal language, especially for social communication, and eye contact. Unconventional, unusual, or repetitive responses to sensory stimuli may also be evident. The student may display stress over changes and/or engagement in repetitive activities.

Autism Small Group Class (BASE-G or BASE-A): Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder demonstrate deficits in the areas of communication and socialization. Some students may require a setting where the principles and procedures of Applied Behavior Analysis are utilized. The classroom environment should be equipped with minimal visual and auditory distractions, boundaries clearly defined, schedules displayed, transition cues utilized, workstations labeled and organized, and student specific data should be evident. Students participate in direct instruction, discrete trial instruction, functional skill instruction, independent work, or natural environment teaching.

Behavior Checklists: Objective protocols that permit an observer to count or check for the existence or absence of a given behavior or set of behaviors through direct observation of the student being evaluated.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP): An individual plan for a student with disabilities exhibiting behavioral difficulties. The BIP is based upon the results of a functional behavioral assessment and should have positive interventions, supports, and other strategies to address challenging behaviors and enable the student to learn socially appropriate and responsible behavior in school.

Behavior Management/Modification: To develop, strengthen, maintain, decrease, or eliminate behaviors in a planned or systematic way

Collaborative classes: The special education teacher collaborates with two teachers during the same class period to provide specialized instruction and implement the accommodations and modifications required in students' Individual Educational Programs (IEPs) and Individual Learning Plans (ILPs). The special education teacher participates in each class an average of one-half the segment each day per week according to the needs of the students and class activities. The special education teacher incorporates specialized instruction for each student with disabilities into the class lesson plans. The special education teacher collects data to modify instruction as needed and to monitor student progress on IEP goals and objectives.

Community Based Instruction (CBI): Community-Based Instruction is an instructional model that provides students with intellectual disabilities an opportunity to learn and practice functional skills across a variety of community settings. It allows educators to present curriculum content in natural settings while addressing deficits in generalization. All objectives

and activities selected for instruction in the community are coordinated with classroom instruction. This allows for skills to be taught simultaneously, both in the classroom and the community, thereby giving multiple opportunities for practicing and generalizing functional skills.

Conduct Disorders: A diagnosis in the DSM-IV, conduct disorders describes anti-social patterns of rule-violating behavior, often directed with the intent to harm others or property. Some authorities describe conduct disorders as failing to have an emotional basis and describe those who have conduct disorders as making a conscious choice to engage in the behaviors, thereby differentiating conduct disorders from emotional disturbances. Such behaviors may include overt physical aggressions, disruptiveness, negativism, irresponsibility, and defiance of authority.

Confidentiality: The process of keeping records for students with disabilities private and confidential. Parents and school district representatives with a “legitimate educational interest” are entitled to access a student’s records. The school special education file should be maintained in a secure location and include all evaluations, eligibility reports, IEPs and other special education records. The Central Office Records Room maintains all original documents prepared on individual students. Confidentiality is also extended to certain mediation and settlement agreements and to the discussion in those meetings. Confidentiality also includes classroom observations and the names of other students in the classroom.

Continuum of Service: The range of placements required to be available, as appropriate, for the education of students with disabilities including regular classroom regular classroom with direct service, consultative, co-teaching, or collaborative; small group classes; special classes within a school or center location; home based instruction; and instruction in a hospital or residential setting.

Consultative: Students with disabilities receive their instruction with accommodations or modifications as required in their IEPs from the General Education Teacher in a regular education class. Special Education provides direct support by consulting with the General Education Teacher and the student for a minimum of one segment per month.

Co-Teaching classes: An instructional delivery model in which the special education teacher collaborates with one general education teacher for the entire class period on a daily basis. The special education teacher and general education teacher share responsibility for planning, delivery, and assessment of the instruction for all students in the class. The special education teacher incorporates specialized instruction for each student with disabilities into the class lesson plan. The special education teacher delivers the specialized instruction according to students' IEPs through flexible grouping with the general education teacher. The special education teacher collects data to modify instruction as needed to maximize student achievement and to monitor student progress on IEP goals and objectives.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH): A category of disability describing a hearing loss sufficient to cause difficulty hearing and understanding language, impacting educational access and learning. Students who are deaf/hard of hearing may require the services of the DHH teacher.

Developmental Disability (DD): A disability or impairment originating before the age of 18 which may be expected to continue indefinitely, which constitutes a substantial impairment. The disability may be attributable to an intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, or other neurological conditions and may include autism.

Discrete Trial Instruction (DTI): Discrete Trial Instruction describes a one-to-one adult to student instructional technique that teaches skills in a planned, controlled and systematic manner to students with autism. DTI is used when a student needs to learn a skill but requires the information to be taught in small repeated systematic steps. DTI is an adult directed activity. It is applied during an adult to student, one to one teaching situation. Each trial or teaching opportunity has a definite beginning and end, thus the descriptor discrete trial. DTI incorporates the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis and is the direct teaching of skills that individuals with autism may not learn naturally.

Due Process Hearing: A formal legal proceeding presided over by an impartial public official who listens to both sides of the dispute and renders a decision based upon the law. A parent of a student with a disability who disagrees with the school system must put their request for a due process hearing in writing to the office of Special Student Services.

Eligibility Team: The educational professionals who determine a student's eligibility for special education services, including a school psychologist, special educator, general educator, related support staff, and parents. Other professionals may be included as needed.

Emotional and Behavior Disorder (EBD): A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree which disrupts the child's or adolescent's educational, academic, or developmental performance: an inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers or teachers; a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

Evaluation: The collection of information (includes testing, observations, and parental input) about a student's learning needs, strengths, and interests. The evaluation is part of the process of determining whether a student qualifies for special education programs and services.

Extended School Year Services (ESY): A term referring to the school program for students with disabilities that extends beyond the regular school year. An IEP committee reviews data, which indicates progress on goals/objectives and determines if ESY services are required as

part of the student's Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). The intent of ESY is to prevent significant regression which compromises the student's ability to make meaningful progress on the IEP, thereby not providing the student with FAPE. ESY is not provided to guarantee mastery of goals/objectives.

FM Amplification System: A system in which the teacher wears a microphone and an FM transmitter that broadcasts their voice to receivers used by students. The receiver may be either attached directly to a hearing aid, other personal amplification device, or in a desktop device with speakers. These devices allow students amplified access to the teacher's voice.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): A key requirement of federal legislation (IDEA), which requires that special education and related services be provided to all students with disabilities. The following requirements must be met: (a) are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; (b) meet the standards of the state board of education and the laws pertaining thereto; (c) include preschool, kindergarten, elementary school, and secondary school education; and (d) are provided in conformity with an individualized educational program (IEP).

Full Time Equivalency (FTE): FTE reporting is the way Georgia's local school districts earn their state funding for education. This process is based on student enrollment and the specific educational services provided to students. Special education services earn higher funding "weights" than general education services to students. The special education teacher should be aware that both the students' service information and their academic schedules directly impact the FTE counts and the state funding the district receives. The special education leadership staff coordinates the process with special education teachers to assure the accuracy of the FTE count in each school.

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA): An assessment to determine the function of a student's disruptive behavior through an analysis of the antecedents and consequences surrounding the behavior. Specific functions of behavior could include escape (i.e., getting out of an assignment) or attention (either peer or adult). An FBA is the initial step in the development of a behavior intervention plan.

Functional Curriculum: A curriculum model for students with moderate and severe disabilities. Content is selected based on identified skills needed for functioning in current and future integrated community, residential, and vocational environments.

Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0 (GAA): A computer-based assessment designed by the GaDOE for students with significant cognitive disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) whose IEP team has determined they are unable to reasonably participate in the regular assessment program. The purpose of the GAA is to ensure all students, including students with significant cognitive disabilities, are provided access to the

state curriculum and given the opportunity to demonstrate progress toward achievement of the state standards.

Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS): The GNETS program supports local school systems' continuum of services by providing comprehensive special education and therapeutic support for students whose behavior severely impedes their learning. GNETS services for students with severe emotional and behavioral disorders or autism may be provided by The Lighthouse program in Barrow County. Students ages 3 through 21 who are eligible may have services recommended by the IEP team ranging from consultative services in their homeschool to self-contained services with a Lighthouse teacher. The Lighthouse provides comprehensive educational and therapeutic support services to students who might otherwise require residential or other more restrictive placements due to the severity of one or more of the characteristics of the disability category of emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD).

GO-IEP: The web-based special education data management system used to manage the IEP process and other program and state reporting requirements to ensure compliance with FAPE and IDEA as well as develop a quality IEP for students with disabilities.

Hard of Hearing: A term to describe individuals who have some amount of hearing loss but still rely on hearing and listening to communicate and learn.

Home Instruction Services (HI): Instructional services provided by a special education home-based teacher to students with disabilities who are unable to attend school because of extensive suspensions or when behavioral challenges extended beyond the scope of what can be safely managed within the school environment. This is considered to be a temporary placement, and re-entry criteria should be developed and agreed upon in the IEP meeting where services are put in place. The Special Education Coordinator must be notified if Home Instruction services are being considered.

Hospital/Homebound (HHB): Instructional services made available to students who are able to participate in educational instruction but are medically unable to attend school for a minimum of ten consecutive days or for intermittent periods of time throughout the school year. The student must have a medical and/or psychiatric condition that is documented by a licensed physician, and the referring licensed physician must be the treating physician for the medical/psychiatric condition for which the student is requesting HHB services.

Inclusion: The process of educating students with disabilities in the general education setting with nondisabled peers. Students receive specialized instructional services through a consultative, collaborative, or co-teaching model.

Individualized Educational Program (IEP): A written plan for each student with a disability that is developed by a team of professionals (teachers, therapists, psychologist, etc.) and the

child's parents. IEPs are based on a multidisciplinary evaluation, describes the student's current level of academic achievement and functional performance, and how the student's disability affects their involvement and progress in the general education curriculum. The IEP includes the special education and related services the student will need to make progress toward the annual goals. The IEP must be reviewed regularly and updated at least annually. Barrow County Special Education uses an electronic IEP program called GO-IEP.

IEP Team: The team of professional educators and parents/guardians who develop and monitor a student's Individualized Educational Program. The team is required by state law to include members who have the role of a special education teacher, general education teacher, evaluator, Local Education Agency (LEA) representative, and parent/guardian. Other specialists and the student should be included as appropriate.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): The federal law enacted to ensure (a) that all students with disabilities have available to them a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living; (b) to ensure that the rights of students with disabilities and their parents are protected; (c) to assist states, localities, educational service agencies, and federal agencies in providing for the education of students with disabilities; and (d) to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate students with disabilities.

Intellectual Disability (ID): Intellectual functioning based on multiple sources of information documenting IQ scores below 70. There is evidence of significant limitations in the child's effectiveness in meeting standards of maturation, learning, personal independence, or social responsibility, and especially school performance. The student's adaptive behavior in school and home is significantly below average.

Interim Alternative Education Setting (IAES): An educational placement designated by the IEP team for a special education student after involvement in a weapons or illicit substance violation at school. The IAES can be determined from a number of options, including alternative school placement or after-school program placement, and have a duration of 45 calendar days.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): The policy mandated by the IDEA that students with disabilities be educated in the general school environment with their nondisabled peers to the greatest extent possible.

Local Education Agency (LEA): A public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within Georgia for either administrative control or direction of, or perform a service function for public schools serving individuals aged 0-21, in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of the State, including a combination of school

districts or counties recognized in the State as an administrative agency for its public schools. The term includes an educational service agency and any other public institution or agency having administrative control and direction of a public elementary or secondary school, including a public nonprofit charter school that is established as a LEA under federal law [\[34 C.F. R. § 300.28\]](#).

Math Rubric: The purpose of a High School Mathematics Decision Rubric is to assist Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams as they engage in the discussion around eligible students with disabilities completing an alternate course sequence, aligned with their transition plan for post-secondary options, to meet the mathematics course requirements of State Board of Education (State Board) Rule 160-4-2-.48.

Manifestation Determination Review (MDR): School personnel may remove a student with a disability who violates the district code of student conduct from their current placement to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting, another setting, or suspension for not more than 10 days in a school year. After the student has been removed for 10 days in the school year and the student again violates the code of student conduct, an MDR must be held to determine if the conduct in question was caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the child's disability or if the conduct was the direct result of the LEA's failure to implement the student's IEP. If the violation was deemed a manifestation of the student's disability, an FBA and a BIP must be conducted or revised if already in place, and the student should be returned to the placement from which they were removed. If the student's violation was not a manifestation of their disability, the student may be suspended, but the IEP team must determine appropriate services needed to provide FAPE so as to enable the student to continue to participate in the general education curriculum in the same setting, another setting, or interim alternative educational setting.

Mediation: An informal process for resolving disputes between parents and schools. Mediation sessions are conducted by an impartial neutral third party at no cost to parents or school districts.

Mild Intellectual Disability (MID): A mild intellectual disability is defined by the GaDOE as intellectual functioning ranging between an upper IQ limit of approximately 70 to a lower IQ limit of approximately 55; deficits in adaptive behavior that significantly limit a child's effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal independence, or social responsibility, and especially school performance that is expected of the individual's age level and cultural group.

Moderate Intellectual Disability (MOID): A moderate intellectual disability is defined by the GaDOE as intellectual functioning ranging from an upper IQ limit of approximately 55 to a lower IQ limit of approximately 40; deficits in adaptive behavior that significantly limit a child's effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal

independence, or social responsibility, and especially school performance that is expected of the individual's age-level and cultural group.

Modifications: Refers to alterations in curriculum that change, lower, or reduce learning expectations and outcome. Modifications can increase the gap between the achievement of students with disabilities and expectations for proficiency at a particular grade level. Consistent use of modifications could adversely affect students throughout their educational career. Modifications in statewide assessments may invalidate the results. The use of modifications exposes the student to the entire curriculum, but only partial mastery is expected.

Occupational Therapy (OT): An occupational therapist uses purposeful, goal directed activities and task analysis to enable children with a disability to benefit from their IEPs. OTs in the school setting address skills that may interfere with a student's educational performance such as hand function, oral motor function, visual motor and perceptual skills, sensory awareness/processing, self-care, and pre- vocational tasks. These areas can be addressed through a variety of intervention strategies, which may include direct therapy with the child, consultation with the teacher, modification of the environment, provision of adaptive equipment, and staff training.

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD): The covert display of underlying aggression by patterns of obstinate, but generally passive behavior. Students with this disorder often provoke adults or other children by the use of negativism, stubbornness, dawdling, procrastination, and other behaviors.

Orientation & Mobility (O&M): This term refers to the teaching and training of skills to a blind/visually impaired student that will familiarize him/her with surroundings and enable him/her to travel safely and independently throughout the environment.

Orthopedic Impairment (OI): Disorders that are caused by congenital anomalies such as deformity/absence of limb, disease such as muscular dystrophy, etc., or other causes such as cerebral palsy, amputations, etc. Evidence of deficits in academic functioning, emotional development, adaptive behavior, motor, or communication skills may exist.

Other Health Impaired (OHI): Chronic or acute health problems documented with a medical report that indicates limited strength, vitality, or alertness which adversely affect a student's educational performance. Evidence of deficits in academic functioning, adaptive behavior, social/emotional development, motor or communication, motor skills or emotional development exists.

Paraprofessional/Para: Support personnel assigned to support students with disabilities under the leadership of a special education teacher.

Parallel Teaching: A co-teaching model in which the general education teacher and special education teacher are teaching the same content to different groups, but present the instruction in a different way depending on student needs. Flexible grouping allows for simultaneous teaching.

Parent Mentors: Parents of children with disabilities who are employed on a part-time basis by the Barrow County School System as special education parent mentors. The goal of the Parent Mentor Program is to nurture communication among parents and educators, ultimately leading to greater success for students with disabilities.

Partial Participation: The curriculum and instructional approach for students with moderate and severe disabilities, which allows them to participate in a general education class or other school setting for the purpose of enrichment and the development of curriculum objectives that target participation within a task in lieu of the ability to independently perform the task. The general education teacher is not responsible for grades or the achievement level of students with moderate or severe disabilities who partially participate in their class. The student receives special education support as required in the IEP.

Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD): The umbrella term used in the DSM-IV, which includes subcategories of autism spectrum disorders, i.e., Childhood Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, Rett Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified.

Physical Therapy (PT): School-based physical therapists assist students with disabilities to access their education. This includes activities of a school day such as moving throughout the school grounds, sitting, standing in line or at the board, and moving in class or through the building. Interventions may include adaptations to school environments, working with a student on motor skills, assistance with identifying and obtaining special equipment, collaboration with other professionals, and training school staff.

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS): A picture exchange communication system is a form of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) that uses pictures instead of words to help children communicate. PECS was designed especially for children with autism who have delays in speech development.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): PBIS is an evidence-based, data-driven framework proven to reduce disciplinary incidents, increase a school's sense of safety, and support improved academic outcomes. The premise of PBIS is that continual teaching, recognizing, and rewarding positive student behavior will reduce unnecessary discipline and promote a climate of greater productivity, safety, and learning. PBIS schools apply a multi-tiered approach to prevention, using disciplinary data and principles of behavior analysis to develop school-wide, targeted, and individualized interventions and supports to improve the

school climate for all students. Implementing PBIS can be a proactive strategy for teaching pro-social school-wide behaviors.

Psychological Report: A written report of the results of an evaluation conducted by a school psychologist that identifies student strengths and weaknesses and offers recommendations the student may need to be successful.

Related Services: Services required for a student to benefit from special education. Related services may include transportation and supportive services such as speech, audiology, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, and interpreters for persons with hearing impairments.

Response to Intervention (RTI): A tiered intervention process that is a problem-solving model that organizes school intervention services for students who are not meeting academic or behavioral expectations. The model provides high quality instruction and intervention matched to individual student needs, monitors progress frequently, and applies student response data to educational decisions. The RTI process progresses from universal to intensive interventions. This process also helps to identify which students respond favorably to the interventions and which students may need referral for consideration under Section 504 or special education.

Revocation of Parental Consent for Placement: On December 1, 2008, Congress passed an amendment to IDEA that allows parents to unilaterally remove their children from special education by putting their request in writing to the school district. The parent has the right to revoke consent for services and the district has no standing to impede the parent's request. The amendment does not allow a parent to revoke consent for part of the services provided by the IEP and keep specific services. If the parent and the district disagree about whether FAPE would be provided with or without the provision of a specific service, the school district may use due process procedures. Revocation of consent means the removal of all special education services outlined in the IEP.

School Psychologist: An individual who is trained in both psychology and education and provides consultation, assessment, intervention, and training for students with learning, social, emotional, or developmental problems.

Section 504: A part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that states "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Severe and Profound Intellectual Disabilities (SID/PID): A generic classification of disorders that involves physical, sensory, intellectual, and social-interpersonal performance deficits significantly below average. These deficits are not limited to any given setting but are evident

in all environmental settings and often involve deficits in several areas of performance. The GaDOE defines severe intellectual functioning as ranging from an upper IQ limit of approximately 40 to a lower IQ limit of approximately 25 and profound disabilities as intellectual functioning below approximately 25 with deficits in adaptive behavior that significantly limit a child's effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal independence, or social responsibility, and especially school performance that is expected of the individual's age-level and cultural group.

Significant Developmental Delay (SDD): The term refers to a delay in a child's development in adaptive behavior, cognition, communication, motor skills, or emotional development to the extent that, if not provided with special intervention, may adversely affect a child's educational performance in age-appropriate activities. Initial eligibility must be established on or before the child's seventh birthday. A categorical eligibility must be established by the end of the school year in which the child turns nine years old.

Small Group Class/Self-contained: A special education class for students with disabilities who require specialized instruction taught by a special education teacher. The model of service required in a subject area where a student's disability is so severe that they cannot benefit from a less restrictive placement. Students are usually functioning at least two to three grade levels below average in the subject area or may require an alternative curriculum or modifications that are too extensive to be delivered in a general education class. Students receive specialized instruction on grade level standards as well as remediation for deficit skills.

Special Education Diploma: A Special Education Diploma can be awarded to students with disabilities assigned to a special education program who have not met the requirements for the High School Diploma or the State-Defined Alternate Diploma but have completed their IEP goals. The Special Education Diploma is a default diploma and does not count as an actual High School Diploma.

Special Education Programs/Services: Programs or services which provide specially designed instruction (offered at no cost to families) for children 3 years old through age 21 with special needs who are found eligible for such services. These include specialized learning methods or materials in the regular classroom and special classes and programs if the learning or physical disabilities are more severe.

Special Needs Preschool (SNP): The special education program for young children ages 3–5 with disabilities. Preschool children with disabilities may be served through home-based, community- based, or facility-based (elementary school) model, or unique combinations of these models.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD): A disorder in understanding or using spoken or written

language, characterized by an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. A primary deficit in basic psychological processes is identified. There is evidence of underachievement in one or more of the following areas: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading comprehension, reading fluency, mathematical calculation, or mathematical problem solving. Achievement in the classroom indicates a pattern of strengths and weaknesses. The achievement deficiencies are directly related to a pervasive processing deficit and correlates to the child's response to scientific, research-based interventions. The term does not include students who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, intellectual disabilities, or environment, cultural or economic disadvantage.

Specialized Instruction: The use of research-based strategies designed to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities in a collaborative, co-teaching, or small group class. Instruction includes the adaptation of the content, methodology, and/or instructional delivery that addresses the unique needs of the student that result from the student's disability and ensures access to the general curriculum.

Speech/Language Impairment (SI): An impairment in the areas of articulation, fluency, voice, or language that adversely affects a student's educational performance. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) assess students, plan interventions, and provide speech and language support for students who are eligible for speech/language services.

State-Defined Alternate Diploma: This diploma is awarded to students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who were assessed using the Georgia Alternate Assessment and meet other requirements of the State Board Rule.

Station Teaching: A co-teaching model in which the general education teacher and special education teacher divide content and students. Each teacher presents the content to one group and subsequently repeats the instruction to the other group. If appropriate, a third "station" could require students to work independently or with a paraprofessional.

Students with a Disability (SWD): A child who is determined by a school multidisciplinary eligibility team to have a disability according to state rules and regulations, and who, by reason of that disability, requires special education and related services.

Team Teaching: A co-teaching model in which the general education teacher and special education teacher deliver the same instruction at the same time using a whole group approach.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI): A form of acquired brain injury that occurs when a sudden trauma causes damage to the brain. Symptoms of a TBI can be mild, moderate, or severe, depending on the extent of the damage to the brain. Deficits in cognitive, social, or motor skills due to the acquired injury adversely impact educational performance.

Universal Design: The design of curricula with the needs of all students in mind so that instruction, materials, and assessment are usable by all. Universal design curriculum is designed to be innately flexible, enriched with multiple media so that alternatives can be accessed whenever appropriate. The curriculum takes on the burden of adaptation, so the student doesn't have to, minimizing barriers and maximizing access to both information and learning.

Visually Impaired (VI): A category of disability describing a student whose best corrected visual acuity in the better eye is 20/70 or worse. Students may require the services of a teacher of Visually Impaired students.

Barrow County School System Special Education Service Programs

APP (Academic Preparatory Program)

This high school program is intended for students who are learning through the general curriculum, but have cognitive and/or adaptive behavior deficits which impede their learning and progress in the general education setting. In this program, students are able to meet the Georgia Standards of Excellence in a small group setting with accommodations and modifications as determined by the IEP team.

BASE-G (Barrow Autism Spectrum Exceptionalities- General)

The BASE-G classroom is designed for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder who display challenges in social/emotional and adaptive skills. This specialized instructional program is provided at the elementary and middle school level. These classrooms have limited transitions, rely heavily on structure, visual schedules, organization, social skills instruction, sensory integration, and communication. There is an ongoing emphasis on sensory integration and a language rich environment. The students require extensive direct instruction in social skills/pragmatic language, as well as a strong focus on teaching emotional regulation strategies. Academically, the students are working on a general academic curriculum in addition to their IEP goals/objectives. All service providers (teachers, paraprofessionals, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, ABA Coordinator, etc.) work collaboratively to provide support and instruction to maximize each student's learning.

BASE-A (Barrow Autism Spectrum Exceptionalities- Adapted)

The BASE-A classroom is designed for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder who demonstrate significant cognitive deficits as well as challenges in social/emotional and adaptive skills. This specialized instructional program is provided in the K-12th grade settings. These classrooms provide a structured and predictable environment with an ongoing emphasis on sensory integration and a language-rich environment. The students require direct instruction in social skills/pragmatic language, and there is a focus on teaching emotional regulation strategies. Academically, the students are typically working below grade-level standards, so curriculum standards are modified (prerequisite skills to the grade-level standards) in order to meet each student's individualized academic needs. Adaptive behavior skills that may impact a student's ability to function in the school environment and/or in the community are also addressed within the classroom, as well as in community settings, as determined appropriate for the student. The students are able to functionally communicate their wants and needs. Typically the students' expressive and receptive language skills are below average. These classrooms provide a structured and predictable environment. All service providers (teachers,

paraprofessionals, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, ABA Coordinator, etc.) work collaboratively to provide support and instruction to maximize each student's learning.

Hospital/Homebound

Students who are unable to attend school due to a medically diagnosed condition who will be restricted to the home or hospital setting can receive hospital/homebound services. These services may be provided by the hospital or school employee. Hospital/homebound services should be considered if a student will be absent 10 consecutive days or has a condition that cause frequent absences. This level of support would be determined by an IEP following the receipt of medical documentation.

Home Instruction

Home instruction is considered as a last resort in order to meet a child's educational needs. This service may be considered when behavioral challenges extend beyond the scope of what can be safely managed within the school environment. This is considered to be a temporary placement and re-entry criteria should be developed and agreed upon in an IEP meeting.

The Lighthouse (GNETS- Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support)

The Lighthouse is part of a psychoeducational network located throughout the state of Georgia. The Lighthouse program supports the Barrow County School System's continuum of services by providing comprehensive special education and therapeutic support, as well as social skills training, for students with disabilities who exhibit behaviors that are considered lengthy in duration, frequent, and/or intense. The purpose of The Lighthouse is to prevent children, ages 5 to 21, from requiring residential or other more restrictive placements due to the severity of one or more of the characteristics of the disability category of emotional/behavioral disorders (EBD), by offering cost-effective, comprehensive services in local areas.

This program is the most restrictive environment for students with behavioral needs within the public school system. A student must move through the continuum of services available for emotional and/or behavioral support within the Barrow County School System prior to being referred for consideration to The Lighthouse Program.

PACE-1 (Program for Adapted & Community Education-1)

This service is designed for students with cognitive deficits (IQ ranging between approximately 69-55, generally the MID range) which exist concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior that adversely affect educational functioning. This specialized program is provided at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Academically, the students are typically working

below grade-level standards, so curriculum standards are modified (prerequisite skills to the grade-level standards) in order to meet each student's individualized academic needs. Adaptive behavior skills that may impact a student's ability to function in the school environment or in the community are also addressed within the classroom, as well as in community settings, as determined appropriate for the student. The elementary school programs primarily focus on academic, communication, self-help, and social skills. Middle and high school programs focus on functional academic, communication, self-help, social, and pre-vocational/vocational skills. All service providers (teachers, paraprofessionals, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, etc.) work collaboratively to provide support and instruction to maximize each student's learning. Most students who function in the MID range can be assessed via the Georgia Milestones, but some may require the Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0. This decision is based upon completion of the GAA rubric and input from the IEP committee members.

PACE-2 (Program for Adapted & Community Education-2)

This service is designed for students with cognitive deficits (IQ ranging between approximately 54-40, generally the MOID range) which exist concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior that adversely affect educational functioning.

This specialized program is provided at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. These classrooms focus on functional academic skills based on modified curriculum standards, adaptive behavior skills, as well as communication and social skills that may impact a student's ability to function in the school environment or in the community. Typically, students work on functional reading and math skills, self-help skills as well as pre-vocational/vocational skills at the middle and high school levels. All service providers (teachers, paraprofessionals, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, adaptive PE teachers, etc.) work collaboratively to provide support and instruction to maximize each student's learning. Many students who function within the MOID range meet criteria for participation in the Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0, but this is to be determined by the student's IEP team.

PACE-3 (Program for Adapted & Community Education-3)

This service is designed for students with cognitive deficits (IQ ranging between 39 and below, generally the SID/PID range) which exist concurrently with significant deficits in adaptive behavior. This specialized program is provided at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. This classroom addresses basic self-help skills, communication skills, vocational skills, and leisure skills. Functional academic skills are based on heavily modified curriculum standards. Many students in these classrooms require assistance with feeding, dressing, and toileting, as well as management of medical needs (e.g., feeding tubes, seizure management, etc.). Students often have limited verbal skills and/or require alternative tools for communication. Most students with severe or profound intellectual disabilities will always be dependent on a

caregiver, but the goal of the class is to teach the skills the students will need in order to be as independent as possible. All service providers (teachers, paraprofessionals, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, adaptive PE teachers, etc.) work collaboratively to provide support and instruction to maximize each student's learning. Students who function within the SID/PID range typically meet criteria for participation in the Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0 as determined by the student's IEP team.

PREP (Preschool Readiness Education Program)

The PREP program is a special needs preschool service designed for students ages 3-5, identified as having significant developmental delays and/or other medical needs. These students may display needs in the following areas: adaptive, social/emotional, communication, physical, and cognitive. This classroom curriculum is aligned with the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards, but also has a focus on visual supports, communication strategies, and strategies to support social/emotional regulation for all learners. Early Intervention is critical and supports received at the preschool level directly impact access to a general education curriculum and later high school graduation rates. Children are often recommended from Babies Can't Wait and Child Find. The students may receive speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and other related services deemed necessary. The special needs preschool program is a half-day program. Support may also be provided for these students within community centers, such as Head Start or other daycare providers.

Regional D/HH Program

The deaf/hard of hearing program is multi-faceted. The Barrow County School System utilizes Northeast Georgia RESA to provide deaf/hard of hearing services to our students. The Northeast Georgia RESA Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH) program provides a wide range of educational programs and services for students who are determined eligible under the category of D/HH. For students whose needs can be accommodated at their home schools, itinerant certified D/HH teachers provide services at the elementary, middle, and high school levels in Barrow County. For students' whose hearing loss requires more intensive academic support, the IEP team may determine that these services would best be provided through our regional D/HH program located in the Clarke County and Madison County School Districts. This regional program supports 13 of our surrounding counties and provides intensive academic support to students with more severe hearing impairments. It is the mission of Northeast Georgia RESA and the Barrow County School system to provide excellence in education to maximize learning and language, ensuring all Deaf/Hard of Hearing students achieve successful outcomes and become valued and participating members of society.

RISE (Responsibility & Independence through Social-Emotional Education)

The RISE program is a behavior support service designed for students in need of a highly structured behaviorally-focused program. This specialized instructional program is provided at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. These classrooms provide a structured environment with a heavy emphasis on behavior modification, using a methodical behavior system, as well as a focus on teaching coping and emotional regulation skills and direct social skills instruction. Academically, these students are working in the general curriculum with accommodations. All service providers (teachers, paraprofessionals, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, ABA coordinators, etc.) work collaboratively to provide support and instruction to maximize each student's learning.

Speech-Language

This program is designed for students who present with articulation, language, fluency and/or voice needs that negatively impact their educational progress. Services are provided by a speech-language pathologist at the home school via a variety of service options (e.g., consultative, separate class, inclusion). The focus of the speech and language program is early intervention and providing services to students in their least restrictive environment.

Vision Impaired

Students with Vision Impaired Eligibility in Barrow County may receive itinerant vision-impaired services at their home school by a licensed teacher with certification in working with students with visual impairments. Services may include consultative or direct services specific to the vision loss. Services are provided to address areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum for Vision Impaired Students, as well as to enhance the classroom environment to ensure academic success. Services include braille instruction, braille and tactile production of classroom materials, in depth assistive technology training, self-care training, as well as the other areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum.

TRANSITION PROGRAMS

Pre-Ets (Pre-Employment Transition Service)

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-Ets) is an 8-week program built within school hours to help students with disabilities get an early start in identifying career interests. The curriculum is taught by a Vocational Rehabilitation provider and consists of lessons involving job exploration counseling, resume building, interviewing techniques, networking, and other job readiness skills. Eligibility requirements are as follows.

1. The student must be at least 14; however, juniors and seniors are targeted population.
2. The student has a documented physical, sensory, or learning disability.
3. The student is potentially eligible or has been determined eligible for Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) services.

High School High Tech (HSHT)

HSHT is a comprehensive, community-based transition program for youth with disabilities which provides a link to academic and career-development experiences that enable students to successfully meet the workforce demands of the 21st century. Students who participate in HSHT will have opportunities to visit colleges, technical schools, and industries throughout the school year. Eligibility requirements are as follows.

1. The student is in grades 8-12; however juniors and seniors are the target population.
2. The student has a documented physical, sensory, or learning disability.
3. The student has an average IQ.
4. The student has a goal to attend postsecondary education.
5. The student is on the GVRA caseload.

YES (Youth Employment Services)

Goodwill of North Georgia's YES program is a partnership between the Barrow County School System and employers to empower our youth. Goodwill staff works with participants of the youth job training program to set career goals and equip students with the necessary skills to enter the workforce. YES participants earn high school credit for job readiness training classes and paid work experience. The YES program has three phases: 1) one transition class at Sims Academy during the fall semester of the senior year (earns one elective credit); 2) paid internship in the spring of the senior year if the student has proven to be motivated and reliable (earns one elective credit); 3) full-time job placement after graduation. Eligibility requirements are as follows.

1. The student is a senior in high school and on-track to graduate.
2. The student has as a current IEP.
3. The student demonstrates third-grade reading level or higher.
4. The student has a goal of full-time employment after high school.
5. The student is on the GVRA caseload.

STEP (Student Transition Enrichment Program)

The *Student Transition Enrichment Program* (STEP) is a full-time, one year, school-to-work transition program for students with significant cognitive disabilities who have the goal of

supported employment after high school. The STEP program provides supported work experiences in a variety of community business settings, as well as within the Sims Academy coffee shop, school store, cafeteria, and various CTAE classrooms. It also gives students the opportunity to practice self-determination, self-advocacy and independent living skills. This program has an application process and students must be accepted for the IEP Team to consider this service. To be eligible for STEP, students must meet the following requirements.

1. The student has a significant cognitive disability.
2. The student's graduation requirements are completed.
3. The student is 18 to 21 years-of-age.
4. The student is motivated to work.
5. The student has the goal of supported employment after high school.
6. The student is receptive to direction and feedback.

Project Search

Project SEARCH is a yearlong, school-to-work transition program targeting students with developmental disabilities. This innovative program, originating at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, has prepared young adults to find success in integrated, competitive employment sites both nationally and internationally. It is driven by a collaboration of community partners all centered on providing employment opportunities to students with disabilities. The Barrow County Project SEARCH program is a collaboration between Project SEARCH, the BCSS, Chico's FAS as the host business site, Creative Enterprises, the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD), and the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA).

During the student's final year in school, interns practice and refine their employability skills through three 10-week internships solely at the host business site. As the year progresses, student interns create an employment goal with the assistance of their support team. Job placement by the end of the internship, or within six months of program completion, is the ultimate goal for 100% of the interns. Also notable, Project SEARCH graduates receive effective follow-along services to gain and retain employment after they complete the program. This program has a comprehensive application process and students must be accepted for the IEP Team to consider this service. To be eligible for Project SEARCH, students must meet the following requirements:

1. The student has a cognitive or developmental disability.
2. The student is between 18-21 years-of-age.
3. The student demonstrates appropriate hygiene.
4. The student demonstrates adequate social and communication skills.

5. The student has the ability to take direction and change behavior.
6. The student can pass drug screening and a background check.
7. The student has a goal of competitive employment after high school.
8. The student is on the GVRA caseload.