

Learning Disability Information and Resources

The health and wellbeing of your child are most important. It can be overwhelming if you suspect that your child may have a learning disability, and you do not know where to go for help or the right questions to ask. This brochure explains some of the common terms and resources that may be helpful as you go through the process. Please talk to your doctor if you think your child may have a learning disability.

Understanding Learning Disabilities

- Learning disabilities are common: between **8% and 10%** of children under age 18 in the U.S. may have some type of learning disability.
- People with learning disabilities may have problems with writing, math, reading, or understanding directions.
- Some of the most common learning disabilities are:
 - Dyslexia: affects reading skills
 - Dyscalculia: affects math skills
 - Dysgraphia: affects writing and motor skills
- Learning disabilities have nothing to do with how smart a person is! Because children who have learning disabilities may see, hear, and understand things differently, everyday tasks may become more difficult.
- Learning disabilities can be hard to diagnose because not every child's symptoms are the same. Often the disability can go undetected until school demands change or increase.

Parenting and Advocating for Children with Disabilities (Resources)

Steps to take

1. If you suspect your child may have a learning disability, talk to your pediatrician and teacher about having the child evaluated.
2. Learn as much as you can. The more you know, the better you can help your child. If your child has a learning disability, you should be aware of the laws that protect your child:
 - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
 - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
3. Partner with your child's school:
 - Keep records of your child's performance at school (assessment data, work samples, missing assignments).
 - Meet with your child's teacher to understand their progress.
4. Encourage your child to find joy in learning by pointing out their strengths.
5. If you are asking for a school-based Special Education Evaluation for your child, always put that request in writing.

- Useful Online Resources:
 - Learning disabilities association of America: <https://ldaamerica.org>
 - Virginia department of education: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/
 - Testing information: <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/evaluations/evaluation-basics/why-your-childs-school-can-deny-your-evaluation-request>
 - Parent center hub: <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/ld/>
 - Virginia department of education: Parents Guide to Special Education http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/parents/parents_guide.pdf
 - Virginia Department of Education Ombudsman: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/resolving_disputes/index.shtml
 - National Center for Learning Disabilities: <https://www.understood.org/en>
 - <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/autism-learning-disabilities/helping-children-with-learning-disabilities.htm>
 - Special Educational Consulting and Advocacy (local): www.SuccessByDesignEdu.com

Your Rights to Have Your Child Tested

You have the right to request that your public school evaluate your child for special education.¹ We have created a letter that you can use to do this. We recommend that this letter be hand delivered or sent by certified mail. You can find out form at the end of this guide.

- The Virginia Department of Education outlines the steps in their parent’s guide. http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/parents/parents_guide.pdf
- If you request testing, the school has 10 business days to decide whether to evaluate. If it is decided that an evaluation is needed, the school has 65 business days to complete the evaluation (the 65 days start once the parent gives permission to test and the component checklist is signed). The school system pays for this evaluation. If the school knows, or has a reason to suspect that your child has a learning disability, they must test. This is part of the “child find” requirement that is part of the IDEA act.
- If the school denies your request for an evaluation, you can request a due process hearing.

¹ <https://ldaamerica.org/advocacy/lda-position-papers/right-to-an-evaluation-of-a-child-for-special-education-services/>

- If you do not agree with the results of the evaluation, you can request a second opinion – this means that someone outside of the school system will evaluate your child. If you do this, the school may ask for a due process hearing to show that its evaluation is appropriate. If the hearing officer decides that the school’s evaluation is appropriate, then you [parent] still have the right to an independent evaluation, but the school does not have to pay for it.
- There is a state Ombudsman that you can contact if you feel you are being treated unfairly.
 - **Parent Ombudsman**
Phone: 804-371-7420 or 800-422-2083
Other contact information:
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/resolving_disputes/ombudsman/index.shtml

Request for Evaluation by Public School

Date: _____

Dear Principal _____:

I am writing to request that my child, _____, be evaluated for special education services. I am worried that my child is not doing well in school and may need special help. Please provide a Consent for Evaluation for my/our signature. This request is made in accordance with Federal Laws; to include (1) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and (2) the Individuals with Disabilities and Education Act (IDEA, Public Law 105-17) of 1997. Specifically I am concerned because:

By signing below, I understand that I am giving you written permission to have my child tested. However, I would like to know about the tests, the process and this can be done. I would be happy to talk with you about my child. You may send the information to me at the address below or call me at the number listed below. I am keeping a copy of this request for my records. I also request a copy of information for parents that you have about the evaluation process and a copy of Virginia Procedural Safeguards.

Sincerely,

Name of parent / guardian

Signature of parent / guardian

Address- street

Name of school

City, State and zip code

Teacher's name / grade

Telephone number