

HOW TO REQUEST AN EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION THROUGH YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT

Learning problems are usually identified from a group of educational tests. There are distinct advantages to having this testing done by your school district. Testing done by the school district involves no cost to the parents. Testing done outside the school system can be very expensive. Often such outside testing is not covered by health insurance. Also, school staff are responsible for deciding what extra services a child should receive. Professionals from outside the school can make recommendations about extra services, but school staff do not have to follow these recommendations. All school districts have specialists who perform educational testing. These testing evaluations are very similar to those conducted by other professionals (such as those at the Dennis Developmental Center).

Parents can request an educational evaluation through the school district. However, it is very important that parents follow the steps outlined below in making the request. The parents must formally request a **Referral Conference**. The purpose of a referral conference is to discuss and determine the need for an educational evaluation.

HOW TO REQUEST A REFERRAL CONFERENCE

1. Write a letter to the school principal. A sample letter is attached. In the letter clearly state you are requesting a referral conference. Include your child's name, date of birth, grade, and their teacher's name in the letter. Briefly describe the problems your child is having in school. If you are not the child's legal guardian, provide the name and address of the legal guardian. Sign and date the letter. Keep a copy of the letter. Several days after mailing, call the school to make sure they received your letter.
2. The school must contact the parent or guardian within 7 days after they receive the letter. The purpose of this contact (usually through a letter) will be to schedule a time for the referral conference. Write back to the principal stating whether you can or can't attend the time they set. If you can't meet on the date they chose, ask them in the letter to change the meeting time to another day. Several days after mailing, call the school to make sure they got your letter.
3. You must take information supporting your concerns to the referral conference. This information might include samples of homework, report cards, notes from teachers, any previous testing results, and medical records. If a doctor or other professional has recommended an evaluation, bring a letter or report stating the recommendation. You can also ask another person to go to the conference with you if they can provide information about your concerns. Such a person might include a former teacher or a counselor.
4. If it is decided at the conference that your child should be tested you will need to sign a written form that gives permission for the testing. Before signing the consent form, be sure the testing will assess your areas of concern.
5. It may be decided that your child will not be tested. In this case, insist that a plan be developed to address your concerns. Also request a follow-up meeting to assess whether the plan is working. If the plan does not work, request a second referral conference.

Remember, your chances of being successful increase by cooperating with the school. Do not threaten or give up. Be persistent and well prepared. If the school sees that you are seriously concerned about your child, they will be too.

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SAMPLE LETTER REQUESTING A REFERRAL CONFERENCE

Today's Date (month/day/year)
Your mailing address
Your daytime telephone number

Full name of the Principal
Name of School
School's mailing address

Dear *(Principal's name):*

I am writing to request a referral conference for my child, *(insert your child's full name).* *(Insert your child's first name)* **is in the ____ grade, in** *(insert the name of your child's teacher)* **'s class.**

I am concerned about *(state your child's first name)* **because** *(briefly explain your concerns such as grades, learning problems, behavior, or other relevant areas).*

If you have any questions I can be reached at *(state your daytime phone number).* **I look forward to receiving your response to this formal request. Thank you in advance for your assistance in helping address my concerns.**

Sincerely,

Your Signature

(Type/print your full name under your signature)