

## **Children with Disabilities Procedural Handbook**

*Children with disabilities may require specialized support in order to succeed in the school environment. River Valley School District is committed to providing a continuum of services that offers optimal learning opportunities. The district's Pupil Services Director coordinates and supervises special education and 504 referrals and programming within the River Valley School District. Contact the Pupil Services Director at the River Valley Middle School with any inquiries regarding programming and children with disabilities.*

Pupil Services Director – Claire Knoll

Pupil Services Administrative Assistant – Elly Schram

Special Education Staff:

Early Childhood Special Education Teachers – Kelly Kalscheur, Melinda Mohr

River Valley Elementary Special Education Teachers – Jill Bierman, Jarica Heiser, Meghan McCall, Anna Pawlisch

Middle School Special Education Teachers – Cristin Lagerman, Courtney Norton, Lara Pawelski, Simonne Starr

High School Special Education Teachers – Gerri Gudenschwager, Anne Lieven, Lisa Pipkorn, Sarah Schiller

Occupational Therapist – Nicole Bailey

Physical Therapist – Renee Weber

Speech and Language Pathologists –Kay Schulz, Jamie Sugarman, Britt Thatcher

CESA 3 Services: Vision Specialist

CESA 5 Services: Audiologist and Orientation and Mobility Specialist

Pupil Services Staff:

Counselors: Stacy Hauden, Mitch Heinemeyer, Missy Hilliard, Holly Lochner,

School Nursing Services: Brittney Belche, Jennifer Smith, Heather Olson

School Psychologist: Savannah Jennings

### Special Education Evaluation and Eligibility Criteria

A special education evaluation is an essential beginning step in the special education process for a child with a disability. Before a child can receive special education and related services for the first time, a full and individualized initial evaluation of the child's needs must be conducted to see if the child has a disability and is eligible for special education. Parents must be informed through the Notice of Referral before this evaluation may be conducted. The evaluation process is guided by requirements in our nation's special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Wisconsin's eligibility criteria. The Special Education Rights for Parents and Children and Procedural Safeguards Notice also provides more information on parent's rights throughout the process.

### Special Education Referral

This process begins with a referral stating that it is believed the student has a disability and the reasons this assumption is being made. Parents may initiate a referral by contacting any school staff and expressing their desire to refer their child for special education. When a referral is made, the parent will receive paperwork which states that an IEP team will be developed to conduct the evaluation, informs parents of the steps in the process, and their rights throughout the process.

When a referral is submitted, an IEP Team is appointed to conduct the evaluation. An IEP Team consists of: Parents/Guardians, the Student (if appropriate), Other individuals requested by the parent, the Local Education Agency Representative (LEA Rep), a Special Education Teacher, a Regular Education Teacher if the child is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment during the timeframe of the IEP, and Other staff requested by district.

At the time of the referral, the IEP team determines if additional assessment is needed. If additional assessment is needed, the consent form is sent to parents (when the district receives the parent signature, this starts the 60 day timeline for evaluation completion). If additional assessment is not needed, the team will use the current data to determine eligibility within 60 days of the date this was determined. After the evaluation is conducted, the team meets to determine eligibility. If the child is determined not eligible, the evaluation is complete. If the child is determined eligible, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is created within 30 days.

### Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Once a student is determined to have a disability & requires special education, an IEP is developed that documents the student's disability, how it affects progress in the general education environment, the student's present level of performance, annual goals toward improving performance and special education services the student will require. The IEP can be reviewed and revised throughout the duration of the IEP. Students are eligible to receive services starting from age 3 through the end of the school year that they turn 21. For initial placement, a parent signature must be obtained to place the child in special education

### 504 Plan

If the student has a disability requiring accommodations that can be met in the general education setting and does not need special education through an IEP, a Section 504 referral can be made. Section 504 is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities and ensures that the child with a disability has equal access to an education.

### Transfer Students

Students who move into RV will have no interruption in special education or 504 services. Once paperwork is received, a team will be assembled and services will be approximated as closely as possible to the current IEP or 504 while it is being reviewed for adoption or a new one is being developed. If the evaluation meets WI criteria and the IEP or 504 can be carried out as written in our schools, RV can adopt the previous district's evaluation and IEP or 504. If the evaluation does not meet WI criteria, a new evaluation will be conducted, followed by a new IEP or 504. RV also offers an array of services to students with disabilities attending private and parochial schools.

### Programming for Children with Disabilities

Our goal is to ensure all students with disabilities receive their federally guaranteed free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment, thus promoting inclusive

schooling. Student services advances a diverse, expansive continuum of services and placements essential for both IDEA adherence, and for realizing inclusive schooling.

Services may include:

- Assessment Accommodations & Modifications
- Assistive Technology
- Audiology and Deaf/Hard of Hearing Services
- Counseling Services
- Early Childhood and Child Find Screening
- Extended School Year
- Health Services
- Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy
- School Based Services and Medicaid Billing
- Special Education Programming
- Speech and Language Services
- Transition (18-21 year old program) Services
- Transportation
- Vision

Assessment Accommodations and Modifications: The IEP outlines the students' needs, and if appropriate, students can receive accommodations and modifications on districtwide, classroom, and statewide tests such as tests read aloud, taken in a different setting, or with extended times.

Assistive Technology: Assistive Technology is anything that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a student who has an identified disability. Assistive Technology is considered at an IEP meeting after the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance has been written and appropriate goals/objectives have been developed. Assistive Technology may or may not involve diagnostic equipment and should first include exploration and documentation of low tech items, strategies/adaptations, and/or other techniques that have been utilized.

Audiology and Deaf/Hard of Hearing Services: Most students attend the school closest to their home with supports from staff with knowledge in working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing, with other support staff in the school, and the general education staff. The district's audiologist and deaf/hard of hearing is contracted through CESA 5 and services are typically provided in an itinerant model; meaning staff who travel to multiple districts providing services for the students. Other program supports provided by DPI include:

- Wisconsin School for the Deaf (WSD) in Delavan provides educational services for students ages 3-21 who are deaf or hard of hearing. In recognition of the diverse needs of Wisconsin's deaf and hard of hearing children, the Wisconsin School for the Deaf is dedicated to educational excellence in a unique ASL/English bilingual-bicultural environment by preparing students to achieve their maximum potential and become successful citizens of the future. For more information on WSD go to: [www.wsd.k12.wi.us](http://www.wsd.k12.wi.us)
- The Outreach program provides a broad array of services, information, support, and training to school districts and educational programs in serving deaf, and hard of hearing and deafblind children and their families. Services and support are determined based on the child's needs. In addition, the Outreach Program offers unique programs for families including Deaf Mentor Program and Guide-By-Your-Side,

and also provides professional development opportunities and the Professional and Family Conference. For more information on the Outreach program, go to: [www.wesp-dhh.wi.gov](http://www.wesp-dhh.wi.gov) or an Overview of Outreach Services.

Counseling Services: Services to help students feel healthy, safe, and supported can be provided from our pupil services staff. Our pupil services staff includes building counselors, school psychologists, and school nurses. Students who need additional support for continuous or short-term care is offered to ensure social emotional growth.

Early Childhood and Child Find Screening: The Early Childhood special education program provides comprehensive screening to children ages 3-5, evaluates children using multiple assessment measures, and implement quality special education services. The Early Childhood program is fully inclusive within the district's 4K setting.

Child Find is a component of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that requires states to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities, aged birth to 21, who are in need of early intervention or special education services. Child Find is a continuous process of public awareness activities, screening and evaluation designed to locate, identify, and refer as early as possible all young children with disabilities and their families who are in need of an Early Intervention Program (Part C) or Early Childhood Special Education (Part B) services of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Referrals can be made any time throughout the year. A formal child find screening (Child Development Days) is offered annually.

Extended School Year: School districts must provide each resident child with a disability a free appropriate public education (FAPE). In order to provide a FAPE, districts must ensure all children with disabilities receive special education and related services consistent with the provisions of their IEPs. Special education and related services provided pursuant to an IEP beyond the limits of the school term are ESY services. Federal special education regulations and court cases establish a standard for determining whether a child is eligible for ESY services. In most cases, courts consider regression during an interruption in services and recoupment of skills after services resume in determining eligibility for ESY services. The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, which includes Wisconsin, has held that states should engage in a multi-factored determination of eligibility for ESY services, including "the likelihood of regression, slow recoupment, and predictive data based upon the opinion of professionals." Accordingly, the department recommends that districts consider all appropriate factors in determining whether the benefits accrued to a child during the regular school year will be significantly jeopardized if the child is

Health Services: As part of the Pupil Services Teams in schools, School Nurses provide a holistic health perspective related to the physical, mental and social emotional health of students. The School Nurse is responsible for coordinating and managing health needs of individual students during the school day as well as promoting health and safety for all students. Nurse Assistants care for ill and injured students, complete clerical work and carry out delegated nursing activities (such as giving medications) under the clinical supervision of the school nurse.

Occupational and Physical Therapy: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) includes occupational therapy and physical therapy as related services. Related Services are those necessary to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education. Federal and state laws govern the provision of school-based occupational therapy and physical therapy. The district's occupational therapist serves students aged 3-21 and is housed at River Valley Elementary School. The district's physical therapist is contracted with Upland Hills Health Care and also serves students aged 3-21.

School Based Services and Medicaid Billing: School Based Services provides added revenue to school districts by billing Wisconsin Medicaid for medically necessary services provided in school for eligible children. The purpose of Medicaid is to provide reimbursement for and assure the availability of appropriate medical care to persons who meet the criteria for Medicaid. RV is requesting Medicaid consent for all students who receive special education services because we have no information to make a judgment on which families do or do not qualify. We request the signature, so that we know we have addressed this with all families and can obtain consent from as many as possible, regardless of their Medicaid qualifying status. Federal guidelines have broadened services that may be claimed to include: Speech, language, audiology and hearing, occupational and physical therapy, nursing and delegated nursing duties, psychological counseling and social work, developmental testing and assessments when they result in an Individual Education Program (IEP), and special transportation. Your consent to bill WI Medicaid will not result in denial or limitation of community-based services provided outside the school.

Special Education Programming: Special education programming for a student with an IEP is determined at each IEP meeting, held at least annually. Special education case managers are assigned students to their caseloads, and staff deliver services according to the developed IEPs. It is the belief at RV that all children learn differently and strive to provide a continuum of services to meet the needs of all the children in our district

Speech and Language Services: A student may either have a speech and language disability or require therapy from a speech and language pathologist as a related service (which assists a child with a disability to benefit from special education). Students receive speech and language services based on their needs, which could range from monthly consultation with the regular education teacher to group therapy once a week to several times per week of individualized therapy. The amount and frequency is determined by IEP teams and the students' needs.

Transportation: Some students with disabilities may receive "specialized transportation" as part of either their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 Plan (504 Plan). In order to be eligible for specialized transportation, an IEP team or 504 team must determine that specialized transportation is a service that is required to assist a student with a disability to benefit from special education or is required to provide equal access to the regular education environment.

Vision Services: RV will provide opportunities for children and youth who are visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities, to develop the skills necessary to lead vocationally, personally, socially satisfying and productive lives through the use of assistive technology, braille, expanded core curriculum, etc. so they are community, career and college ready. The district's vision specialist is contracted with CESA 3.