

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND PRESCHOOL

PHILOSOPHY

Yellowstone-West/Carbon County Special Services Cooperative has a philosophy of providing quality Special Education and Related Services to eligible students residing within the Cooperative boundary. It is the intention of this Cooperative to look at the whole child when designing specialized services for him or her. Every effort will be made to place each child referred and placed in Special Education in the least restrictive, appropriate placement.

SCREENINGS

YWCCSSC offers periodic Early Childhood Clinics/Child Find Screenings for children 0-six years of age for possible difficulties in the areas of speech and language, cognition or readiness, socialization and fine and gross motor skills. Hearing, vision, and general health may also be checked. These screenings are offered to children who reside within the residency boundaries for the schools we serve: Belfry, Blue Creek, Bridger, Broadview, Canyon Creek, Elder Grove, Elysian, Fromberg, Independent, Joliet, Luther, Molt, Morin, Pryor, Red Lodge, and Roberts.

The Denver Developmental Screening Test (DDST) is used to measure the performance of children ages 3 years and younger. ECI (Early Childhood Intervention) assists the Cooperative in these screenings. Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning - 4 (DIAL-4) is used to measure performance of children ages 3 to 6 years. Cooperative staff conduct the latter.

Parents are asked to call the Cooperative (839-2339) to set up an appointment during scheduled Early Childhood Clinics. Upon registering their children, parents will be given a brief explanation of the screening process and the developmental areas to be screened. A summary and interpretation of test results will be provided to the parent following the screening. The parent(s) of those children referred for further evaluation will be contacted by the Yellowstone-West/Carbon County Special Services Cooperative or the school district's special education teacher. Notice of Early Childhood Screenings will be published in local newspapers or other media.

A schedule for 2023-2024 is as follows. All clinics are from 9:00 AM to Noon

Wednesday, September 13, 2023 at the Cooperative office: 714 East 5th Street, Laurel
Tuesday, October 17, 2023 at the Red Lodge Civic Center: 215 14th St West, Red Lodge
Wednesday, November 8, 2023 at Independent School: 2907 Roundup Rd, Billings
Thursday, January 25, 2024 at the Cooperative office: 714 East 5th Street, Laurel

PLANNING MEETINGS/REFERRALS

Children served by Part C agencies are sometimes referred. This referral takes place at least 90 days before the child's third birthday.

Children served by Head Start may be referred by their parents or the disability coordinator. The disability coordinator is requested to assist the parent in securing an appointment at one of the periodic Early Childhood Clinics. Additionally, the disability coordinator is asked to secure a signature on the Mutual Consent for Information form utilized by the Cooperative (a sample is attached). The Mutual Consent Form is provided to the home school district. Parental contact with the family by the home district will follow.

In Planning Meetings held for the purpose of discussing a referral the following individuals may be invited:

From Part C:

- Family Support Specialist
- Parent or Legal Guardian
- Family Advocate
- Preschool Teacher (from home district or district's center-based teacher)
- Cooperative Speech Pathologist
- School Administrator
- Cooperative Director
- Other Professionals like Doctors, Private Therapists, etc.

From Head Start and Part B:

- Family Support Specialist if receiving developmental disability services
- District Special Education staff
- Parent or Legal Guardian
- Classroom Teachers (Cooperative and Head Start)
- Cooperative Speech Pathologist
- School Administrator
- Cooperative Director
- Head Start Disability Coordinator
- Family Advocate
- Other Professionals like Doctors, Private Therapists, etc.

In Planning Meetings between Head Start and the home school district, the agency requesting the meeting will organize the meeting. The Head Start Coordinator will organize the meeting when it initiates the planning meeting for a possible referral. The home school district will organize the meeting when the school district is initiating the meeting to discuss a possible referral. These meetings will be held in a timely fashion without undue delay.

During these meetings it will be acceptable, if the parent is present, to obtain permission for evaluation. The parent may also deny consent. If the parent changes his/her mind, the parent may re-initiate the process at a later date.

Eligibility will not be determined at the planning meetings for referral even when outside testing is shared.

Referrals for Special Education need to include the following three items:

1. Statement of the reason(s) for referral (include screening data)
2. Documentation which may include data on general education interventions tried paired with their results and/or outside evaluation results
3. Signature of the individual making the referral

Referrals may come directly from parents as well. The referral is better written by a representative from the referring agency (i.e. Disability Coordinator for Head Start in conjunction with a classroom teacher) or the home school district teacher or speech pathologist. If the referral comes from Part C, Part C will use its own form.

Parents should be knowledgeable of this process and provide informed consent before a referral is provided to the Cooperative.

Referrals from the home school district to Head Start will take into account the student's age and be dependent upon the family completing a Head Start enrollment application.

During transition/referral meetings parents should be provided a copy of Procedural Safeguards.

EVALUATION PLAN

An Evaluation Plan will be completed by school staff following receipt of referral information should the district decide to pursue a comprehensive educational evaluation. Upon receipt of parent or legal guardian signed permission, a 60-day timeline will commence during which evaluations are to occur.

EVALUATION

The evaluation must include:

- Administering an evaluation instrument;
- Taking the child's history (including interviewing the parent and other family members or caregivers, as appropriate);

- Identifying the child’s level of functioning in each developmental area (cognitive, physical, including hearing and vision, communication, social or emotional, and adaptive skill development);
- Gathering information from other sources such as family members, other care givers, medical providers, social workers, and educators, if necessary to understand the full scope of the child’s unique strengths and needs; and
- Reviewing medical, educational and/or other records.

However, if a child’s medical and other records may be used to establish eligibility testing in the indicated areas may be reviewed and further testing in these areas may be deemed unnecessary.

If a school refuses to conduct a comprehensive educational evaluation, it must provide a parent Prior Written Notice.

EVALUATION TEAM

Required members of the eligibility team are as follows:

- Parent or legal guardian
- One regular education teacher if the child will be participating in a regular education environment
- One special educator
- District administrator where student will be served potentially
- An individual who can interpret instructional implications of assessments used.
- At the parent’s discretion other individuals with knowledge or special expertise regarding the child
- The child if appropriate
- Specialists as required in initial evaluations for consideration of eligibility criteria other than Developmental Delay as indicated through ARM 10.16.3321.

This team will determine whether a child both meets an eligibility criteria and needs service. A child may meet the requirements of an eligibility criteria and not need special education services.

A child cannot qualify for only related service.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN

If a child is determined eligible for special education, an Individualized Education Plan, IEP, is developed within 30 days. If the child is transitioning from Part C to Part B, the IEP will be written and in place by the third birthday.

The parent must approve an IEP. The Evaluation Team cannot proceed without parent/guardian approval. This document is reviewed at least annually.

The required members of the IEP include the following individuals:

- Parent or legal guardian
- One regular education teacher if the child will be participating in a regular education environment; this can include a certified Head Start teacher
- One special educator
- District administrator where student will be served potentially
- An individual who can interpret instructional implications of assessments used.
- At the parent's discretion other individuals with knowledge or special expertise regarding the child
- The child if appropriate

SERVICES

Special education is specially designed instruction provided at no cost to parents in order to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. These include services like braille instruction, communication, self-help/independence, toilet training, reading, math, etc.

Related services include services like occupational therapy, physical therapy, and in some instances speech therapy.

A district must provide transportation as a related service if it is required for the child to benefit from special education. The district must ensure that any transportation services included in a student's IEP as a related service are provided at no cost to the parents and that the student's IEP describes the transportation arrangement. The district has a variety of options for how they provide transportation, including school buses, contracted services, transportation contracts with parents, or other options.

Related services cannot stand alone. There needs to be a special education service before a related service can be added in an IEP.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Throughout the special education process, confidentiality is of the utmost importance. The “need to know” circle is tightly defined and communications within the circle should be restricted to the process’s formal meetings. If the child is placed on an IEP, communications will meet the parameters agreed upon within the IEP document which may include electronic messages, verbal messages, or paper notices. If individuals are given a copy of the IEP, they must ensure that confidentiality of the IEP is maintained at all times in the same manner as other special education records, including storage of and access to the IEP.

CLASS OBSERVATIONS

Class observations of the preschool program by parents are possible provided they are pre-arranged, do not interfere with the lessons, are limited in length and frequency, and do not take staff away from their student responsibilities. Individuals requesting to visit should direct their inquiries through the school administrator.

PRESCHOOL SERVICES

Canyon Creek School provides a center-based service for the following school districts:

- Blue Creek
- Canyon Creek
- Elder Grove
- Elysian

Other schools within our Cooperative choose to serve their students at their neighborhood: Belfry, Bridger, Broadview, Fromberg, Independent, Joliet, Luther, Molt, Morin, Pryor, Red Lodge, and Roberts.

CONTACTS

YWCCSSC Office:

General Phone Contact: 839-2339

FAX: 633-4286

Brandyn Romo, Director

Head Start:

General Phone Contact: 406-628-5870

FAX: 406-633-4160

Canyon Creek:

General Phone Contact: 656-4474

FAX: 655-1031

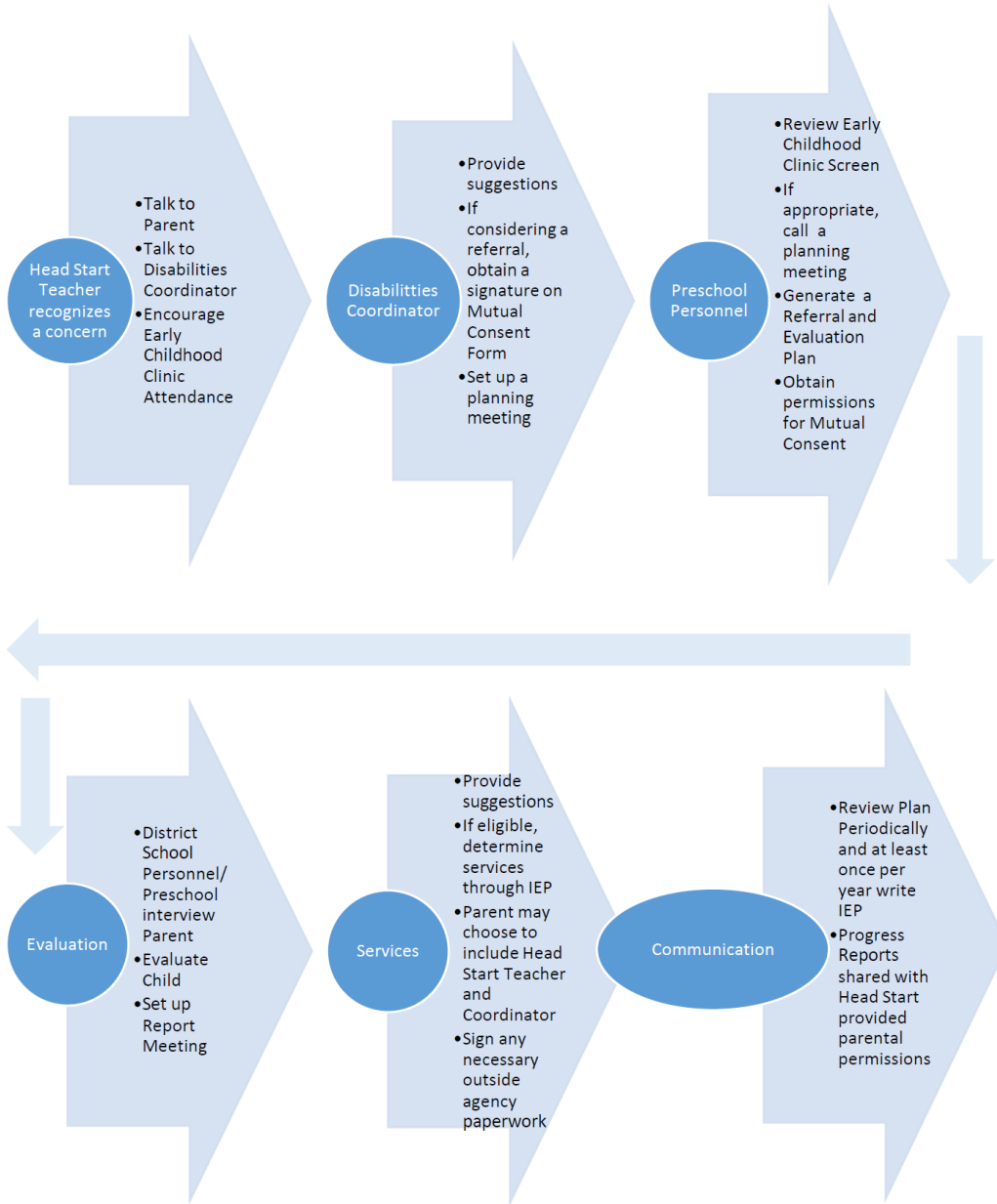
Haley Morales, CBEE Cooperative Program

Director

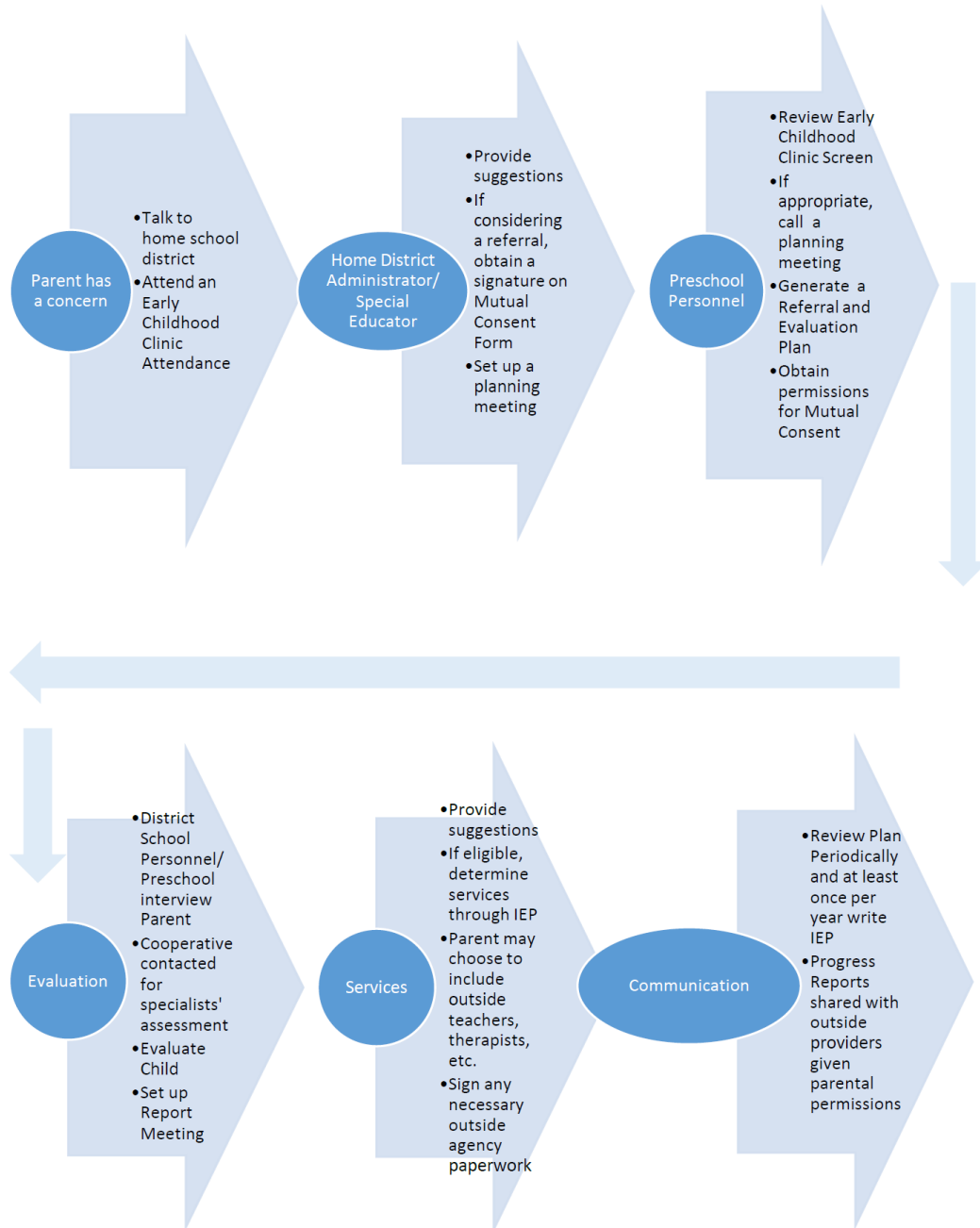
You are encouraged to contact your local school district to initiate questions:

SUMMARY FOR HEAD START CONCERNS

What do to when...



SUMMARY FOR PARENTAL CONCERNS



REFERENCE

PLEASE SEE OPI: <https://opi.mt.gov/Families-Students/School-Topics/Early-Childhood/>

This site provides guides including transition documents, reporting requirements, and general information.