



# Program for Exceptional Students

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**Joy Folsom**  
Superintendent Cook County Schools

**Leslie McElrath, Ed. S.**  
Director of Special Education

June 2, 2025

To: Private/Homeschool Representatives and Parents of Parentally-Placed School  
Students with Disabilities

From: Leslie McElrath, Director of Special Education

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Child Find and Private School rules require school systems to locate, identify, and evaluate students with disabilities (SWD) ages 3 through 21 attending private schools within their boundaries. Children who are homeschooled are also considered parentally-placed private school students. Private schools referenced in this letter include home schools. Parentally-placed SWD in private schools are not entitled to Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), but the district will provide services based on a proportionate share of federal funds.

The district must make the final decisions with respect to the proportionate share services to be provided to eligible private school SWD prior to the start of the school year. To ensure timely and meaningful consultation, the Cook County Special Education Department would like to meet with private school representatives and parents of parentally-placed private school SWD. During this meeting, we will discuss the child find process, the determination of how proportionate share funds are calculated, how to meaningfully participate throughout the school year, and determine the special education and related services to be provided for private school students with disabilities.

The meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 11th at 9:00 a.m. at the Cook County Board of Education building located at 37 Josey Rd. If you are unable to attend, you may call the Special Education office at 229-896-2296 and we will be happy to discuss the process with you and answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Leslie McElrath  
Director of Special Education  
Cook County Schools