



A Parent's Guide to Special Education

Special Education Services & Programs for Learners
With Disabilities From Birth to Age 26

Goal of Special Education

- Enable learners to be active participants in settings appropriate to their age which may include their home, community, child care, preschool, and school settings.
- Enable learners to make progress on goals related to their needs.
- Enable families to provide care and learning for their children and have the resources they need to participate in their own desired family and community activities.

Evaluation Procedures

If your child has been recommended for special education evaluation to determine eligibility*, a team of individuals will complete a series of assessments that may include observations across different settings, standardized testing, parent input, teacher/caregiver input, and/or developmental checklists. For children birth to age 5, these evaluations may take place in settings such as home, daycare, or preschool. The personnel involved may include a speech and language therapist, school social worker, school psychologist, teacher, occupational therapist, physical therapist, and/or hearing or vision specialist. For students ages 6 and up, evaluation services will likely take place in the school setting.

*Page three provides a description of each eligibility category.

Developing a Plan

Individualized Family Service Planning (IFSP) Process

Services and programs for children birth to age 3 are developed through an IFSP process.

Individualized Education Planning (IEP) Process

Services and programs for children ages 3 up to age 26 are developed through an IEP process.

Plans are designed to meet the unique needs of each child and family and parents are an important part of the planning team. As a parent, your expertise is knowing your child. We urge you to ask questions of our staff and use their expertise to support your child. You don't need to learn all the technical terms. Our staff is more than willing to define terms for you. Bring a support person to any meetings. This person can help by taking notes, keeping track of information, and reviewing information with you after the meeting.



Determining Special Education Eligibility

Children qualify for special education as defined by the guidelines of the State of Michigan. Eligibility for special education requires that there is an adverse effect on educational performance. Areas of eligibility include:

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Significant delays in the development of social interaction, communication, and behavior.

Cognitive Impairment (CI)

Significant delays in thinking, problem solving, and reasoning.

Deaf-Blindness (DB)

Both a hearing and visual impairment, the combination of which significantly affects development.

Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH)

A hearing impairment that significantly affects development.

Early Childhood Developmental Delay (ECDD)

A significant delay by at least half of a child's chronological age in one or more areas of development and does not meet eligibility requirements in any other category.

Emotional Impairment (EI)

Significant behavioral problems that occur over a long period of time that impact a child's educational performance.

Other Health Impairment (OHI)

A health impairment that significantly affects development.

Physical Impairment (PI)

An existing physical impairment that affects daily functioning.

Severe Multiple Impairment (SXI)

An impairment in more than one disability in intellectual, physical and/or functional abilities.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations.

Speech/Language Impairment (SLI)

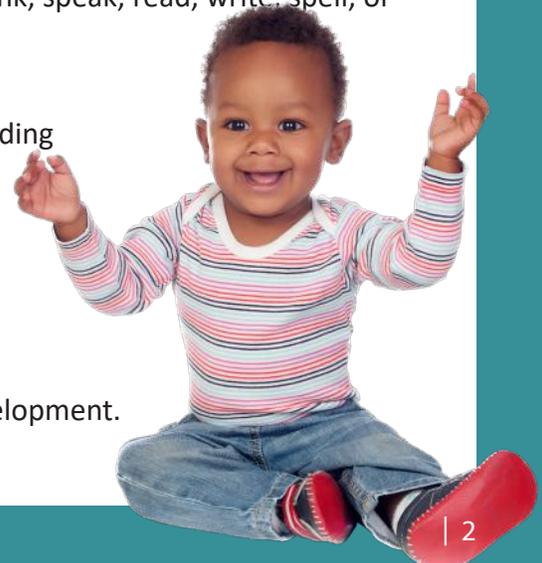
Significant delay in speech and/or language that affects the understanding and/or use of language.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

An acquired injury to the brain that has been caused by external physical force, resulting in significantly impaired development.

Visual Impairment (VI)

A visual impairment, which, even with correction, interferes with development.



Services and Programs for Children Birth to Age 3

Early On is the name of Michigan's system for supporting infants and toddlers up to the age of 3 with a delay or disability. These services are designed to assist families in nurturing, stimulating and guiding the development of their child.

Services are provided in the child's natural environments, including the home and community settings where children with or without disabilities participate, such as local playgroups.

Services and Programs for Children Ages 3 to 5

Services and programs for children ages 3 to 5 are designed to support children's access, progress, and participation in an educational environment.

Children who attend preschool are often served within their general education classroom. Children who do not attend preschool may receive a stand alone service provided at the local elementary school. Students with a significant delay may be served in an early childhood special education classroom.

Parents are an important part of the planning team regardless of age and plans are designed to meet the unique needs of each child and family.

Services and Programs for Learners Ages 6 to 26

Services and programs for learners ages 6 up to age 26 are designed to support individual learners' access, progress and participation in the educational environment. IEP teams, including parent input, help design programs that meet the needs of the student based on their disability and the impact of those needs. The IEP outlines the plan to provide a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, which means instruction occurs as close to same-age peers in general education as appropriate.



Strengthening Families and the Five Protective Factors

Our department has adopted the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework which strives to build and strengthen five specific characteristics in families. These “Protective factors” act as a shield to counteract risk factors. They are built through daily interactions with the people and systems that families encounter. Together, we want to help you build your protective factors and make your family strong!

Parental Resilience

Exercise Flexibility and Develop Inner Strength:

Your life is not defined by your experiences, but how you respond and grow. Resilient parents keep a positive attitude, solve problems creatively and take life in stride.

Social Connections

Make a Friend:

Having a social network of emotionally supportive friends and family makes it easier to care for your children and yourself.

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Learn to Be Your Child’s Expert:

Children go through many stages of development. Informed parents are more likely to have realistic expectations, provide appropriate guidance, and build a positive relationship with their child.

Concrete Support in Times of Need

Ask For Help:

All families at some point need help. Whether the challenge is joyous like the birth of a child, transitional like a job loss, or tragic like a serious illness, families need extra support. Families that know where to meet their needs and ask for help can handle life’s challenges and be successful.

Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Give Your Child Words to Express How They Feel:

A child’s ability to interact appropriately with others and express their feelings is essential to emotional intelligence. A parent who helps their child communicate and interact builds an emotionally strong child capable of establishing positive relationships.

Interested in Learning More About Your Child’s Development?

Children Birth to Age Five

Help Me Grow® Char-Em can help! We provide screenings for early signs of developmental, learning, and behavioral needs, and we connect families to community-based services and supports - all at no cost to the family.

Once you have completed your free & easy online developmental screening, an early childhood professional will contact you to share the screening results and will support you in determining the next best steps for your child.

Call **231.308.0289** or visit:
helpmegrow-mi.org/charemcounty

More Resources for
Children Birth to Age Five!

Learners Ages 6 to 26

If your child is in school, contact the building Principal.

More Resources for
Learners Ages 6 to 26!

Schools served by Char-Em ISD

Alanson Public
Beaver Island Community
Boyne City Public
Boyne Falls Public
Central Lake Public
Charlevoix Public
Concord Academy Boyne
Concord Academy Petoskey
East Jordan Public
Ellsworth Community
Harbor Springs Public
Pellston Public
Public Schools of Petoskey
and non-public schools



Supporting Schools
Supporting Students

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