

***Are you concerned that your child has a disability and may need additional assistance in school?***

## **Special Education Services**

### Eligibility for Special Education Services

Two federal laws protect children with disabilities, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 04) and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Children experiencing disabilities are guaranteed a free appropriate public education (FAPE) under IDEA 04 and Alaska State Regulations. Under IDEA 04, a child with a disability is one who has a physical or mental disability as defined in one of 14 eligibility categories, the disability adversely affects the educational performance of the child and because of the disability the child is in need of special education and related services. The areas of eligibility are: autism, deafness, deaf blindness, early childhood developmental delay, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, specific learning disability, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment.

Section 504 defines disabled as "any person who has a physical or mental disability which substantially limits a major life activity or has a record of such a disability or is regarded as having such a disability". **For information about whether your child may qualify for services under IDEA 04 or Section 504, contact an administrator at your child's school.**

### Rights of Children with Disabilities

IDEA 04 provides for a FAPE to all children experiencing disabilities in the least restrictive environment. This means services without charge to the parent, in conformity with an appropriately developed Individualized Education Program (IEP), provided at public expense under public supervision,

and which meet the education standards and administrative policies and procedures of the state Education Agency.

IDEA 04 requires school districts to provide parents with opportunities to become involved in their child's educational program and to document that involvement. These rights place responsibility on the parent to become actively involved. Rights to which parents are entitled under IDEA 04 are referred to as procedural safeguards. A copy of the procedural safeguards is available at any school.

Special education means the specifically designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. Specially designed instruction means adapting content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child and to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum. Special education is a services, not a place.

#### Services Available to Children with Disabilities

The Anchorage School District provides comprehensive educational services through the Special Education Department to all children who experience disabilities and have additional needs beyond those which can generally be met by the regular classroom program. Special education services are provided in all Anchorage School District schools, including alternative schools, optional schools, charter schools and special school programs. Services are designed by an IEP team in the least restrictive environment, including the parent as a contributing member.

IDEA 04 requires that a continuum of special education placements is available which includes: support in the regular classroom supervised by special education personnel, direct service by special education personnel in the regular classroom, pull-out time from the regular classroom with service from special education personnel

self-contained special education classrooms, a special school, home or hospital instruction or instruction in an institution. Since all components of the continuum cannot be provided in every neighborhood school, the IEP teams make every effort to provide the appropriate services for a student in a setting as close to his/her normal classroom as possible. In addition to providing the necessary special education services, the IEP team may determine a need for related services. Related services may include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, specialized nursing services, audiology services and transportation.

#### Confidentiality Protections

The district maintains the confidentiality of information relating to students with disabilities. The district must obtain written consent before disclosing personally identifiable information to any person other than a school employee who has a legitimate educational interest, employees of the school in which the child is enrolled, or a representative of the United States Department of Education or the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.

#### Contact Information

If you have any questions about whether your child might require special education services or a 504 Plan, please contact the Special Education Administration Office at 742-4236.