

**KALAMAZOO RESA**

INSPIRING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

# Special Education

## Parent Handbook

Kalamazoo RESA  
1819 East Milham Avenue  
Portage, MI 49002

[www.kresa.org](http://www.kresa.org)  
P: (269) 250-9200  
F: (269) 250-9201

# How to Obtain Services

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If you think your child would benefit from special education services, call your local school. Persons responsible for special education programs and services are listed below:

## Central Service Area

Rikki Saunders, Director of Special Education  
1220 Howard Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49008  
Phone: (269) 337-0161  
Serving: Kalamazoo Public Schools

## Eastern Service Area

Janan Zimmerman, Director of Special Education  
3010 Gull Lake Road, Kalamazoo, MI 49008  
Phone: (269) 250-8924  
Serving: Climax Scotts, Comstock, Galesburg-Augusta, Gull Lake & Parchment School Districts

## Southern Service Area

Jeanine Mattson-Gearhart, Director of Special Education  
8107 Mustang Drive, Portage, MI 49002  
Phone: (269) 323-5010  
Serving: Portage, Schoolcraft & Vicksburg School Districts

## Kalamazoo Public School Academies

Augusta Academy .....	(269) 731-5775
Evergreen Academy.....	(269) 488-6324
Forest Academy .....	(269) 488-2315
Kalamazoo Covenant Academy.....	(269) 226-2100
Lakeside Charter School .....	(269) 381-4760
Oakland Academy.....	(269) 324-8951
Paramount Charter Academy.....	(269) 553-6400
Youth Advancement Academy.....	(269) 353-4193

# Letter to Parents

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Dear Parents:

We, as parents of students with disabilities, invite you to become acquainted with the programs, persons, and organizations available to help you and your child.

This handbook is one of the most effective means the school has of informing you of the new as well as existing laws in special education. It is meant as a starting point for finding programs and services appropriate to the individual student's needs.

Your participation is of vital importance in helping your child reach his or her fullest potential. You know your child better than anyone does.

The Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) works cooperatively with local school districts and the intermediate school district to help assure the continued high quality special education programs and services in our county.

The PAC is composed exclusively of parents of students with disabilities. Please feel free to contact any PAC member with your concerns, questions or comments or call your local school. We welcome you at our meetings. For the date and time of the next meeting, please call the KRESA Special Education office, 269-250-9323.

Sincerely,

Parent Advisory Committee Members

## Special Education Parent Advisory Committee

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The Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) is composed of parents of children with disabilities from the public school districts and public school academies in Kalamazoo County.

The PAC participates in the development, review, and amendment of the KRESA Plan for the Delivery of Special Education Programs and Services.

The PAC also strives to represent the interests and concerns of disabled students and their parents in each of the constituent districts. The committee will, upon request, also provide information to parents, facilitate communication, and promote cooperation between parents, their local boards of education and the KRESA Board of Education.

See <https://www.kresa.org/page/525> for more information.

# Notice of Non-Discrimination Policy

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It is the policy of the School District that no staff member, candidate for employment, program participant, or recipient of services shall experience discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation or transgender identity) disability, age, religion, height, weight, marital or family status, military status, ancestry, genetic information, or any other legally protected category (collectively "Protected Classes"), in its programs and activities, including employment opportunities.

Any questions concerning Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, Title VI, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin, or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, should be directed to the director of special education listed on the inside of the cover.

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# What is Special Education

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Special education is specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parent, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability.

## Special Education Evaluation

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### **Why Does My Child Need an Evaluation?**

The evaluation is done to answer these questions:

- How is the child currently performing in school? (present level of academic achievement and functional performance)
- What are the child's educational needs?
- Does the child qualify for particular category of disability?
- Does the child need special education and related services?
- What accommodations or modifications, if any, are needed to enable the child to meet annual goals in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) and participate, as appropriate, in the general curriculum?

### **What Are the Steps in the Evaluation Process?**

Before a child is evaluated for the first time, the school must notify the parents. The notice describes evaluations that the school proposes to conduct. The parents must give their informed consent for the child to be evaluated.

Prior to the school requesting parent consent for evaluation, the child's IEP Team gathers and reviews existing information on the child. This includes evaluations and information provided by the parents, current classroom-based assessments and observations, and teacher and other service providers' observations. After this information is reviewed, the school recommends the evaluation to be conducted.

### **How is a Child Evaluated for the Presence of a Disability?**

The evaluations are given individually, in the child's native language, using nondiscriminatory evaluations. Any standardized tests must be administered correctly by trained, knowledgeable personnel.

# Eligibility

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## Who Decides if a Child is eligible for Services?

A team of qualified professionals and the parents decide if the child is eligible for special education.

## Who is a “Child with a Disability”?

The definition includes the following qualifications:

- Children from birth through age 25 who have not graduated from high school;
- Children who have the characteristics of a specific disability as defined in the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (the special education eligibility categories are listed in this document) and because of that disability, need special education/ related services.

## What Happens After a Child is Found Eligible?

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An IEP Team comprised of the parents, school professionals and the student, when appropriate, develops an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the child. The child begins to receive special education/related services designed to meet the child’s needs once the parent gives consent for the school to provide special education.

## What is an IEP?

An “Individualized Education Program” means a written plan for a child with a disability that describes the special education/related services the child will receive. The team that develops the IEP is comprised of the parents, school professionals, and the student when appropriate. The IEP Team meets at a mutually agreed upon time to develop the IEP. The IEP is a written record of the IEP Team meeting and must be reviewed at least annually.

## What is Included in the IEP?

The IEP includes:

- a statement of the child’s present level of academic achievement and functional performance;
- a statement of measurable annual goals, including short-term objectives related to:
  - meeting the needs that result from the disability to enable the child’s involvement and progress in the general curriculum, and
  - meeting each of the child’s other educational needs that result from the child’s disability.
- a statement of special education services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child, and any program modifications or supports provided by school personnel;
- an explanation of when the child will not participate with non-disabled children in the regular class and other activities;



- a statement of any accommodations the student needs to take state- or district-wide assessments;
- the projected date for initiation, duration, anticipated frequency, and location of programs and services;
- a statement of the child’s postsecondary vision and related transition activities, to be included in the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16; and
- a statement of how the child’s progress toward the annual goals will be measured and how the parents will be regularly informed of that progress.

### **What is Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)?**

LRE involves consideration of the setting in which the child receives an education. The law indicates that children with disabilities are most appropriately educated with their non-disabled peers. Attending special classes or separate schools or removing children with disabilities from the regular classroom occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability prevents the child from achieving satisfactorily even when supplementary aids and services are provided.

### **What is a “Free Appropriate Public Education” (FAPE)?**

FAPE includes the special education/related services provided to children with disabilities at public expense, under public supervision and direction, without charge to parents. The programs/services written into the IEP must meet Michigan Department of Education standards and be provided according to the IEP.

### **How Does a Parent Participate in the Decision-Making Process?**

Parents are involved in a variety of ways:

- Parents have the right to participate and provide information at meetings to discuss identification, evaluation, educational placement, reevaluation, and the appropriate education of the child;
- Parents give consent for initial evaluations and reevaluations;
- Parents receive regular reports on their child’s progress;
- Parents must notify the school district if they intend to remove their child from the public school; and
- Parents may be involved at the local level through the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). The Michigan Department of Education also involves parents in activities related to special education.

### **How Should the Student be Involved in the IEP Meeting?**

Students have a place at the IEP meeting because they have insights as to their learning strengths and needs. When students are involved in determining their goals and objectives, it is likely they will have more commitment to achieving them. Each student should have the opportunity to be a part of the process.

Students participate in their transition planning starting with the IEP that will be in place the year they turn age 16. Transition plans are updated at least annually.

Students who are age 17 are notified that their rights will be transferred to them upon reaching the age of majority (18).

## Procedural Safeguards

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### **What are the Procedural Safeguards?**

Procedural safeguards ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected. The safeguards provide information needed by parents to make decisions about their child's education. The safeguards also explain the procedures that are in place to resolve disagreements between parties.

The Procedural Safeguards come from federal and state laws and regulations. Sometimes they are difficult to understand. If you have any questions regarding them, please contact KRESA or local school district for assistance.

### **Notice of Procedural Safeguards Available to Parents of Students with Disabilities**

[http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6530\\_6598\\_36168-188305--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-6530_6598_36168-188305--,00.html)

## Description of Programs & Services

Ancillary/Related Services	This term means developmental, corrective, and other supportive services including but not limited to psychological services, speech therapy, counseling services, orientation and mobility services, transportation.
Autism Spectrum Disorder	The programs/services for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are designed to develop language and communication, academic achievement, and social skills.
Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)	ECSE programs/services are designed to bring family and school together to develop academic, social-emotional and communication skills for children from birth through five years of age.
Emotional Impairment	The programs/services for students with Emotional Impairment (EI) are designed to develop academic and social skills for students with social-emotional needs.
Hearing Impairment	The programs/services for students with Hearing Impairment (HI) are designed to provide academic support for students who require specialized teaching techniques and/or adaptive equipment due to a hearing impairment.
Homebound & Hospitalized Services	A minimum of two hours of instruction per week may be provided to a student who is confined to home for medical reasons.
Learning Disabilities	The programs/services for students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) are designed to provide specialized instruction and learning strategies when students exhibit learning needs in academics and language.
Mild Cognitive Impairment	The programs/services for students with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MiCI) are designed to develop academic, social, communication and functional life skills for students with intellectual disabilities.
Moderate Cognitive Impairment	The programs/services for students with Moderate Cognitive Impairment (MoCI) are designed to develop academic, social, communication and functional life skills for students with intellectual disabilities.

Other Health Impairment	The program/services for students with Other Health Impairment (OHI) are designed to provide support for students who require specialized learning strategies and/or adaptive equipment due to a health impairment.
Physical Impairment	The programs/services for students with Physical Impairment (PI) are designed to provide support for students who require specialized learning strategies and/or adaptive equipment due to a physical impairment.
Elementary and Secondary Resource Programs	Resource programs are designed to provide academic support to students who require specialized learning strategies.
Secondary Transition Services	Services designed to help high school students move into adult roles, including post-secondary and vocational education, independent living and community participation.
Severe Cognitive Impairment	The programs/services for students with Severe Cognitive Impairment (SCI) are designed to develop academic, social, communication and functional life skills for students with intellectual disabilities.
Severe Multiple Impairment	The programs/services for students with Severe Multiple Impairment (SXI) are designed to develop academic, social, communication and functional life skills for students with intellectual disabilities who have at least one or two other impairments.
Speech/Language Impaired Services	Speech/Language Impaired (SLI) support services include specialized learning strategies for students whose impairment interferes with receptive and expressive language.
Visual Impairment	The programs/services for students with Visual Impairment (VI) are designed to provide academic support for students who require specialized teaching techniques and/or adaptive equipment due to a visual impairment.
Teacher Consultant	Teacher Consultant services are designed to support students who require specialized learning strategies in the general education setting.

See Part 3 of the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education for more information.

# Special Education Categories

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**Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** – A developmental disability involving academic, behavioral/social and communication skills that adversely affects educational performance.

**Cognitive Impairment (CI)** – Delays in intellectual development and adaptive skills that adversely affect educational performance.

**Deaf-Blindness (DB)** – Hearing and visual impairments causing severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that adversely affect educational performance.

**Early Childhood Development Delay (ECDD)** – Developmental delays that cannot be identified under any other Special Education disability category; this eligibility is available to children birth through age 7.

**Emotional Impairment (EI)** – A disability where behaviors that interfere with learning adversely affect educational performance.

**Hearing Impairment (HI)** – An impairment characterized by hearing loss/deafness that adversely affects educational performance.

**Specific Learning Disability (LD)** – A disability in understanding or in using spoken or written language affecting the ability to listen, speak, read, write or do math that adversely affects educational performance.

**Other Health Impairment (OHI)** – Health impairments due to a chronic or acute health problem that adversely affect educational performance.

**Physical Impairment (PI)** – A severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects educational performance.

**Severe Multiple Impairment (SXI)** – A combination of severe mental and physical disabilities that adversely affects educational performance.

**Speech and Language Impairment (SLI)** – Communication delays or disorders in language, articulation, fluency or voice that adversely affect educational performance.

**Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)** – An acquired injury to the brain that adversely affects educational performance.

**Visual Impairment (VI)** – An impairment characterized by partial sightedness or blindness that adversely affects educational performance.

See Part I of the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education for more information.

# Medicaid Parental Consent Annual Notification

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## **Change in Regulation**

Since 1993 the State of Michigan has participated in a federal program known as Medicaid School-Based Services. The program assists school districts by partially reimbursing the provision of medically-related services as listed on Medicaid-eligible students' Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) or Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs). Parents/ guardians of Medicaid-eligible students used to have to give written permission or consent annually for districts to access a child's public benefits or insurance for School-Based Services, however, in 2013 the regulations regarding parental consent changed. Now, a school must obtain written parent consent prior to accessing a child's public benefits or insurance for the first time; thereafter, school districts must notify parents/guardians in writing annually to continue to access public benefits or insurance.

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Medicaid School-Based Services**

### **Will claims by my school district for School-Based Medicaid impact my family's Medicaid benefits?**

No. The School-Based Services program does NOT impact a family's Medicaid services, funds, or limits. Michigan operates the School-Based Services program differently than the Family Medicaid program. The School-Based Services program does not affect your family's Medicaid benefits in any way.

### **Is there a cost to me for school services?**

No. Services written into IEPs and IFSPs are provided to students while they are at school at NO cost to the parent/guardian. It is the continuing responsibility of the school district to ensure that students are provided all required special education and related services at no charge to you or your child.

### **Am I required to provide consent to the school to access my child's public benefits or insurance?**

No. You may refuse to provide consent and you may withdraw your consent at any time.

### **Who will see this information about my child?**

Information about your child's school-based services may be shared with the Michigan Medicaid agency and its affiliates for the purpose of verifying Medicaid eligibility and submitting claims for school-based services. You have the right to withdraw consent to disclose your child's personally identifiable information to the Michigan Medicaid agency and its affiliates at any time.

**Will my consent or refusal affect my child's services?**

No. Regardless of whether you have Medicaid coverage or not, and whether you provide consent or not, the school district will still provide services to your child at no cost according to their IEP or IFSP.

**What if I have other questions or concerns?**

Please call your school district's Special Education department with any questions or concerns.

## Organizations That Assist Parents

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### Special Education Process

- KRESA Special Education Parent Advisory Committee..... Phone: (269) 250-9323
- Michigan Alliance for Families..... Phone: (800) 552-4821
- Michigan Department of Education ..... Phone: (888) 320-8384  
 Director of Special Education  
 P.O. Box 30008  
 Lansing, MI 48909
- Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service..... Phone: (800) 288-5923
- Michigan Special Education Mediation Program..... <http://MSEMP.cenmi.org>

## Services for Parents and Students

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- ASK Family Services ..... Phone: (269) 343-5896
- Association for Children's Mental Health..... Phone: (888) 226-4543
- Autism Society of Kalamazoo/Battle Creek..... Phone: (269) 326-3023
- Children's Special Health Care Services ..... Phone: (800) 359-3722
- Disability Network of SW Michigan..... Phone: (269) 345-1516
- Easter Seals Disability Services ..... Phone: (800) 292-2729
- Elizabeth Upjohn Community Healing Center..... Phone: (269) 343-1651
- Epilepsy Foundation of Michigan..... Phone: (800) 337-6226

Family & Children Services ..... Phone: (269) 344-0202

Kalamazoo County Mental Health Services ..... Phone: (269) 373-6000

Leader Dogs for the Blind..... Phone: (888) 777-5332

Learning Disabilities Association of Michigan ..... Phone: (888) 597-7809

Michigan Assn. for Deaf, Hearing and Speech Services ..... Phone: (517) 487-0066

Michigan Commission for the Blind..... Phone: (269) 337-3848

Michigan Department of Human Services..... Phone: (269) 337-4900

Michigan Integrated Technology Supports..... Phone: (517) 908-3916

Michigan Hands and Voices..... Phone: (248) 845-8762

Michigan Rehabilitation Services ..... Phone: (269) 337-3700

The Arc Community Advocates..... Phone: (269) 342-9801

United Cerebral Palsy Assn. of Michigan..... Phone: (800) 828-2714