



How to Access Special Education (3-5 years) through Plumas Unified School District



scan me for a link to this
material on our website



Local support is available to help you at any point in the process.

First 5 Plumas

call or text (530) 334-0679, aliciakerr@countyofplumas.com

If I have concerns about how my preschool child is developing what should I do?

Keep an eye on your child's growth

Regularly checking to see if your child is meeting their developmental milestones and/or completing regular screening can help you identify your child's strengths and identify any potential areas of concern. Early detection of developmental delays can make a huge difference in your child's growth and learning!



Screenings can be done at home by parents.

First 5 Plumas has free developmental check-up tools available online for children 0-5 years.

Screening tools are available at 6 month intervals for preschool aged children.

- Milestones
- Social Emotional Skills

If your child is struggling to complete a school day, collaborate with your school to address the underlying causes and develop strategies to improve your child's behavior and learning which may include an evaluation for Special Education services.

Trust Your Instincts and Act Early

You know your child best. Well-meaning individuals may advise you to "wait and see," but early intervention is critical. Taking action now ensures your child receives the right support at the right time, leading to significantly better long-term outcomes.

What is special education?

Special education consists of individualized supports and services—not a specific classroom or setting—that help students with disabilities access the general education curriculum. Since every child’s needs differ, support may look different for each student. Eligible students receive a legally binding Individualized Education Program (IEP), which ensures their learning needs are met in the most inclusive environment possible.

How can I determine if my child qualifies for special education?

Your child may be eligible for special education if your child meets **one** of 13 qualifying areas.

- In order to determine if your child’s learning is impacted in one of these areas you will need to request an evaluation for special education services.
- **Early Intervention is Key:** Identifying and addressing learning or developmental challenges early on can significantly improve your child's outcomes.

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Written Request for Evaluation

You can request an evaluation at any time.

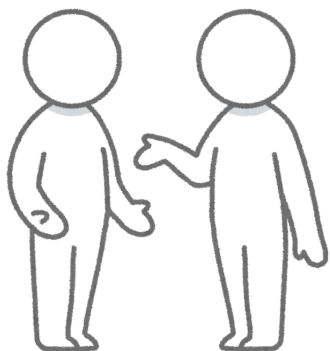
Send your request to your local elementary school principal:

- **If your child is 3-5 years old (not yet eligible for Kindergarten) send your evaluation request to the Special Education Director, Jessica Stone jstone@pcoe.k12.ca.us or send certified mail or deliver to 50 Church St. Quincy, CA 95971**
- **If your child is age eligible for Kindergarten, send your letter to the principal of the elementary school in your community.**
- **This request must be in writing in order for the legal timeline to begin.**



Refer to these sample letters for: [Preschool aged children](#) and [School-aged Children](#)

- Living in a small county, it may seem unnecessary, or even too formal to put the request in writing, but in order for your child to fully benefit from this process you must submit the dated request in writing (email with a read receipt confirmation, hand delivered letter or certified mail will all work).
- In this letter outline your areas of concern about your child’s suspected disability and request an evaluation. If you have completed the free screening tools available on First 5 Plumas, these results can show the need to have your child evaluated.



- If you decide to speak with a school teacher or administrator to request an evaluation for special education services, they **must offer to put your request in writing.**
- Filling out the sample letter above yourself has its advantages: it allows you to list all areas of concern, request specific developmental areas be assessed and allows you to be in control of when the letter is completed and submitted.
- Once your letter is submitted, the district must evaluate it or give a clear

reason, in writing, for why they won’t assess. The only legal reason a school can give for not providing an evaluation is if they truly believe there’s no evidence your child has a disability.

- When you send in your letter, it begins the process, and the only way to pause it is by taking back your request in writing.

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Informed Consent

After you are provided the evaluation plan, you have at least 15 calendar days to sign and consent before testing can begin.



- An assessment is a way of collecting information, while an evaluation is the process of making decisions based on that information.
- When provided the initial plan, take the time to research the assessment areas that have been checked as well as those left unchecked.
- The district is required to evaluate the child in all areas of suspected disability. If they don't suspect something, but you do, you need to bring it to their attention. You can write a letter when you receive the Permission to Evaluate form (PTE). When you return the signed PTE, include your letter outlining your concerns and any additional areas you'd like evaluated.
- You have at least 15 days to approve and sign the evaluation plan.

Refer to Disability Rights for more [detailed information on assessment requests](#) and Undivided's [All About Assessments video](#)

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Evaluation & Determination of Eligibility

After you agree in writing to the proposed evaluation plan, the school must complete the agreed assessment of the student and hold an IEP eligibility meeting within **60 school days**, excluding school breaks of 5 days or more.

Evaluation and Eligibility Timeline.....



- The district will invite you to a meeting with the evaluation team to discuss the evaluation report and determine if your child is eligible for special education services.
- You should be provided copies of the assessment reports upon their completion. Be sure to review them prior to the meeting as this will allow you to be prepared for the IEP meeting.

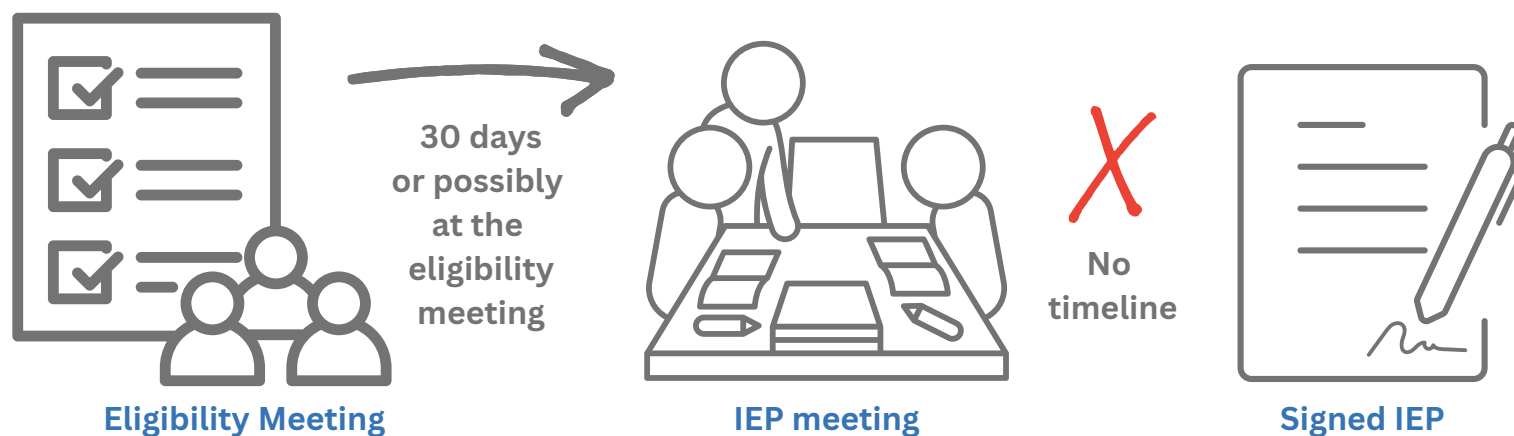
**Undivided has many great resources to help you successfully prepare for the eligibility meeting:
5 things you should know before your first IEP meeting**

- If the school says your child does not qualify for special education services, it needs to explain why in writing. You should get a free copy of the evaluation report. The school also has to tell you how you can contest its decision. Take time to read the school's explanation carefully. If anything is unclear, you have the right to ask for more details. You can simply call the school or, if you want a deeper understanding, ask for a meeting with the school staff.
- The evaluation process for children who have learning and thinking differences is complicated. An advocate can help you understand your options and even help you negotiate a solution with the school. Follow up with an Education Advocate at Disability Rights in Education Defense Fund (DREDF) at 1 (800) 348-4232 or iephelp@dredf.org
- If you disagree with the school district's assessment, you have the right to request an independent assessment (IEE) from qualified specialists, at public expense. This request should be made in writing and directed to the school district.
- Call or text the First 5 Plumas Family Services Coordinator (530) 334-0679 or email aliciakerr@countyofplumas.com to be connected to services and activities that can support your child's development while you work towards supportive solutions.

Preschool Should be Inclusive & In Your Community

- Your preschool-aged child does not have to attend the Special Day Preschool in Quincy to receive special education services. Services should be provided in your child's local community, as supported by guidance from the U.S. and California Departments of Education.
- Under IDEA, the IEP team must consider supports to help your child succeed in a general education classroom. Removal from that setting should only happen if your child's needs cannot be met with appropriate supports. Fortunately, general education options are available at California State Preschools in all four Plumas County communities.
- The California State Preschool Programs, operated by Sierra Cascade Family Opportunities and Feather River College, may be available as placement options for children requiring special services. These settings may be offered when the IEP team determines they are appropriate and the child meets the preschool operators' enrollment criteria.





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Development of your child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

- After determining that the student is eligible for special education, the school and IEP team have 30 days to develop the IEP. The completion of the IEP is often developed at the IEP eligibility meeting within 60 days of the signed evaluation plan so this could happen at the eligibility determination meeting.
- Parents are, by law, equal members of their child's IEP team. You may not be an expert about special education, but you are an expert about your child. Your input helps the team assess your child's skills and develop IEP goals.
- Parents have the right to invite someone with "knowledge or expertise" regarding their child. This may include a child care provider, a DREDF Education Advocate, or anyone you feel would be supportive.
- IEP forms require two different types of signature: one agreeing that you participated in the meeting, which all participants sign, and another stating that the parent agrees to the plan. It's fine to sign the attendance sheet at each meeting. But it's best to wait until you review the document at home before signing that you agree with your child's IEP.
- This will have been your first IEP meeting with school staff and the IEP they prepare is only a draft and should not be the final product. Remember, the draft you are presented does not include any of your feedback during the meeting. You should expect them to make revisions to their draft based upon your input. Only after you are presented with the revisions reflecting your input should they request a signature.

Undivided has information on Key Parts of an IEP How to Review Your IEP Before Signing

- If you still feel the revised plan does not meet your child's educational needs, you can request further revisions.
- If areas of disagreement continue, you can sign a partial agreement, agreeing with most of the IEP but not certain components. The best way to do this is to write on the IEP signature page that you partially consent and then attach a note that explains your disagreement.

Understood has more details on how to partially agree to the IEP
while continuing to work with the district on amendments.

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Monitoring Progress

- The school district is required to provide you with progress reports on how your child is developing in relationship to the goals set in their IEP, as frequently as grades are reported.
- You will also meet annually to assess progress and set new goals.
- Every three years, your child will be reevaluated to see if their needs have changed and also to see if they still qualify for special education services.
- If you are worried that the IEP is not helping your child, want something changed, or see a new problem with your child's learning, ask the school for a meeting right away. You do not need to wait for the yearly IEP meeting. You must put this request in writing (a short note, email, or fax). Visit [Undivided](#) for more details on this process.
- If your child's IEP services aren't meeting their needs or aren't being provided, please contact Special Education Director Jessica Stone at jstone@pcoe.k12.ca.us.

Additional Information & Resources

Homeschooling and enrollment in private schools, for children old enough to attend Kindergarten, in California does not ensure Special Education supports are provided through an IEP. To receive special education services you will need to enroll your school-aged child in Plumas Unified and discuss the option of independent studies with your child's IEP team. Another option is to enroll your child in a public charter school homeschool program which will have a different Special Education department from Plumas Unified. Plumas Charter's SELPA is the housed within the [El Dorado County Charter SELPA](#).

- [Family Empowerment Center at Plumas Rural Services](#)
- [High Quality IEPs Family Resource for the IEP Journey](#)
- [Special Education Rights and Responsibilities \(SERR, Disability Rights](#)
- [Notice of Procedural Safeguards: Special Education Rights of Parents & Children under IDEA part B](#)
- [Disagreements with Districts Toolkit, Disability Rights](#)
- [School-age Education Resources \(ages 3 and up, Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund](#)
- [Special Education Eligibility Checklist, Alliance for Children](#)



One System, All Children: Better Together
Access ♦ Participation ♦ Supports



We love to support families!
Text or call (530)334-0679 with any questions
aliciakerr@countyofplumas.com
www.first5plumas.org