



PROBLEMS WITH THE START OF SCHOOL? QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR FAMILIES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN NEW YORK CITY (SEPTEMBER 2009)

Please note that the DOE's Temporary Student Registration Centers identified in our handout have been set up especially for September. After September 31st families will need to contact the Borough Enrollment Offices for all questions and concerns.

Please note that this guide does not replace legal advice. See www.arisecoalition.org for a list of advocacy groups working to help NYC families.

1. My child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), and I am not sure where s/he's supposed to go in September. Who should I talk to so we know where to go on the first day of school?

IF YOUR CHILD....	CONTACT/GO TO...
Is in elementary or middle school and needs related services only or Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS).	Go to your zoned school, if you have one, as soon as they open the doors for pre-registration (usually during the week before the first day of school). If you have no zoned school you will need to visit one of the Temporary Student Registration Centers, which you can find by calling 311 or online at http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/NewStudents/registration.htm .
Is in elementary or middle school and needs Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) services or a self-contained classroom (special class ratios 12:1, 12:1:1, 8:1:1, 6:1:1, and 12:1:4), and you still haven't been sent a letter with a school placement (a Final Notice of Recommendation (FNR)).	If you do not have a school to attend, please visit a special education enrollment site, which you can find by calling 311 or looking online at http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/NewStudents/BEO+Contact+Information.htm . They will identify a placement and give you an FNR. Remember that even after you receive a FNR you have the right to visit the recommended program before accepting that offer.
Is in high school.	The DOE has set up Temporary Student Registration Centers (call 311 or see http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/NewStudents/registration.htm) around NYC that open August 31 st . A visit to one of those sites, with your IEP, should lead to a school assignment.
Was not in a New York City public school last year and has a current IEP from somewhere other than NYC.	Go to your CSE for a similar service plan. To find your CSE, call 311 or see http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/523F7978-51E6-40CF-9885-44771101F654/0/CSEchairs.pdf .

To find phone numbers and/or addresses for the offices mentioned above, or to find your zoned school if you have one, you can look on the DOE's website (<http://schools.nyc.gov>), call 311, or visit the Inside Schools website (www.insideschools.org).

2. Our IEP says that my child is supposed to get porter service or a mini bus, but we haven't heard anything yet about pick up arrangements. What should I do to make sure someone is there to pick him/her up on the first day of school?

If your child needs porter service or a mini bus to get to school, your IEP should say that. Some students who need someone to pick them up at their home may require more modifications – such as special equipment, air conditioning, or a shorter ride. If your child needs these things, but they are not identified on his or her IEP, you will need to request an IEP meeting right away to change the IEP. When you go to the new meeting, bring copies of your evaluations and a specific doctor's note explaining the need for the additional services. If your IEP says your child should get any transportation services, you should receive a notice in the mail with specific information about pick up and drop off times. If you haven't received this notice before school begins, call the Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) ((718) 784-3313) or

go to the OPT website at <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/Transportation/default.htm>. Give them your child's identification number and ask about your child's bus. If they don't have a request for transportation for your child, reach out to your school immediately or call the CSE/Special Education Enrollment Site (call 311 or see <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/NewStudents/BEO+Contact+Information.htm>), speak with the placement officer, and make certain they make the request for transportation. If you moved over the summer, notify your school or the CSE right away so they can call OPT with the changes.

3. What if my child arrives at school and finds that the school doesn't have the type of program called for on the IEP?

Try to work with your school. They should work with you and Student Enrollment to determine the best way to meet your child's needs. If that doesn't work, then visit your special education enrollment site or call 311 and ask for the DOE's Special Education Call Center. If you're still having trouble, contact an advocacy group for advice and/or assistance (see www.arisecoalition.org/resources.php).

4. What if my child shows up for the first day of school and is told that the school no longer has a seat?

As above, work with your school first, then visit your special education enrollment site or call 311 and ask for the DOE's Special Education Call Center. If that doesn't work, see www.arisecoalition.org/resources.php to find an advocacy organization that may be able to help.

5. My child uses a wheelchair, and I am worried that his/her new classroom isn't going to be accessible for him/her. Who should I call to find out? What should I do if it is not?

Call the school's principal or Parent Coordinator and ask. Look online for a list of functionally and partially accessible sites at <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/41ACD8D4-DDD2-4F1A-AEF0-AF3A9D132EBB/0/ListofAccessibleSchools2007.pdf>. If the school is not accessible for your child, call the Office of School Enrollment by calling 311 or see <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/NewStudents/BEO+Contact+Information.htm> for addresses to the borough offices.

WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING TO A NEW SCHOOL TO ENROLL YOUR CHILD. Bring your child, proof of immunization, and proof of NYC residence. If you are enrolling in the New York City school system for the first time you will need proof of age. For the list of documents that the school will accept see <http://schools.nyc.gov/ChoicesEnrollment/NewStudents/default.htm> or call 311. Even without proof of immunization or age, your child should still be enrolled while the school helps get these documents. If your child has been enrolled in another school, bring any records you have to make sure s/he gets placed in the right grade. If you don't have those records s/he can still enroll, and the new school will be responsible for getting them. You do NOT need to bring proof of immigration status.

6. What if we get started and settled in the school right away, but then learn the school can't provide some or all of the assistive technology or related services (OT, PT, Counseling, etc.) my child is supposed to be receiving?

Your child has a right to receive all the services on your child's IEP. You should check with the school during the first few weeks to make sure the school is in fact providing your child these services. If your child is not getting the services s/he is supposed to get, work with your school to resolve the problem - start with your child's teacher, and move to the parent coordinator, and if necessary the school's principal. Next, try your District Family Advocate, who can be found by calling 311 or checking online at <http://insideschools.org/index12.php?dl=dfa>. If you are still having trouble resolving the matter, call 311 and ask to speak with the DOE's Special Education Call Center, or reach out to an advocacy group for advice and/or assistance (see www.arisecoalition.org/resources.php). If the school cannot provide a service, the school must give you a Related Services Authorization (RSA). The RSA allows you to get the service for your child through an approved provider outside of school. A list of providers is available at <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/SpecialEducation/ParentResources/Related+Services+Information.htm>.

7. When I tried to get my kindergarten child the help s/he needs, the school told me that kindergarten is not mandatory. Can the school refuse to help me on this basis?

No! Although you do not *have* to send your child to kindergarten, you have the *right* to send your child to kindergarten. If you want your child to attend school during kindergarten, the DOE must provide an appropriate, full-day kindergarten class and all the services on your child's IEP.

IF YOU HAVE TRIED EVERYTHING SUGGESTED ABOVE, BUT YOUR CHILD IS STILL NOT IN SCHOOL OR RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES:

- A. Speak with your **District Family Advocate**. For contact information call 311 or see Inside Schools at <http://insideschools.org/index12.php?dl=dfa>,
- B. Call the **DOE's Special Education Call Center** by calling 311 and asking to be transferred there, or
- C. Go to www.arisecoalition.org/resources.php to find organizations that provide assistance to parents in school-related matters.

For more information or to share your story about your own experiences this year and become part of a bigger movement for system-wide reform in special education, contact Maggie Moroff, Coordinator of the ARISE Coalition, at mmoroff@advocatesforchildren.org or 212-822-9523.
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