

PUBLIC NOTICE ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

Fort Cherry School District • 110 Fort Cherry Road • McDonald PA 15057

Phone: 724-796-1551

Mr. Tom Samosky, Superintendent
Mrs. Mary Burford, Business Manager
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Notice to Parents

The Fort Cherry School District, as required by law, issues notification to parents concerning special education programs, privacy rights of parents and students, screening and evaluation, and Chapter 15 services. It is the policy of the Fort Cherry School District not to discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, handicap or age in its educational and vocational programs, activities or employment as required by Title IX, Section 504 and Title VI. For information regarding civil rights or grievance procedure, contact: Superintendent Fort Cherry School District.

Public Notice on Screening and Evaluation

The Fort Cherry School District uses the procedures required by law in locating, identifying and evaluating school-age children who may require special programs or services. Procedures are:

The District, as prescribed by Section 1402 of the School Code, conducts screening of a child's hearing acuity in kindergarten, first, second, third, seventh, and eleventh grades. Visual acuity is evaluated yearly in kindergarten through grade twelve, and speech and language evaluation is done upon kindergarten registration. Gross motor and fine motor skills, academic skills, and social/emotional skills are assessed by classroom teachers on an ongoing basis. Specified needs from all of these screening sources are noted within the child's official file. These school records are always available to parents, but are only open to those school officials with a "legitimate need to know". Information from the records is released to other persons only with the signed permission of parents or guardians. Any parent concerned with the development of their child may contact building principals or Director of Special Education to request a screening and evaluation. Communication with parents and exceptional students will be in English or the native language of the parents.

At the Fort Cherry Elementary Center, screening information will be used by the Instructional Support Team (IST) to meet a child's specific needs or to document the need for further evaluation. If it is determined that a child needs additional services, the IST will begin the intervention, which may include adaptation in instruction, support in study skills, organization skills and consulting with the classroom teacher and parents. Parents are notified if a child is receiving instruction support and are encouraged to participate in all team meetings. If a student does not demonstrate significant progress with IST involvement, parents will be asked to give written permission for the district to conduct a multidisciplinary evaluation. Contact: building principal.

Upon completion of a formal evaluation, an Evaluation Report is compiled with parent involvement and includes recommendation for interventions, based on the child's specific needs. Parents are then invited to participate in a meeting where the results of the Multidisciplinary Evaluation are discussed. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed when necessary for specialized student services. Parents are then presented with a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement, with which they may agree or disagree. If parents disagree with the recommendation, the issue may be taken to mediation, a pre-hearing, or a due process hearing.

Information about early intervention, parents' rights, mediation, or due process procedures, specific special education services and programs offered by the district, and the district's educational records policy are available upon request from the building principal. A parent may request that the district initiate a screening or evaluation of their child's needs at any time by contacting the building principal. Further information about these procedures may be obtained by contacting, Director of Special Education.

Public Notice on Student Records

The collection, maintenance, and dissemination of pupil records is a legitimate and expected function of a school system. The professional staff recognizes the confidential nature of such data and the need to strike a balance between the need for educationally relevant information about children, and the protection of individual rights to privacy.

Student files contain only information of value in the educational process. Confidentiality of student records is maintained as outlined in the Fort Cherry School District's Student Record Policy. You have the right, as a parent/guardian, or eligible student, to review the educational records maintained by the Fort Cherry School District. In addition, the Fort Cherry School District will release, upon request of a parent or another school, records of a student who is entering another elementary or secondary school. Parents, upon request, will be provided with a copy of the educational records.

If the school district fails to comply with the request of the parent/guardian or eligible student to review records, the individual(s) may file a complaint with the Family Education Rights & Privacy Act Office, Department of Education, Office of Management.

With regard to parents who do not understand the English language, the school district will attempt to inform them of their rights in their native language. Further information regarding the policy of the collection, maintenance, and dissemination of records is available through the principal's office.

Annual Notice to Protected Handicapped Students

In compliance with state and federal law, the Fort Cherry School District will provide each protected handicapped student – without discrimination or cost to the student of their family – those related aids, services or accommodations which are necessary to provide them equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extracurricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student’s abilities.

In order to qualify as a protected handicapped student, the child must be of school age with a physical or mental disability, which substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program. These services and protections for “protected handicapped students” are distinct from those applicable to all eligible or exceptional students enrolled (or seeking enrollment) in special education programs. For further information on the evaluation procedure and provision of services to protected handicapped students, contact: Director of Special Education.

Service for School-Age Exceptional Students

The Fort Cherry School District provides a free appropriate public education to exceptional students according to state and federal mandates. The Fort Cherry School District provides services, which meet the needs of all eligible students within the school community. To be eligible, a child must be of school age, need specially designed instruction and meet eligibility criteria for mentally gifted and/or one or more of the following physical or mental disabilities as set forth in the Pennsylvania State Standards: autism/pervasive development disorder, blindness/visual impairment, mental retardation, neurological impairment, physical disability, emotional disturbance, specific learning disability, other health impairment, speech/language impairment, deafness or hearing impairment and multiple disabilities.

Services designed to meet the needs of eligible students include the annual development of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), initial multidisciplinary evaluation and subsequent mandated re-evaluation. Levels of intervention range from least to most restrictive as follows: Supportive intervention in the regular class, Supplemental intervention in the regular class, Placement in a special education class in a regular school, or placement in a special education class outside of the regular school. The extent of special education services and location for the delivery of such services are determined by the IEP team. Decisions are based on the student’s identified needs and abilities, chronological age, and the level of intervention which is most appropriate and in the least restrictive environment in which a student’s needs can be met. The school district also provides any related services required to enable the student to benefit educationally.

Public Notice of Exceptional Student Records

In accordance with Family Education Right & Privacy Act (FERPA) Office, Department of Education, the Fort Cherry School District states the following through public notice.

The Fort Cherry School District recognizes the need to protect confidentiality of personally identifiable information in the education records of exceptional children. The district policy for student records of exceptional children outlines the privacy rights of both the parents and the exceptional child in the collection, maintenance, release and destruction of these records. The parents/guardians of any student are to have access to educational records and opportunity to formally request the amendment of records, as outlined in the district policy. The Fort Cherry School District may disclose directory information to authorized officials unless the parent/guardian or eligible student wish to refuse disclosure of this information, in which case a written request to this effect must be sent to: Director of Special Education.

The Fort Cherry School District will release information from a student’s educational records, with prior consent, to officials of other primary or secondary schools or school systems in which a student seeks or intends to enroll. Transcripts to post-secondary institutions in which a student intends to enroll will be sent upon written request of parents of a student or an eligible student.

Parents, upon written request, may receive a copy of records that may be released by the school. The parent may challenge information contained in such records by submitting written notification to the school district.

Services of Disabled Preschool-age Children

Act 212, the Early Intervention System Act, entitles all preschool-age children with disabilities to appropriate early intervention services. Young children experiencing developmental delays or physical or mental disabilities are eligible for early intervention services. The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare is responsible for providing services to infants and toddlers, defined as children from birth through two years of age. Contact:

United Cerebral Palsy
655 Jefferson Avenue
Washington PA 15301
(724) 225-8145

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is responsible for providing service to preschool-age children from ages three (3) through five (5). Contact:

Child Alert, Intermediate Unit 1
One Intermediate Unit Drive
Coal Center PA 15423
1-800-328-6481

For further information, you may also contact:

- Bureau of Special Education Consult Line 1-800-879-2301 for information regarding regulations and procedures.
- Connect Services 1-800-692-7288 for general information concerning Special Education topics.