**Section 5**

**PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

**Ed 1126.01 (b)(5)**

The Litchfield School District shall actively involve parents in all steps of the special education process. In addition to fulfilling legal requirements, the District recognizes the crucial and irreplaceable role parents play in the education of their children. Therefore, consistent efforts will be placed on keeping parents well informed within the context of a collaborative team process. This is accomplished, in part, by the dissemination of Procedural Safeguards Notice and Written Prior Notices. The school district also participates in the NH Connections project, which is funded by the Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, in response to the needs of schools/school district personnel for information and resources on effective ways to enhance strategies to create and sustain partnerships among school personnel and parents of children with disabilities and their families.

**Procedural Safeguards Notice (Ed 1120)**

Parents of a child with disabilities will be given *New Hampshire Procedural Safeguards in Special Education* describing the procedural safeguards available to them under state and federal law on an annual basis. In addition, parents will be provided a copy of procedural safeguards:

* Upon initial referral or parent request for evaluation
* Upon receipt of the first state complaint and upon the receipt of the first due process complaint in a school year
* In accordance with discipline procedures
* Upon request by a parent.

**Written Prior Notice**

Parents will be officially notified in writing any time the District:

* proposes to initiate or change the identification, evaluation or educational placement of the child or the provision of a free and appropriate public education to the child; or
* refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation or educational placement of the child or the provision of a free and appropriate public education to the child.

The notification shall include:

1. A description of the action proposed or refused by the district;
2. An explanation of why the agency proposes or refuses to take the action
3. A description of each evaluation, procedure, assessment, record or report the district used as basis for the proposed or refused action;
4. A statement that the parents of the child with disabilities have protection under the procedural safeguards of IDEA (if this notice is not an initial referral for evaluation, the means by which a copy of the description of the procedural safeguards can be obtained;
5. Sources for parents to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provisions of the law; a description of the other options that the IEP team considered and the reasons why those options were rejected, and
6. A description of the other options the team considered and the reasons why they were rejected, and
7. A description of other factors that are relevant to the agency’s proposal or refusal.

**Ongoing parent involvement is supported through the following actions:**

1. Parents shall receive formal notification when their child is referred for special services, except in the case where the parent was the referring party. Procedural Safeguards and information regarding the Special Education Process shall be provided to the parent at this time.
2. Within 15 days of the receipt of the referral, the IEP Team (including the parents) will meet to determine the appropriate course of action.
3. The IEP Team shall determine if the referral is appropriate and whether there is a need for a comprehensive evaluation. If so, specific evaluations shall be determined by the team. The district shall provide Written Prior Notice (WPN) and request written permission to proceed.

d. The evaluation process, including a written summary report, shall be completed within 45 days after receipt of parental permission for testing or at the conclusion of any extension provided in Ed 1107.01(c). Only one extension of no more than 15 days may be granted in the evaluation process with written consent of both parties.

e. Parents shall be included as part of the team which determines whether or not the child qualifies as a child with a disability. The team decision shall be provided Written Prior Notice to the parent with a request for written approval of the decision.

1. If a child is determined to be a child with a disability, an IEP will be developed within the next 30 calendar days. As members of the IEP team, parents are encouraged to be active participants in the IEP process. Parent concerns and input shall be considered in the development of the IEP. Written Prior Notice shall be provided to the parent. The parent must provide written approval before the IEP can be implemented.
2. Upon approval of the IEP, the IEP Team, including parents, shall determine an appropriate placement for the child. Written Prior Notice is again completed and parents must agree in writing to the proposed placement prior to its implementation.
3. Parents will receive 10 days notice for any meetings held for the purpose of developing or amending the child’s IEP and/or determining placement, unless the notification requirement is waived in writing by the parent. All IEP Team meeting notices include the purpose, time, location, and participants expected to attend the meeting. The District shall take steps to ensure that one or both parents of the child with a disability are present at each meeting of the IEP Team and are afforded the opportunity to participate. This includes scheduling the meeting at a mutually agreed upon time and place. Parents and the District are encouraged to use alternative means of participation, such as video conferencing and conference calls in order to include the parent.

Meetings will be rescheduled at parent request, unless the parent requests that the meeting continue without him or her in attendance. It is recommended that the District contact the parent a minimum of three times and document the attempts to secure their participation. If these attempts have been unsuccessful, a meeting may proceed without the parents.

1. District special education staff shall take whatever steps necessary to ensure that the parents understand the proceedings at the meeting, including arranging for an interpreter for parents who are deaf or whose native language is other than English.
2. The District shall provide copies of all written documents to parents including Written Prior Notice, evaluation summary report, and IEP.
3. The District shall file a request for appointment of a surrogate parent, to represent a child with a disability, when the parents or guardians are not known, or the student is a ward of the state.
4. For a student considered to be an unaccompanied homeless youth, as defined in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, who is or may be a youth with an educational disability, the District shall immediately enroll the child in school for the purposes of attending classes and participating fully in school activities. The District’s local homeless education liaison shall have no more than 30 days from the initial date of school enrollment to appoint a surrogate parent for the unaccompanied homeless youth.
5. A parent, as defined in Ed 1102.04 (h) or an adult student may authorize an individual to act on their behalf pursuant to a duly executed power of attorney. (Ed 1120.01 (c))
6. The district has the authority to initiate court proceedings to authorize initial provision of services, but a due process hearing may not be used in this circumstance. (Ed 1120.05 (d)) (If a parent refuses consent for the initial provision of special education services, the LEA shall not pursue the initial provision of special education services by initiating a due process hearing under Ed 1123. The LEA shall have the authority to initiate court proceedings to authorize the initial provision of special education services.)
7. Districts shall obtain informed parent consent annually and when there is a change in services paid for by public insurance. Parents may refuse permission, but this does not relieve the district of its responsibility to provide services detailed in the IEP.(Ed 1120.08 and Ed 1120.08 (a))
8. The LEA, upon a written request for an IEP team meeting by the parent, guardian, or adult student shall: schedule a mutually agreeable time and date for the meeting, convene the IEP team on the mutually agreeable upon time and date, OR provide to the parent/guardian/adult student with written prior notice detailing why the LEA refuses to convene the IEP team that the parent, guardian, or adult student has requested. (Ed1109.06 (b)).

**PARENT INVOLVEMENT ARTIFACTS:**

* NH Special Education Procedural Safeguards Handbook
* Forms
  + Notification of Special Education Team Meeting
  + Prior Written Notice
  + Parent’s Response to Special Education Proposal
  + Parent Referral for Special Education Services
  + Basic Parent Information Form
  + Parent Meeting Survey
* *A Family Guide to Special Education in New Hampshire*