

**Special Education Fact Sheet**  
**Will This Charter School Meet Your Child's Special Education Needs?**

Students with disabilities have the right to apply to charter schools and enter charter school lotteries to gain admission. Charter schools must implement the programs and services on these students' IEPs. However, before enrolling your child in a charter school, you should determine whether the school is prepared to meet this obligation for your child.

This factsheet is designed to highlight specific factors that may impact that determination.

**1. Ask if the School has an Appropriate Class Setting**

There is no guarantee that every school will have an appropriate placement for your child. For example, many schools, including charter schools, do not have small special education classes. It is important to communicate your child's needs to the charter school before enrolling, and to ask if the school provides class settings appropriate to your child's needs.

*Ask questions like:*

- How many students are in each class?
- How many adults are in each class?
- Are these adults teachers or paraprofessionals? What is the ratio of students to teachers to paraprofessionals?
- If your child has a specific class size recommended by their IEP, how is the school planning to meet that recommendation?
- If the school already has the class setting specified on your child's IEP, can you see the class in order to evaluate whether it will be a good fit for your child?

**2. Ask if the School Offers Appropriate Services**

Charter schools must provide your child not only with an appropriate setting, but also with appropriate services. However, these services do not necessarily need to be provided by the charter school. They may be offered through outside providers or through the Department of Education's Committees on Special Education (CSEs). Before enrolling your child in a charter school, you should determine which services your child can expect to receive at that school, and how your child will be receiving those services.

*Ask questions like:*

- Does the school provide counseling, tutoring, speech/language services, or any other therapies or services specified on your child's IEP?
- Are these services provided on-site?
- Will your child have access to assistive technology, if necessary?
- Who will be providing special education services to your child? Can you speak to them?
- What kinds of accommodations can the school make in order to help your child progress academically?

- Is there a specific contact at the school in charge of special education? Can you speak to them?
- Does the school have a policy about the use of paraprofessionals in classrooms?
- How can you contact the CSE corresponding to your charter school?

### **3. Ask About the School's Discipline and Safety Policies**

In general, it is a good idea to ask about school discipline and safety regardless of whether your child has a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) or not. Asking about disciplinary procedures can be a good way to better understand the culture of any school, and to determine if that school will be a good fit for your child. Charter schools will often have individualized discipline policies, and it is important to understand these policies before enrolling your child.

*Ask questions like:*

- What is the school's disciplinary policy? Can you see it in writing? Does the school readily provide a copy of the policy?
- What behavioral techniques and plans are used by teachers and staff? How do staff respond to students they believe are not behaving well?
- What training has the staff had in behavioral interventions?
- Does the school have an incident reporting system and do they make reports available to parents?
- How does the school respond to reports of bullying?
- What was the suspension rate for the school in the preceding year? Do suspensions occur for only major infractions, or are they invoked even for minor infractions?
- Is there a special policy for discipline of students with IEP's?
- Does the school hold a hearing if they intend to suspend a student? Can a parent or student contest the suspension?
- What are the school's expulsion policies? Is there a way to contest an expulsion?

Finally: *Remember!* Under special education law, children with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate education and related services. When a charter school enrolls your child, that school is making a commitment to provide your child with an appropriate education. As the parent, you can best evaluate whether the school can meet that commitment for your child.

## TIPS

- **Keep a notebook**
  - Record all phone conversations and in-person conferences and meetings
  - Keep all the papers you received from the DOE
  - Keep letters and envelopes
  - If documents are not dated, note the date you received the document on the back of the document or envelope
- **Send all communications by certified mail or hand deliver them, asking the receiver to initial and date your copy**
- **Always**
  - Keep a copy of everything you give to the DOE
  - take the name of the DOE person you're dealing with
    - If you can, get title, office, and detailed contact information
    - write it all down for future use
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**THIS FACT SHEET GIVES ONLY GENERAL INFORMATION. IT IS NOT LEGAL ADVICE.**