Clarification on Initial Referrals for Special Education Services, Scheduling & Implementing Interventions

Please note the following clarifications on initial referrals for special education services and scheduling/implementing general education interventions outlined in the Special Education Standard Operating Procedures Manual (SOPM). Note that the SOPM has not been changed.

- Principals should review pages 14–18 of the SOPM in its entirety and follow the guidelines when a parent submits an initial referral for special education to their school team. Note that a principal must not discourage, refuse, or delay a parent’s initial referral.

- Principals should offer a meeting to families to discuss general education interventions (i.e., alternatives to special education, including academic intervention services, response to intervention (RTI), and remedial instruction) for a student who is not yet receiving appropriate and available general education interventions and for a student who is already receiving general education interventions. If, after the meeting, the parent wants to withdraw the referral, the principal and the parent must enter into a written agreement using the form in SESIS setting forth the general education interventions and the withdrawal of the initial referral. A parent may not be compelled to withdraw an initial referral in order for their child to receive interventions.

- Note that if the parent accepts the general education interventions discussed above but wishes to continue their initial referral for special education services, or if the student previously had existing interventions in place, any general education interventions, either previously existing or newly agreed to, must continue to be provided simultaneously with the initial evaluation and may not delay the timelines.

- The principal must identify an intervention teacher and ensure the general education interventions are programmed in STARS and implemented. General education interventions scheduled in STARS appear in parents’ New York City Schools Accounts (NYCSA). Schools must ensure that interventions are logged in STARS,
and there is adequate progress monitoring to determine if the interventions are delivered and effective. Such information must be shared with students and families using the methods in the Academic Policy Guides sections regarding interventions. The student’s response to these interventions is important data to document when considering a student’s overall progress.

For support on special education referrals and evaluations, email your district specialized student support lead or administrator for special education (ASE) (DOE login required). For support on programming students for academic interventions in STARS, email your district’s academic policy, performance, and assessment specialist (APPA) (DOE login required).