

PA LEARNERS Online Regional Cyber Charter School (PALO), as required by law, issues annual public notification to parents concerning special education services and programs, screening and evaluation, Chapter 15 and other protected handicapped students, and notification of rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

PA LEARNERS Online Regional Cyber Charter School PALO provides a free appropriate public education to children with disabilities who, because of their disabilities, need special education and related services. School age children with disabilities who need special education and related services are identified as eligible for special education if they need specially designed instruction and have one or more of the following physical or mental disabilities:

Autism/pervasive developmental disorder

Deaf-Blindness

Deafness

Emotional disturbance

Hearing impairment

Mental Retardation

Multiple disabilities

Orthopedic impairments

Other health impairments

Specific Learning Disability

Speech or language impairment

Traumatic brain injury

Visual impairment including blindness

Screening

PA Learners Online Regional Cyber Charter School (PALO) has established and will implement procedures to locate, identify and evaluate school age students thought to be eligible for special education services. These procedures include, but are not limited to, review of student records (cumulative records, enrollment records, health records, and report cards), hearing and vision screening, speech and language screening.

The screening process will incorporate:

1. Curriculum based or performance based assessments for students who have academic concerns.
2. Observations of student behavior in the virtual classroom or elsewhere.
3. Required interventions based on the above assessment results
4. Compilation of data and assessment of the student's response to the interventions initiated.
5. Determination of whether the students assessed difficulties are due to a lack of instruction or limited English proficiency
6. Determination of whether the student's needs exceed the functional ability of the regular education program.
7. Information from parents.

If the student is thought to be in need of services, PALO will initiate the screening process and if, after sixty days, the student has made little or no improvement in their identified areas of difficulty, or, the screening process indicates that a student may be eligible for special education services, the student will be referred for a multidisciplinary evaluation. The parents can at any time, request a formal evaluation prior to or during the screening process by contacting the PALO Principal in writing at:

PA LEARNERS Online
475 E. Waterfront Drive
Homestead, PA 15120

Evaluation

When screening indicates that a student may be eligible for special education services, PALO will seek parental consent to conduct a formal, multidisciplinary evaluation. The evaluation is conducted by a multidisciplinary team comprised of teachers, school psychologist and other qualified professionals who work with the child and parents. When completed, the evaluation results are summarized in a written evaluation. This report makes recommendations about a student's eligibility for special education, based on the presence of a disability and the need for specially designed instruction. If it determined that the student does have a disability and is in need of specially designed instruction, a team will be convened to develop an Individualized Education Plan.

The I.E.P team will consist of the following members:

1. One or both of the student's parents
2. The student, if the purpose is to discuss transition planning, or if the parent chooses to have the student participate
3. At least one special education teacher of the students
4. At least one regular education teacher
5. A local educational agency representative other than student's teacher who:
 - Is qualified to provide or supervise special education
 - Is knowledgeable about the general curriculum
 - Is knowledgeable about the availability of the resources of the LEA
6. Other Public agencies that are likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services.
7. An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of the evaluation results
8. Any other individuals at the discretion of the parent.

Educational Placement

Developed annually, the I.E.P includes descriptions of a student's current educational levels, lists individual goals and objectives and individual programs and services that the student will receive. The I.E.P team makes decisions about the types of service, the level of intervention and location of the provided services.

The educational placement for each student will be made in the least restrictive environment in which the student's needs can be met with special education and related services.

Reevaluation

Students who are receiving special education services through PALO will be reevaluated at the following intervals:

1. Every two years for students identified with Mental Retardation.
2. Every three years for students identified with other disabilities.

PALO will seek parental consent to reevaluate when necessary.

SERVICES FOR PROTECTED HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

Students who are not eligible to receive special education programs and services may qualify as handicapped students and therefore may be protected by other federal and state laws intended to prevent discrimination. PALO will provide to each protected handicapped student without discrimination or cost to the students family, those related aids, services or accommodations which are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in and obtain benefits of the school program and extracurricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the child'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" may be distinct from those applicable to eligible or thought to be eligible students. The parent may initiate an evaluation if they believe a student is a protected handicapped student. For further information on the evaluation procedures and provisions of services handicapped students, parents should contact the PALO Assistant Principal.

Annual Notice of Rights Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

PALO protects the confidentiality of personally identifiable information regarding its eligible, thought to be eligible, and protected handicapped students in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and implementing regulations as well as IDEA '97 and its implementing regulations.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. They are:

1. Parents have the right to inspect and review a child's education record. PA LEARNERS Online Regional Cyber Charter School (PALO) will comply with a request to inspect or review education records without unnecessary delay and within no more than 45 days from the receipt of the request. Requests should be submitted in writing, indicating the records the parent wishes to inspect, to the school principal or other designated school official. The school official will make arrangements for access and will notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where records may be inspected. Parents have a right to request copies of the records. While PALO cannot charge a fee to search for or to retrieve information, it may charge a copying fee as long as it does not effectively prevent the parents from exercising their right to inspect and review the records.
2. If the parent thinks information in an educational record is inaccurate, they may request amendment of the record. Requests should be made in writing and clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it is inaccurate. PALO will decide whether to amend the record and will notify the parents in writing of its decision. If PALO decides not to amend a record, it will notify the parents of their right to a hearing to challenge the disputed information. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.
3. Parents have the right to consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in student' education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. Information may be disclosed without consent to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by PALO as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom PALO has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on a official committee or assisting another school official in performing his or her professional task. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Directory information may be released without parent consent. Parents have the right to refuse to let an agency designate any or all of the above information as directory information.

PALO will inform parents when personally identifiable information is no longer needed to provide educational services to the child. Such information must be destroyed at the request of the parent. However, a permanent record of a student's name, address, and telephone number, his or her grades, attendance record, classes attended, grade level completed, and year completed may be maintained without limitation.

Palo will provide, upon request, a listing of the types and locations of education records maintained, the school officials responsible for these records, and the personnel authorized to see personally identifiable information. PALO keeps a record of parties obtaining access to education records, including the name of the party, the date the access was given, and the purpose for which the party is authorized to use the records.

Within 10 school days of receipt of written request, PALO releases education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

Parents have a right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures of PALO to comply with the requirements of FERPA. Complaints may be filed with the Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202-4605.