PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION William C. Harrison, Ed.D., *Chairman and Chief Executive Officer*
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., *State Superintendent*
WWW.NCPUBLICSCHOOLS.ORG

April 2, 2009

TO: Directors, Exceptional Children Programs
Preschool Coordinators, Exceptional Children Programs

FROM: Mary Watson, Director, Exceptional Children Division
John Pruette, Executive Director, Office of School Readiness

SUBJECT: **Physician to Preschool Program Notification Process**

We are pleased to release three technical assistance documents titled *North Carolina Physician to Preschool Program Process Chart*, the accompanying *Notification Flow Chart Legend and Notes,* and the *Physician Notification and Release of Information* form. These documents were developed at the request of the North Carolina Pediatric Association to clarify our process and provide guidance for physicians when making notifications to the preschool programs about children who have failed physician-conducted screenings for developmental delays and suspected Autism. The documents will be presented to the North Carolina Pediatric Association to disseminate to its members for use in the field. Preschool Program staffs are also welcome to utilize them when communicating with physician's offices.

We would like to thank the many stakeholders from the Exceptional Children Preschool Programs, as well as the program consultants and monitors within the Department of Public Instruction, who reviewed these documents and provided input into their development. These documents can be found in their entirety at the Exceptional Children Division website: www.ncpublicschools.org/ec/policy, and at the Office of School Readiness website: www.osr.nc.gov . Attached you will find a PDF copy of these documents for your future use.

We continue to appreciate and support the further development of Child Find programs in North Carolina. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Vivian James at Vivian.james@ncmail.net, 919-218-8384 or Dr. Norman Allard at NAllard@dpi.state.nc.us, 919-807-3691.

MNW/JP/vj

Attachment

c: Cindy Bagwell
Ira Wolfe
Jody Koon
Vivian James
Norman Allard
Pollye Pruitt

EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN DIVISION
Mary N. Watson, *Director* | mwatson@dpi.state.nc.us
6356 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-6356 | (919) 807-3969 | Fax (919) 807-3243

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

North Carolina Physician to Preschool Exceptional Children Program Notification Process Chart

For Children 3 to Pre-Kindergarten 5 Years of Age

e.g., Developmental Delays, MCHAT is Positive (+) OR Autism Surveillance yields 2 or more + risk factors; ASQ or PEDs scores are raised

Physician provides family with Child Find information from school system

Physician sends notification and parental release of information form
- Contact information
- Signed release of information
- Health screening; including vision and hearing
- Developmental screening
- Behavioral health screening
- Evaluation(s) in process

Notification for child service coordination via health department (if appropriate)

Direct contact made between school system & family
- Interview parents about child development concerns
- School system obtains existing screenings, observations, etc.
- Suggested Interventions offered to family
- School system or parent may initiate a written referral

YES

School system or parent initiates a written referral
- If school system rejects referral, parent may utilize procedural safeguards
- Parent signs informed consent to evaluate
- 90 day timeline begins with written referral

School system conducts assessment or proceeds to eligibility determination if review of existing data indicates such.

Eligibility determination & IEP developed, if eligible
- parental consent for services obtained, if eligible

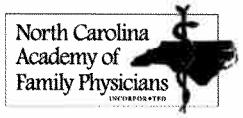
Services begin

NO

Process stopped- NO EVALUATION
- Parent denies consent to evaluate
- School system may utilize procedural safeguards to pursue evaluation.
- No educational concerns identified

Process stopped
- Parent denies consent for services
- Assessments reveal no educational concerns
- Not eligible for special education

School system sends follow-up information to physician
- With consent for release of confidential information



North Carolina Preschool Exceptional Children Program (children 3 to Pre-Kindergarten 5 years of age)
Notification Flow Chart Legend and Notes

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- As of October 2007, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommended that all children be screened for autism at age 18 months and again at age 2, even if there are no signs of developmental delay. When a positive response is obtained, follow-up action should include:
  - Request for simultaneous evaluation for hearing, autism and consideration for special education services.
  - Potential referral to a developmental and behavioral pediatrician, geneticist or neurologist for assistance with an etiologic workup and/or a search for coexisting conditions if indicated.
- According to North Carolina *Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities(Policies)*, the following is in effect for the initial evaluation process for children ages **3 through 21**:
  - Each school system (LEA) must conduct a full and individual initial evaluation in accordance with NC 1503-2.4 through NC 1503-2.7 before the initial provision of special education and related services can be provided (NC 1503-2.2(a)).
  - Either the parent of a child or an LEA may initiate a request for an initial evaluation to determine if the child is a child with a disability. Upon an oral request for an initial evaluation from a parent, the LEA shall provide assistance, as needed, in completing a written referral (NC 1503-2.2(b)); and
  - The initial evaluation process must be conducted; eligibility determined; and for an eligible child, the IEP developed; and placement completed within **90 days** of receipt of a written referral (NC 1503-2.2(c)(1)).
- According to the above noted *Policies*, only the parent or an LEA may initiate an official referral. Therefore, information received by the school system from the physician shall be referred to as "Notification" under CHILD FIND.

ACTION STEPS FOR CHILDREN 3 THROUGH 5 YEARS:

- When Primary Care Practices identify developmental concerns, the Exceptional Children Preschool Program requests that the following information be sent to the school system:
  - Notification form with family contact information to appropriate preschool program staff;
  - Signed release of confidential information for communication from and to pediatrician/school system;
  - All screening information available, such as:
    - Health,
    - Developmental/Autism,
    - Vision and/or Hearing, or
    - Behavioral Health Services; and
  - Pending physician initiated evaluations which are in process.
- The Primary Care Physician should:
  - Facilitate communication among the primary care practice, other entities conducting diagnostic assessments and the school.
  - Share available resources with the parent, school system, and other community partners.

  Follow enclosed Flow Chart, as appropriate.