

# Student Rights Handbook



## Special Education Contacts

**The director or supervisor for special education in your district is listed below:**

Byron Center Public Schools, Erin Tacoma  
Phone: (616) 878-6121

Caledonia Community Schools, Lynelle Dodge  
Phone: (616) 891-0219

Cedar Springs Public Schools, Stacey Jennette  
Phone: (616) 696-0580

Charter Schools  
Call the Building Principal

Comstock Park Public Schools, Doreen Mangrum  
Phone: (616) 254-5215

East Grand Rapids Public Schools, Kathy Wisniewski  
Phone: (616) 235-3535

Forest Hills Public Schools, Jann VanAirsdale  
Phone: (616) 493-8660

Godfrey Lee Public Schools, Jane Dykhouse  
Phone: (616) 475-6622

Godwin Heights Public Schools, Frank Schwartz  
Phone: (616) 252-2084

Grand Rapids Public Schools, Amy Worfel  
Phone: (616) 819-2185

Grandville Public Schools, Angie Thornburgh  
Phone: (616) 254-6768

Kelloggsville Public Schools, Steve Brieve  
Phone: (616) 532-1585 or (616) 532-1590

Kenowa Hills Public Schools, Mike Ghareeb  
Phone: (616) 647-0910

Kent City Community Schools, Pam Thomas  
Phone: (616) 678-7714

Kentwood Public Schools, Sharon O'Donnoghue  
Phone: (616) 554-3980

Lowell Area Schools  
Phone: (616) 987-2516

Northview Public Schools, Dan Heitzman  
Phone: (616) 361-3446

Rockford Public Schools, Kirsten Myers  
Phone: (616) 863-6326

Sparta Area Schools, Sue Gates  
Phone: (616) 887-7359

Thornapple Kellogg Schools, Mari Price  
Phone: (269) 795-5571

Wyoming Public Schools, Harry Knol  
Phone: (616) 530-7525

Dear Student,

Welcome to the age of majority! In Michigan, the age of majority is 18 years of age. This handbook has been developed for you because you are within a year of turning 18 years old, or you have reached the age of majority and are now in charge of your education.

You are a student with unique learning needs. State and federal laws describe those learning needs using the term “disability”. An important federal law for you to know about is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which gives you certain guarantees, or rights about your education. These guarantees are called “procedural safeguards”.

It is critical that you know and understand your procedural safeguards. So take time to read over the information in this handbook. If you would like to listen to the handbook instead of reading it, you can contact your special education teacher.

If you have any questions, talk with your special education teacher or your school’s special education contact person (see the inside cover of this booklet for contact information).



**Congratulations on becoming of age!**

## Student Rights and Procedural Safeguards

Under Michigan law you reach adulthood upon your eighteenth (18<sup>th</sup>) birthday. **When you turn age 18, all of the decision-making rights your parents have transfer to you.**

The school district must discuss the impact of the transfer of rights at least a year before your eighteenth (18<sup>th</sup>) birthday with you and your parents or guardian.

For some students, a court may appoint a legal guardian that will continue to have authority to make decisions about your educational program. In this case, educational decision-making will not be transferred to you.

At least once every school year you will meet with your school team to develop your IEP (Individualized Education program). Your parents/guardians have been doing this with you for several years, and now you have this role as a young adult. It is now your job to speak up for yourself and make decisions about your IEP.

### 1) Your Transfer of Rights Notice

This Student Rights Handbook serves as notice to both you and your parents regarding your transfer of rights. When you turn age 17, you and your parents must both receive notice that rights will transfer to you when you turn age 18. When you turn age 18 you and your parents must receive another notice that your rights have transferred. Notice of this transfer of rights will also be given to you in your IEP paperwork.

### 2) Michigan Procedural Safeguards Notice

You and your parents/guardians should both receive a copy of the ***Special Education Parent Handbook with Procedural Safeguards*** at least once per year. This booklet contains all of the safeguards (rights) and meet precise legal requirements.

### 3) Prior Written Notice

Your school district must tell you in writing any time it:

- Proposes or asks for your permission to change things; or
- Refuses to take action on something you have requested.

These proposed changes or requests can involve:

- Your eligibility (or type of disability);
- Your evaluation (qualifying for special education); and
- Your school program, services and accommodations.

The written notice must:

- Contain the school district's description of and explanation why the changes are proposed or why your requests are refused;
- Be written so you understand it; and
- Include resources for you to contact to help in understanding special education laws.

This notice may be included in your IEP or in another document.

#### **4) Giving Consent**

You must give your consent or permission before you:

- Have any kind of evaluation;
- Make a change in your special education programs or services;
- Allow a representative from a community agency to attend your IEP meeting, and;
- Have your records sent to others outside of your enrolled school district.

Also, you must:

- Be given an explanation of the evaluation or changes in programs or services in a way that you will understand;
- Be given a reasonable opportunity to agree in writing to the evaluation, or any change in programs and services;
- Be told that you have a choice about allowing the evaluation or change in programs or services and that you can change your mind at any time, and;
- Sign permission (consent) to invite a community agency representative to your IEP meeting and to have your records released to the agency.

#### **5) Evaluation Procedures**

You may be asked to give your permission (consent) to have a special education evaluation to see if you continue to be eligible for special education programs or services. Your rights include having:

- The opportunity to tell evaluators about your disability and your learning strengths and needs;
- Tests given in a way so that you best understand
- Tests given that do not discriminate against you on the basis of your race, language or cultural background;
- Tests given to you by trained people who understand your disability and give the tests according to instructions;
- Two or more tests or test procedures given to you to make sure that there is enough information to make any decisions regarding your needs.

- An interpreter or translator if you are deaf; hearing impaired; visually impaired, or if you speak a language other than English; and
- If appropriate, an age-appropriate transition assessment that will help you plan your transition to adult life and/or a vocational evaluation that will give you valuable information about your skills and interests.

You are a member of the IEP Team. When the evaluation is completed, all of the information must be shared with you so you can participate in decisions about your education.

## **6) Continuum of Services**

The law is very clear that you and your IEP Team must consider more than one option when planning your special education services. You need to work with the Team to find the best choice.

## **7) Access to Records**

You have a right to see any records that your school keeps about you. You may also request information or request to remove items from your file that you believe are not accurate, or that violate your rights. There is a process to access your records; ask your principal to explain this process to you.

You must give written permission for your records to be shared with people outside of your school district.

Even though your rights transfer to you at age 18, your parents/guardians will continue to receive all the required IEP and evaluation information notices/paperwork from your school. With your permission they will be able to look at your education records, even though you make your own educational decisions.

## **8) Disagreements**

If you disagree with decisions made by your IEP Team, you have options for action. You may file a special education complaint or request a due process hearing. These are rules and processes for disagreeing; ask your special education teacher to help you or contact your local special education director or coordinator. You can also request a complete copy of the ***Special Education Parent Handbook with Procedural Safeguards*** from your school for more information.

## 9) Information from the IDEA, Federal Special Education Law

**§300.320(c) Transfer of rights at age of majority.** *Beginning not later than one year before the child reaches the age of majority under State law, the IEP must include a statement that the child has been informed of the child's rights under part B of the Act, if any, that will transfer to the child on reaching the age of majority under §300.520.*

This means that around your 17<sup>th</sup> birthday you should be notified (in a meeting or through IEP paperwork) that your rights will transfer to you at age 18. It also means that your teachers and your family should check to make sure you know what this means – that you should get ready to assume your rights as an adult.

**§300.520(a) General.** *A State may provide that, when a student with a disability reaches the age of majority under state law that applies to all students (except for a student with a disability that has been determined to be incompetent under state law)-*

*(1) (i) The public agency shall provide any notice required by this part to both the individual and the parents; and (ii) All other rights accorded to parents under part B of the Act transfer to the student;*

*(2) All rights accorded to the parents under part B of the Act transfer to students who are incarcerated in an adult or juvenile, state or local correctional facility.*

*(3) Whenever a State provides for the transfer of rights under this part pursuant to paragraph (a)(1) or (a)(2) of this section, the agency must notify the child and the parents of the transfer of rights.*

The law also provides that you will receive another notification when your rights have actually transferred to you, as of your 18th birthday.

## 10) Frequently Asked Questions

**Question:** Do all parental rights transfer to me when I turn 18 years old?

**Answer:** Yes. All educational rights of parents under the IDEA (federal special education law) transfer to you when you reach age 18.

**Question:** After I turn 18, is my school district required to give my parents notice of IEP meetings if my parents have not obtained guardianship for me?

**Answer:** Yes. The school district is still required to give notice of IEP meetings and notices about special education programs and services. All other IDEA rights, however, (signing your IEP for example) transfer to you at age 18 in Michigan.

**Question:** Do the parents of a student over the age of 18 have the right to participate in IEP meetings?

**Answer:** At age 18 you have the right to arrange your own IEP meeting and agree to the programs and services offered by the school district. Your parents have the right to be notified of and invited to your IEP Team meeting.

**If you have more questions, ask your parents, your teacher or counselor, or your special education director or coordinator to provide answers. We all want to help you assume your full rights and safeguards as you reach adulthood.**