**SAMPLE LETTER:**

**REFERRAL FOR ASSESSMENT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

**INSTRUCTIONAL NOTE ONLY:**

To request assessment to determine whether your child is eligible for special education services, submit a **WRITTEN LETTER** to the School District Special Education Director.
Copy (cc) the principal, teacher or others involved with your child’s education. Tell the school district that you are concerned about your child’s educational progress, and briefly why, and that you are making a “parent referral for assessment for special education services.”

You will want to retain **PROOF of the letter’s delivery**. Consider sending the letter “certified - return/receipt requested” from the post office. Or hand deliver and ask that your letter be date stamped and a copy of this given to you before you leave. Or fax your letter and print your “successful transmission” fax report and follow up by phone to ensure the letter was received.

A WRITTEN letter triggers an important timeline under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) law:

- From the time the school district receives your letter, the school district has 15 calendar days (not counting days when the school is out of session in excess of 5 days) to present you with an Assessment Plan for your consent.

- From the time you receive an Assessment Plan, you have 15 calendar days (if you wish to take them) to ask all the questions you need to feel comfortable to give “informed consent” by signing the plan.

- From the time you consent to the Assessment Plan by signing it, the district has 60 days (not counting days when the school is out of session in excess of 5 days) to assess your child and hold the first Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting.

In an initial IEP meeting, you and administrative, educational, and assessor team members will discuss the assessment results and make a determination whether the child qualifies for special education services. If your child qualifies, an IEP document, a plan to provide specialized support to meet your child’s unique needs, will be developed.

If your child is currently enrolled in private school, you must request assessment from the school district in which the private school is located, even if this is not the district in which you live. (New when IDEA law was reauthorized in 2004.)

**REFERRAL FOR ASSESSMENT FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

**Date:**

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| --- |
| **INSTRUCTIONAL NOTE:** This process is driven by timelines. Date everything and note how your letter was delivered—mail or fax. Email is not recommended.  |

**From:** Parent/Guardian Name(s):

Street Address:

City/State/Zip:

Telephone Number(s):

E-mail (if applicable):

**To:** Mr./Ms.:

Director of Special Education

School District Name:

District Street Address:

City/State/Zip:

Telephone Number (if known):

Fax Number (if known):

E-mail (if known):

**ON BEHALF OF:**

Student Name:

Student Birth Date:

Student School:

School Address:

City/State/Zip:

My child has not been functioning well in school and I am concerned about my child’s educational progress. I am writing to make a parent referral for assessment for special education services as allowed under the Child Find obligations of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and California Education Code Secs. 56029, 56301, 56302, and 56321(a) and 5 California Code of Regulations (C.C.R.) Sec. 3021. My child may be eligible for special education assistance. I am requesting that my child be given a comprehensive assessment by the school district in all areas of suspected disability, and that an IEP meeting be scheduled.

**INSTRUCTIONAL NOTE – “REASONS FOR CONCERN”**

You may wish to give specific examples of difficulties and concerns you, teachers or doctor have noted. If you have a specific diagnosis, reports or evaluations already, you may want to include them with your letter. You may want to attach doctor’s documentation or report if you believe this will help your school district understand your child’s disability/needs, or state that you have this documentation and can make it available to the school district. You may want to include CA Star test results, samples of written work, report cards, etc. that support your reasons for concern. You may want to get the classroom teacher to give you concrete examples and work products in writing that support the need for further investigation of the child’s problems. The US Congress in IDEA law specifically chose to use the term “educational progress,” a broad term to encompass all kinds of progress a child is expected to make in school. Concern is not limited to academic progress alone. It can also mean motor challenges, social difficulty, behavior issues, sensory overwhelm, health impairment, etc.

**Below are some examples, but use your own examples:**

**Academic Concerns:** My child is in 4th grade and scoring below basic in the State tests in math, despite doing all the homework and trying his best.

**Motor Concerns:** My child has extreme difficulty with fine motor tasks and cannot write sufficiently well to complete classroom assignments in the time allotted.

**Behavior/Socialization Concerns:** My child is having behavior difficulties that are impairing his ability to succeed in the classroom environment. For example, he can’t keep his hands to himself, sit still, can’t resolve conflicts or socialize in an age appropriate way, he is being disciplined regularly, going to the office, etc.

**Specific Disability or Health Impairment Concerns:** My child has a diagnosis of (name disability such as Autism, Dyslexia, Diabetes, Severe Allergy, etc., if applicable.) This adversely affects his educational progress because (exclusion, performance, fatigue, missing school, etc).

**Transition-to-Adult Concerns:** I am concerned that my child does not have the skills necessary to successfully transition into the community or college after graduation or completion of high school. For example, he cannot balance a checkbook, take public transportation, etc. The assessment should examine his social, educational, emotional, career and independent living skills in order to develop an appropriate transition plan in his IEP.

Below are some of my concerns related to my child’s educational progress, and information about my child’s known and/or suspected disabilities:

**[list or describe parent “reasons for concern”]**

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| **INSTRUCTIONAL NOTE:** In every request for INITIAL assessment to determine if your child needs special education, you should include a paragraph requesting that your child also be evaluated under the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act for any “disabling condition” that would require accommodations and/or services to enable your child to benefit from public education to the extent that students without disabilities do. **If your child does not already have special education services, and this is an initial request for special education evaluation to see if your child may need special education, include the 504 paragraph below in your letter:** |

As part of the assessment process, I also request that my child be assessed under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to determine whether he should be identified as handicapped pursuant to that law and to determine what, if any, accommodations might be required in his educational program in the event that he does not qualify for special education services, or in addition to special education services. I also request that the school district’s 504 Coordinator be present at the IEP meeting to discuss the results and recommendations of assessment.

**OPTION:** If you know particular areas of known or suspected disability you believe need to be assessed, or know specific tests your child may need, you may request them.

**Here are some examples, but use your own that are tailored to your child:**

**Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Assessment:** by a qualified AAC specialist for children who are non-verbal communicators. To my knowledge, the district does not have on staff any experts in this field. I have been recommended to [Expert Name, Title] in non-verbal communication, and unless the district has a comparable expert, I am requesting that you contract with [Dr. X] to do the non-verbal communication evaluation of my child.

**Occupational Therapy (OT) Assessment:** by a qualified OT to determine how to support my child’s need for proper positioning for learning due to his orthopedic impairment, and to help support his high sensitivity to sensory stimuli.

**Assistive Technology (AT) Assessment:** by a qualified and certified Assistive Technologist to determine the appropriate tools, strategies and services that may be necessary to assist my child in accessing and benefiting from the educational program. IDEA requires determination of AT needs for students.

**Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA):** by a qualified behaviorist trained in behavior analysis and positive behavioral support to determine the triggers and function of my child’s behavioral difficulties in order to develop a Positive Behavioral Support Plan (BSP) and goals to enable my child to learn to replace behaviors impeding my child’s learning, or the learning of others, with positive behaviors so that educational progress can be made.

In addition to the typical school district evaluations, I specifically request that the school district conduct the following evaluations of my child if listed here:

**[list specific evaluations requests here if you have some]**

I understand that Response-to-Intervention (RTI) is now allowed under IDEA 2004 as *one* evaluative tool that may assist in determining the presence of specific learning disability (SLD) but that, according to the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) Office of Special Education and Programs (OSEP) memo of 1/27/2011, “it would be inconsistent with the evaluation provisions at 34 CFR Sections 300.301-300.111 for an LEA [school district] to reject a referral and delay provision of an initial evaluation on the basis that a child has not participated in an RTI framework,” and that the school district has an “obligation to ensure that evaluations of children suspected of having a disability are not delayed or denied because of implementation of an RTI strategy.”
<http://www.rti4success.org/resourcetype/memo-response-intervention-rti-process-cannot-be-used-delay-deny-evaluation-eligibility>

If the school district asks to conduct a Student Study Team (SST) process in response to my parent referral for IDEA evaluation, I will consider such a request so that my child can receive help and intervention *while* the IDEA evaluations are ongoing. Understand, however, that if I give my approval for a SST, I will not and do not waive my child's right to comprehensive assessment under the district’s “Child Find” mandate.

I understand that schools are required only to “consider” general education interventions before delivering special education *services*, and that evaluation is not services. I also understand that the school district is not required to “exhaust” general education interventions; that there is no exhaustion standard in IDEA; and that IDEA Child Find requires evaluation when there is suspected disability.

I look forward to receiving an Assessment Plan in 15 calendar days for my review and consent so that evaluations can proceed. If the district refuses to evaluate I expect Prior Written Notice (PWN) that meets the requirements of the IDEA.

I look forward to evaluations being completed promptly and an IEP meeting held at a mutually agreeable time and place, within 60 calendar days of my consent to the Assessment Plan, to discuss results and plan for my child’s supported education.

Please ensure that we schedule an IEP meeting accordingly to ensure that I receive copies of all assessment reports at least 5 business days before the IEP meeting that will be scheduled to discuss them so that I will have adequate time to review carefully and prepare any questions or parent concerns I may have for the team.

Sincerely,

Parent/Guardian Signature:

Copies to: **[list other members of child’s educational team]**

Enclosed: **[list any attachments to this letter you want to include that may help the district understand child’s needs, disability, or suspected disabilities]**