



CSI Guidebook: Special Education Onboarding

A guide for New CSI schools

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Special Education

CSI Contact: Matt Hudson, Director of Special Education

<https://resources.csi.state.co.us/special-education/>

To ensure compliance with all local, state, and federal requirements to serve Special Education students, CSI schools are required to maintain a Special Education Plan.

To assist schools in developing this plan, CSI provides a [Core Procedures Manual](#) to deliver services to exceptional students. Additionally, CSI has developed a template aligns with state and federal requirements for special education. The program plan template can be accessed on the CSI website:

<https://resources.csi.state.co.us/sped-504-plan-template/>

Section 1: School Responsibilities and Funding Requirements

Section 2: Child Find

Section 3: Special Education Referral, Evaluation,
Eligibility Determination and Reevaluation Process

Section 4: Free Appropriate Public Education

Section 5: Individualized Education Programs (IEP)

Section 6: Confidentiality of Information, Procedural Safeguards and
Dispute Resolution Processes for Parents and Children

Section 7: Student Discipline Procedures

More information on special education requirements can be found on the CSI website: CSI schools will follow all state/federal rules including CSI policies and procedures. Schools should consult with these resources and guidebooks on the CSI website to ensure that they have a clear understanding of their responsibilities under the law. The CSI Director of Special Education is also available for consultation.

Onboarding Calendar

The following special education related activities and events and corresponding timelines are suggested for all schools who are new to CSI.

Topic Title	Content	Location	Timing
CSI guidebook	Overview of CSI Departments	CSI Guidebook	April-May
SPED Policies	Policy/Procedure Manual	Special Education Comprehensive Manual:	April-May
Program Plan	SPED/504 School Plan	Sped/504 Plan Template	June-July
Monitoring	TIERED Process	Student Screener and Tiers of Support	June-July
Student Enrollment	Determinations and Transfers	Enrollment and Student Transfer Process:	April-July
SPED Legal Issues	Legal Trends in SPED		July-August
School Child Find	MTSS/RtI	MTSS to Special Education Overall MTSS	July-August
IEP Compliance	Writing IEP's	School-Age IEPs Quality and Compliance	July-Sept
IEP Compliance	Standardized IEP's- Goals	Writing Standards Aligned IEPS Supplemental Guidance	July-Sept
IEP Compliance	SPED Eligibility	SPED Eligibility Determination	July-Sept
IEP Compliance	Transition Age (HS)	Transition IEPs	July-Sept
SPED Personnel	Employ SPED staff	Complete CSI HR Form and submit to ES department	August 1st
SPED Personnel	Staff Vacancies	Complete Vacant Personnel Action Form for any vacancies	Ongoing
School Health	Policy/Procedures	CSI and CDE	July-Sept
Student Information System (SIS)	Powerschool/Infinite Campus, ASCEND Colorado, etc.,	School Chooses SIS and Plan Management systems	July-Sept
SIS/Plan Management Systems	Request Records i.e., IEP, Section 504, ALP, MTSS	Collect and Enter Plans into Plan Management system	Ongoing

General Timeline of Activities for Special Education

This general timeline provides the estimated timeline of Special Education related activities:

	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	System	Dates
Data Submissions														
October Count			■	■	■								Data Pipeline	Sept-Nov
Quality Assurance														
Assurance of Compliance		■											CSI	August
Exceptional Students														
December Count & SPED HR					■	■	■	■	■				Pipeline/Alpine/IC	Nov-Feb
SPED EOY Report	■	■	■	■							■	■	Pipeline/ALPINE/IC	May-Oct
SPED Discipline	■	■									■	■	Pipeline/SIS (PS)	May-Aug
GT EOY Report										■			ESSU Site	April
SPED HR Due	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Data Pipeline/CSI	Ongoing
Parent Surveys		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	ESSU Site (CSI only)	Sept-June
Post School Outcomes Interviews	■	■	■										ESSU Site (CSI only)	July-Sept
IEP/504 Record Reviews Due						■					■		Survey Monkey	Dec & May
IEP 's completed & updated	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Survey Monkey	Ongoing
Federal Programs and ELL														
Requests For Funds	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	CSI -RFF	Monthly

Special Education Policies/Procedures

SPED Policies and Procedures Manual

[Special Education Comprehensive Manual:](#)

The Institute operates as the administrative unit (AU) with authority for delivering services to exceptional students and legal compliance for students with disabilities and other exceptional students in its individual charter schools. Schools agree to take direction from and work collaboratively with the Institute with regard to the provision of these services, evaluations and concerns, and to provide for the attendance of any necessary school employees at appropriate meetings i.e. IEP, 504, . Because the Institute remains responsible for compliance, the Institute’s position shall control if a school and the Institute disagree as to the correct interpretation or application of a statute or regulation concerning the education of exceptional students. In the charter school contract with the Charter School Institute, each school agrees to comply with the Institute’s Board policies and regulations and the requirements of federal and state law concerning exceptional children including but not limited to, the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (20 U.S.C. § 1401 et seq.), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794), the Exceptional Children’s Educational Act (C.R.S. § 22-20-101, et seq. “ECEA”), *Title III(A)*: Title III(A) of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (ELA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.).

School Enrollment Policy

[Enrollment and Student Transfer Process:](#)

Although CSI does not have an enrollment policy required to be used by all CSI schools, there is guidance provided on the enrollment process for students with disabilities which can be found in the CSI Special Education Manual. CSI reviews enrollment policies for each CSI school as part of the new school application process, as stated in Rule 4 of the Rules for the Administration of the State Charter School Institute.

All CSI school's enrollment policies must be in compliance with the statute below:

22-30.5-104 (3) A charter school shall be subject to all federal and state laws and constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services. A charter school shall be subject to any court-ordered desegregation plan in effect for the school district. Enrollment must be open to any child who resides within the school district; except that no charter school shall be required to make alterations in the structure of the facility used by the charter school or to make alterations to the arrangement or function of rooms within the facility, except as may be required by state or federal law. Enrollment decisions shall be made in a nondiscriminatory manner specified by the charter school applicant in the charter school application.

Special Education Data Submissions

<https://resources.csi.state.co.us/data-submissions-library/>

CSI's Role

CSI acts as the liaison between the school and CDE for all required reporting. The Data Submissions Department at CSI oversees the coordination of the below submissions for CSI schools to CDE through Data Pipeline. CSI implements timelines, assists with troubleshooting errors, provides data summary reports to schools to review and verify, and ultimately ensures CSI and CSI schools meet CDE's timeline.

School's Role

Schools are responsible for reviewing and ensuring data submitted for the below reports are correct and timelines established by CSI are met. Special education staff should work closely with their data submissions contact at the school to ensure that accurate data is being submitted.

Special Education Data Collection Submissions

➤ Student October (October Count)

The Student October Pupil Enrollment collection contains student enrollment information as of the pupil enrollment count date. This information is used to determine the school demographics, number of students in instructional programs, free and reduced lunch counts, and distribution of school finances across the state. This mandatory CDE report starts in September and ends in mid-November. The collection includes variables such as demographic information (SASID, name, gender, DOB, grade, primary language etc.), Special Education, English language proficiency, Title I designation, FRL,

homeless status, gifted and talented designation, and much more. This report begins with the registration of student information as they enroll and ends in November.

➤ **Human Resources**

This required CDE report collects information on all staff employed by each school as of December 1st. One of the primary purposes of this collection is to ensure that necessary staff is Highly Qualified (HQ). General demographic information, including name, DOB, gender, district of residence, as well as education level, salary, job and/or teaching position, and grades taught are a few examples of variables collected. This report begins in November and ends in February.

➤ **Special Education December Count**

The Special Education December Count collection is an annual count of Eligible Students under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as of December 1st used to generate federal funding to provide specialized student services. Special Education December Staff Data is also required to obtain actual data on special education staff employed by administrative units on December 1st of each year so that appropriate licensure and endorsement of staff can be verified.

➤ **Special Education Discipline**

The Special Education Discipline snapshot contains information on children with disabilities served under IDEA subject to disciplinary removal. This information is used for Federal and Indicator reporting, to monitor state performance, and to examine issues related to disproportionality and in policy development decisions.

➤ **Special Education End of Year**

The Special Education End-of-Year Student collection is required to obtain data on students who were referred, evaluated, or received special education services throughout the school year. Information is also collected on students who received services in an eligible facility or were tuitioned to an in-state or out-of-state non-public school program or public agency. The data collected includes information on exits from special education, part C evaluations, and the services students in special education are receiving.

CSI and Charter School Responsibilities

Special Education

Charter School Responsibilities

- Admit and serve all special education students by following the CSI Enrollment Determination guidelines and admission process specified in their charter contract
- Purchase (i.e. contract) and use highly qualified and licensed special education teachers and related service providers
- Provide all services indicated on students' IEPs
- Complete all paperwork, submissions, student plans and other relevant forms according to CSI established timelines
- Use a problem solving model, such as Response to Intervention (RTI) or Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS), to provide interventions to students in the general population and to identify students in need of special education services
- In case of a dispute about whether the school can adequately serve a student, hold an IEP meeting to determine the appropriate educational setting

CSI Responsibilities

- Serve as the AU responsible for ensuring charter schools' compliance with applicable state and federal laws. This includes monitoring compliance and implementing the Tiered Process.
- Facilitate Annual Special Education Audit with the Colorado Department of Education
- Submit required Special Education End of Year, Discipline and December Count reports to CDE
- Collaborate with school to check special education teacher qualifications.

Admission Process/Procedures

As addressed in the charter school contract, each school may establish its own enrollment timeline and procedures. A school may deny enrollment to a student with disabilities seeking admission in a charter school in the same manner and for the same reasons the school may deny admission to a student without disabilities, including that the student's admission would require alterations in the structure of the facility used by the institute charter school or alterations to the arrangement or function of rooms within the facility, beyond those required by state or federal law. All superintendents and special education directors of the districts of residence of special education students must be notified of their attendance at a CSI charter school.

Staffing (Teachers)

Charter schools are responsible for hiring their own highly qualified and licensed special education teachers with appropriate endorsements. Although charter schools may obtain state and district waivers for the licensure of regular education personnel, this is not the case for special education teachers (contact CDE's Educator Licensing unit at educator.licensing@cde.state.co.us for questions about appropriate licensure and endorsements for special education teachers). School-based staff members are required to follow all relevant procedures such as conducting IEP meetings, maintaining up-to-date IEP paperwork, and ensuring service delivery that follows that mandated in student IEPs. The CSI Director of Special Education is available to school staff for technical assistance and consultation. In addition, the CSI Exceptional Student Department provides required professional

development for charter school special education teachers as appropriate or when mandated by federal/state rule changes.

Staffing (Related Service Providers)

CSI is responsible for providing oversight of the schools' obligation for staffing highly qualified and appropriately certified related service providers, such as nurses, psychologists, speech/language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists. These positions are staffed based on needs identified in student IEPs. **Each** CSI school must check teacher licensing and credentials and complete and send to CSI any required HR information validating the credentials. All special education and related service providers must be hired upon the start of the 1st day of school or by August 1st whatever comes first. By April 1st of each year, the CSI schools must inform CSI if there are plans to change the system of which special education staff is hired. For any other supports needed, contact the school's special education teacher and the CSI Director of Special Education.

Funding

CSI charter schools hire and pay their own special education teachers to serve their students. CSI manages all State and Federal grant applications for funding, and allocates budgets and disperses funds directly to schools.

Schools' responsibilities that CSI will provide oversight include, but are not limited to:

- Legal defense for due process suits and other legal issues
- Vision/Hearing screenings
- all Special Education staff and related service providers
- Maintaining required data on student plans
- Teacher professional development
- Technical assistance requests and consultation from the CSI Department of Exceptional Students including the Exceptional Student Coordinator
- Building Problems Solving team – Multi-tiered System (MTSS) or Response to Intervention Supports (RTI)
- Transition Services
- Family Liaisons
- Assistive Technology

ES Coordinator Roles

ES Coordinators act as the Special Education Director designee and are hired by the Institute schools. The ES Coordinator role can be expanded by individual schools, and minimally consists of the following:

Consultation

Consultation is one of the ES Coordinators' primary role. Consultation provided to schools includes state and federal laws, policies, procedures, compliance, programming, resources, etc.

Oversight

ES Coordinators provide oversight of schools using tools such as the IEP Audit Checklist. ES Coordinators will implement an annual audit at each school, report out to the CSI Special Education Director who will assist in the development of an Action Plan or issuance of a Notice of Concern, and provide follow-up support specific to schools' identified needs.

Collaboration

ES Coordinators assist in building capacity in schools by creating opportunities for collaboration with local districts and other agencies.

Mediation

ES Coordinators will assist schools with mediation requests, serve as Director's Designee at necessary meetings, and refer resources as needed.

Professional Development

ES Coordinators will provide technical assistance and refer schools to professional development in the areas of Special Education, and other programs as directed in their contract i.e. 504, School Health and Gifted & Talented programs.

Submissions

ES Coordinators will assist in all State, Federal, Local reporting and submissions including December Count, End of Year, Discipline, TCAP, CO-Alt, etc.

Section 504

Section 504: The terms "504" and "Section 504" refer to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This act protects people with disabilities against discrimination. Students eligible for services under Section 504 have a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits major life activities. These students may not meet the criteria for eligibility for Special Education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004). However, if their impairments or conditions substantially limit their ability to learn in school or to engage in other major life activities, they are disabled within the meaning of Section 504. Common impairments that may require a school to consider Section 504 eligibility for a student may include diabetes, ADHD, or in a wheelchair. Students eligible to receive services or accommodations under Section 504 must have a Section 504 plan that documents the student's impairment, significant limitations on a major life activity, and the accommodations and persons responsible for delivering services. CSI is the agency that oversees school compliance with Section 504. For additional information regarding Section 504 please review the CSI Comprehensive Manual for 504.

Section 504 Coordinator: Each school is required to have a Section 504 Coordinator, who is the building principal or designee. A principal may designate any staff member except a special education teacher who is fully funded using special education dollars to serve as the school Section 504 Coordinator.

Charter School Responsibilities

- Admit and serve all 504 students in following the admission process specified in their charter contract
- Screen, identify and serve the needs of 504 students and provide all accommodations and/or services indicated on students' 504 plan, using Alpine Achievement to maintain all records
- Assign a 504 Coordinator and complete all relevant forms and paperwork in a timely manner to identify students in need of 504 services
- In case of a dispute about whether the school can adequately serve a student, hold an 504 meeting to determine the appropriate educational setting

CSI Responsibilities

- Serve as the AU responsible for ensuring charter school compliance with applicable 504 laws including oversight of schools providing all supports as outlined in students' 504 plans
- Check compliance with 504 (i.e. OMP process)

Procedures

- *Procedures & Documentation:* The Section 504 School Coordinator is responsible for convening Section 504 meetings, monitoring the implementation of Section 504 plans, scheduling annual reviews of Section 504 plans, and reporting required information to the district.
- *Reporting:* Charter schools must provide all the required 504 forms for documentation: For example, if the CSI school is using ALPINE, the following is required:
 - After new Section 504 plan is created: Complete of all Section 504 forms in Alpine Achievement (including consent for evaluation, notice of meeting, and the Section 504 plan).
 - Upon annual review meetings: Updated Section 504 in Alpine Achievement including notice of review meeting and updated plans.
- *Training:* The Section 504 Coordinator may be required to attend scheduled trainings. All information on required trainings will be sent to schools. It is the school's responsibility to disseminate this information to their 504 designee.

Nursing Services/School Health

The Charter School Institute provides a comprehensive [School Health Resource manual](#) that can be found on the CSI website that relates to the CDE Essential School Health services Guidelines, the Colorado Nurse Practice Act (refer to Chapter XIII Rules and Regulations Regarding The Delegation of Nursing Tasks), and the Colorado Department of Human Services-Child Care Licensing requirement (refer to 7.702.55 C. Health Consultant). Schools are required to have a school nurse to provide school nursing services, such as routine care and emergency response. A school nurse must be a Registered Nurse and be highly qualified under NCLB, which means they need a CDE school nurse license. A school nurse may delegate specific nursing tasks to unlicensed school site staff, provided the appropriate delegation protocol is followed. Refer to Chapter XIII of the Colorado Nurse Practice Act → Rules and Regulations.

Charter School Responsibilities

- Admit and serve school health-related needs of students
- Follow all Health Policies and Procedures required by state/federal law including CSI Comprehensive Manual
- Purchase (i.e. contract) and use highly qualified and licensed nurses and delegates
- Conduct vision/hearing screening assessments
- Manage health section indicated on students' Plans, i.e. IEP, 504
 - Complete all paperwork, submissions, student plans and other relevant forms according to CSI established timelines
- Maintain training and professional development for all school staff and nurse delegates

CSI Responsibilities

- Serve as the AU responsible for ensuring charter school compliance with applicable health laws including the oversight of school health services

- Collaborate with school to check for nurse qualifications.

Procedures

Each CSI charter school is responsible for employing a school nurse to meet the needs of their students. A CSI school nurse is highly qualified and has received appropriate education and training to implement all school health and nursing services at the school. CSI charter schools are required to follow CSI nursing guidelines and procedures. The most commonly used CSI school health forms may be accessed in the CSI School Health Manual and the school is allowed to develop additional forms to meet compliance.

Examples of forms:

- Health summary form: Required as part of registration. Please see CSI Resource manual for sample forms for guidance. All CSI schools must include health summary information.
- Medication release form: All medications administered during the school day must have the required medication release form completed and signed by the parent/guardian and primary health care provider **before** the medication can be administered. All school personnel administering medication must follow the CSI medication administration policy.
- Immunization letters: The requirements for immunizations, as well as all forms and parent letters must be developed and distributed by CSI schools. If a child's immunization record is incomplete, then a "Notice of Exclusion" form must be signed by parents so that the child can enroll in school. CSI participates in the statewide immunization program where schools can access the state immunization data bank.
- *Vision & Hearing Screening:* All Colorado public schools are mandated by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to provide hearing and vision screening on an annual basis. The School Nurse and/or designee, along with a Vision and Hearing Screening Team, will be responsible for scheduling this service. C.R.S. 22-1-116 mandates that vision screening is to be done each year for:
 - All students in ECE, Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th or comparable grade levels.
 - All children new to the school system.
 - All children referred by school personnel or parents.
 - All students in special education programs at the age at which they would be in grades ECE, Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th and at initial and triennial.
- *Purchasing nursing services:* Nursing services is purchased independently by each CSI school.

Highly Qualified for Special Education

All CSI schools are required to submit to CSI list of all special education staff as well as all required HR information needed to complete State reports and submission. Any changes in staff must be sent to CSI as it occurs.

Special Education Teachers and Special Service Providers

Must hold a current License and/or Endorsement in their area (IDEA & ECEA) and meet HQ requirements

Special Education Staff to Student Ratio Recommendations

Please note that these guidelines are based on typical caseload representation by CSI Charter Schools and include extraneous time spent conducting IEP meetings, writing Plans, participating in RtI, progress monitoring, etc. Thus, it is important to not only align the FTE of staff with what is noted for hours on an IEP, but also note that in cases of smaller schools that do not reach the minimum caseload size as presented in the table below, you will need to allot time for the special education provider to participate in these extraneous duties.

Special Education Staff to Student Ratio Recommendations

Position	Staff : Student Ratio	Description
Mild-Moderate Needs Teacher	1:20 Sped Ratio (Secondary)* 1:200 Gen Ed. Ratio 1:15 (Elementary)*	*Compare ratio of moderate needs teachers to moderate needs students and also compare ratio of gen. ed students sped teachers due to RTI for example, students requiring <7.5 hours per week or spending >80% of their day in general education. *Look at amount of hours on IEP to align with recommended Ratios. Allow time for paperwork, meetings, assessments, etc. * Consideration of multiple roles and alignment with SPED funds i.e. 504, GT, RtI, etc.
Speech Language Pathologist	1:40-50	ASHA recommends 1:40, numbers can be adjusted upward to some degree if an SLP-A is also employed (do not double caseload) Compare to size of school and identified hours on IEP
School Psychologist/Counselor	1.0 FTE	1 mental health FTE per elementary school, 1.2 at MS, 1.8 at HS Consider- 1. size of schools 2. Type of behavioral health model, family engagement/support (i.e. SW), identified needs on IEP
CDE Licensed School Nurse	Contract as needed	Contract as needed per school with judgment based on size/need and delegation to Health Tech.
Health Tech	.5-1.0 FTE	Based on size/need of school and delegation by Nurse with a recommended minimum .5 FTE per School
OT/PT	1:40	If have COTA or PTA these numbers can be adjusted upward to some degree
Early Childhood Special Ed. Teacher	1:30	1 licensed ECSE teacher for 1AM and 1PM sections of preschool

New Charter School On-Boarding Checklist

Have your school's special education staff review the following materials

- **Charter Institute Guidance**
[CSI Guidebook](#)
- **Onsite Monitoring Process (OMP)**
[OMP Forms & Plan Checklists](#)
- **SPED Policies and Procedures Manual**
[Special Education Core Manual:](#)

Have your school's special education staff develop

- **[Special Education Program Plan](#)**

Have your school's nursing staff review the following materials

- **School Nurse & Health Polies/Procedures**
[CSI](#) and [CDE](#)
 - CDE Licensed Nurse and delegates hired/trained
 - Immunization records for all students
 - Health Care Plans
 - Vision/hearing Screenings process
 - Obtain nursing supplies/materials
 - Emergency Procedures in place- First Aid Staff, Child Abuse reporting

Have your school's special education staff review the following materials:

Orientation Webinar Trainings

- New Sped Staff Orientation
- Core Manual Training
- Enrollment and Student Transfer Process:
- Monitoring Student Progress
- Eligibility Determination
- School Age IEPs
- Transition IEPs
- IEP Amendment Training
- December Count Trainings
- Sped End of Year Training
- MTSS to Special Education
- Trends in Sped: Legal Topics and Compliance

Have your school's HR / business manager review the following materials

- **Personnel- HR**
 - Employ/Contract Service Providers- insure HQ
 - Complete and submit the CSI Personnel Directory form
 - [Complete CSI HR Form and submit to ES department](#)
 - Obtain CDE Special Services License and evaluate for Highly Qualified status-Include Paras
 - [Complete Vacant Personnel Action Form for any vacancies](#)

Have your school's special education staff and registrar review the following materials

- **ES Student Records**
 - Obtain Student files, including current IEP, Section 504, GT- ALP, and Health Plans.
 - Transfer IEP Process- Notify District of Residence Form- send to school district of residence

- **Finance**

- Create a Special Education, GT, Nurse/Health budget; include assumptions
- **Student Information System**
Alpine Achievement, Infinite Campus Provide SIS training and Assign User Names/Passwords to school staff and CSI SPED staff
 - Create a plan to collect, analyze, track student data: special education, 504, GT, School health
- **Education Plan**
 - Staff Materials and supplies including test kits for GT and Special education/504, progress monitoring tools
 - Building Level problem solving procedures and team identified
 - Program Coordinators identified: GT, SPED, 504 , School Nurse- Health/Safety