



# *Dyslexia*

## PARENT GUIDE

This guide was created by:



# Creating School Support for Children with Dyslexia

## STEPS FOR PARENTS

When children struggle with reading, it's crucial that they get the support they need at school. As a parent or caregiver, you are the expert on your child and serve an essential role in the process of early identification and intervention. The following checklist provides the steps you can take to get your child support in the classroom.

- Create a record
- Initiate a conversation with an educator
- Collect information
- See if your state has a dyslexia handbook
- Schedule a meeting
- Meet with a pediatrician
- Be aware of Child Find
- Use an online dyslexia screener
- Ask questions about reading interventions
- Advocate for your child
- Learn about dyslexia
- Explore your resources
- Meet with Child Study Team
- Be heard
- Advocate for Legislative Change

### STEP 1

#### *Create a record*

Keep a notebook with documentation of what steps you have taken and who you have contacted regarding each concern and step (you can use this guide).

### STEP 2

#### *Initiate a conversation with an educator*

When you realize that your child is struggling, identify someone at your child's school to initiate a conversation regarding your concerns—homeroom teacher, ELA teacher, or others—who could provide information on what skills and abilities may be below grade level.

**EDUCATOR CONTACTED:**

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**DATE OF CONTACT:**

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**NOTES:**

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**STEP 3**

**Collect information**

Collect information and data about your child in a file or folder. This information can include:

- test scores such as DIBELS
- standardized test results
- grades
- samples of work
- time to complete homework
- difficulty with specific areas such as sounding out words
- family history with reading/learning challenges
- outside evaluations (pediatrician, neuropsychologist, speech and language evaluations)

This information will be useful when talking with school personnel about concerns.

**STEP 4**

**See if your state has a dyslexia handbook**

Find out if your state has a dyslexia handbook and if so, what is the process for identifying learning difficulties and getting appropriate intervention. If your state doesn't have a dyslexia handbook, you can view one from another state that Donell mentioned such as the Utah handbook [found here](#).

**STEP 5**

**Schedule a meeting**

Rather than showing up at the school unannounced, call the school and schedule an appointment with the person in charge of reading intervention—literacy specialist, special education coordinator, etc.—or contact the principal to find out who you should talk to.

**PEOPLE AT MEETING:**

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**DATE OF MEETING:**

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**NOTES:**

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**STEP 6**

**Meet with a Pediatrician**

Discuss concerns with your child's pediatrician. They are often able to assist with referrals and can document your concerns in the child's records.

STEP 7

**Be aware of Child Find**

The Child Find mandate gives you the legal ground to get your child evaluated by his/her school.

According to [Understood.org](http://Understood.org):

*Child Find is a legal requirement that schools find all children who have disabilities and who may be entitled to special education services. Child Find covers every child from birth through age 21. The school must evaluate any child that it knows or suspects may have a disability. Child Find is part of a federal law called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This law protects the rights of students with disabilities.*

STEP 8

**Use an online dyslexia screener**

Use an online dyslexia screener such as the free online one [found here](#) to identify the number of dyslexia-specific characteristics and print the results to include in data to take to the school.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:**

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STEP 9

**Ask questions about reading interventions**

If reading support is being offered, ask specific questions:

- Is my child going to receive intervention through the RTI process?
- Who will be providing the intervention? How often and for what amount of time?
- What program will be used? Is it research-based (explicit, systematic, and sequential)? Has the person providing intervention had training in the use of the program/intervention?
- What will happen if my child isn't making expected progress?

STEP 10

**Advocate for your child**

Find ways to advocate for your child with educators, through parent-teacher organizations, serving on decision-making committees, even running for school board. Seek out other parent advocacy groups such as the [Decoding Dyslexia chapter in your state](#).

STEP 11

**Learn about dyslexia**

Find information on [dyslexia](#) to become better informed. [Overcoming Dyslexia](#) by Dr. Sally Shaywitz is often recommended as a good place for parents to start.

**STEP 12**

**Explore your resources**

Find out if your area has a parent information center, educational advocacy program, or other resources that could provide information and even go with you to a meeting at the school.

**STEP 13**

**Meet with Child Study Team**

If the need is urgent, request that your child’s situation be brought to the school’s Child Study Team for consideration for additional testing, a 504 plan, etc. Ask when that meeting will be held and request to sit in on the discussion if warranted. If you have data that supports the need for more immediate assessment, you can request in writing that the school does an evaluation. All requests to schools should be done in writing and a copy kept for your personal records.

**PEOPLE AT MEETING:**

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**DATE OF MEETING:**

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**NOTES:**

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**STEP 14**

**Be heard**

If you have attempted to get support from the school and you feel that you are being ignored or given incorrect information, contact the school principal. If that doesn’t work, contact the district special education coordinator or superintendent and request a meeting to review what you have tried.

**PEOPLE AT MEETING:**

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**DATE OF MEETING:**

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**NOTES:**

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**STEP 15**

**Advocate for legislative change**

Parents have found success in implementing educational policies by contacting their elected representatives. Many states have already enacted laws to include more training for teachers, screening for dyslexia, and appropriate research-based instruction and intervention.





