

An Introduction to Understanding Special Education



Arlington Public Schools
Special Education Parent Resource Center
(PRC)

Session Overview

- Key Facts About Special Education
- The Role of the Family
- The Special Education Cycle
- Tools for Collaboration



What is special education?

Special education means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parent(s), to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability.

Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction:

1. To address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability; and
2. To ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards that apply to all children within the jurisdiction of the local educational agency.

**Special education is a service,
not a place.**



A Brief History

- **Public Law 94-142**
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education ACT (IDEA)**
- **Six Principles of IDEA**
(from *Navigating the Special Education Maze, 4th Edition*)
 - All children will be served (*Virginia serves children ages 2 through 21*)
 - Children will be tested fairly to determine if they will receive services.
 - Schools have a duty to provide individually designed, appropriate programs for every child at no cost to their parents.
 - Children with disabilities will be educated with children who do not have disabilities whenever possible. (LRE)
 - The decisions of the school system can be challenged by parents.
 - Parents of children with disabilities participate in the planning and decision-making for their child's education.

Learn more at: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/leg/idea/history.html>



Cornerstones of Special Education

Belief that *ALL* children can learn, and have the right to a:



Free and Appropriate Public Education (**FAPE**) in the:



Least Restrictive Environment (**LRE**)



The Role of Families

- Information sharing
- Active Involvement
- Teammates
- Consent
- Decision-makers

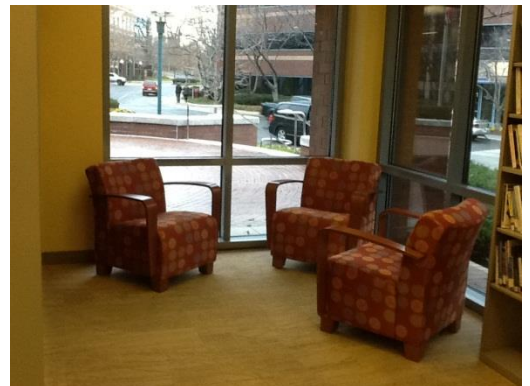


- ✓ Be informed.
- ✓ Seek guidance and support as needed.
- ✓ Provide input at all phases of the process.
- ✓ Develop positive partnerships with staff.
- ✓ You are the long-term member of your child's educational team – think of yourself as the home-based case manager.
- ✓ Develop a record keeping system.
- ✓ Use a planning calendar.
- ✓ Know that you have the right to access your child's records at school.



The Parent Resource Center (PRC)

- Part of the Virginia Parent Resource Center Network and Virginia Family Involvement Network
- Supports family involvement in children's education
- Supports collaboration of families and school staff
- Strives to help families navigate the special education process



PRC Support

- Parent Education Classes and Training
- Lending Library
- Individual Meetings with Families
- Community Collaboration and Referrals
- Information Clearinghouse

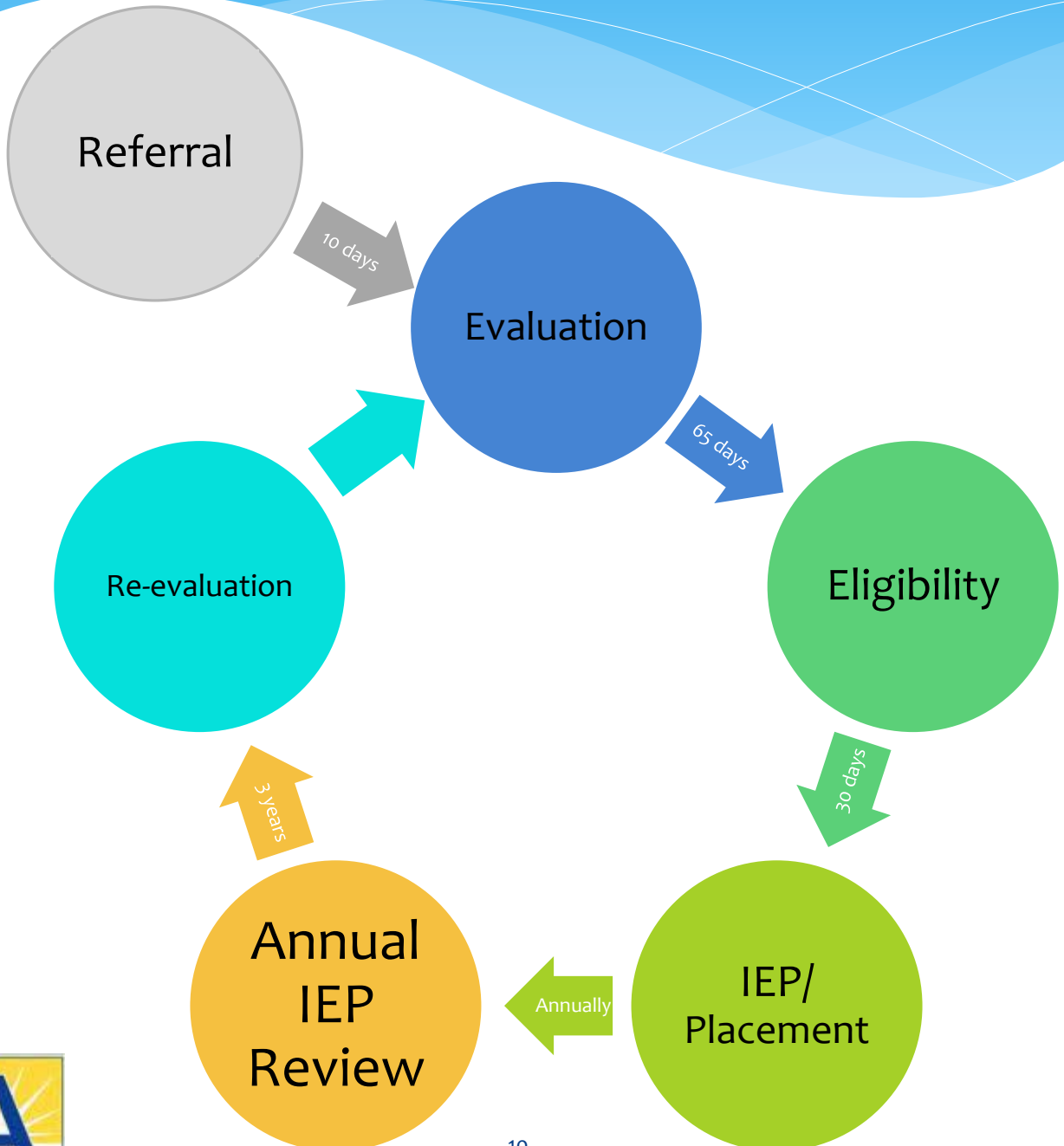


Intervention Assistance Teams (IATs)

- General education, NOT special education.
- Problem solving approach designed to help promote students success in the general education classroom.
- Team collects and reviews data regarding concerns.
- Develops interventions plans including desired change(s), specific time frames for implementation, and outcome monitoring.



The Special Education Cycle



Referral

- Anyone who suspects that a child may have a disability may refer a child.
- Once a referral is received, Arlington Public Schools (APS) will schedule a ***Student Study Committee Meeting*** to discuss the referral, within 10 administrative days
- Parents must be invited to the meeting, but attendance is not required. Typically, there will be at least 3 school staff members present.



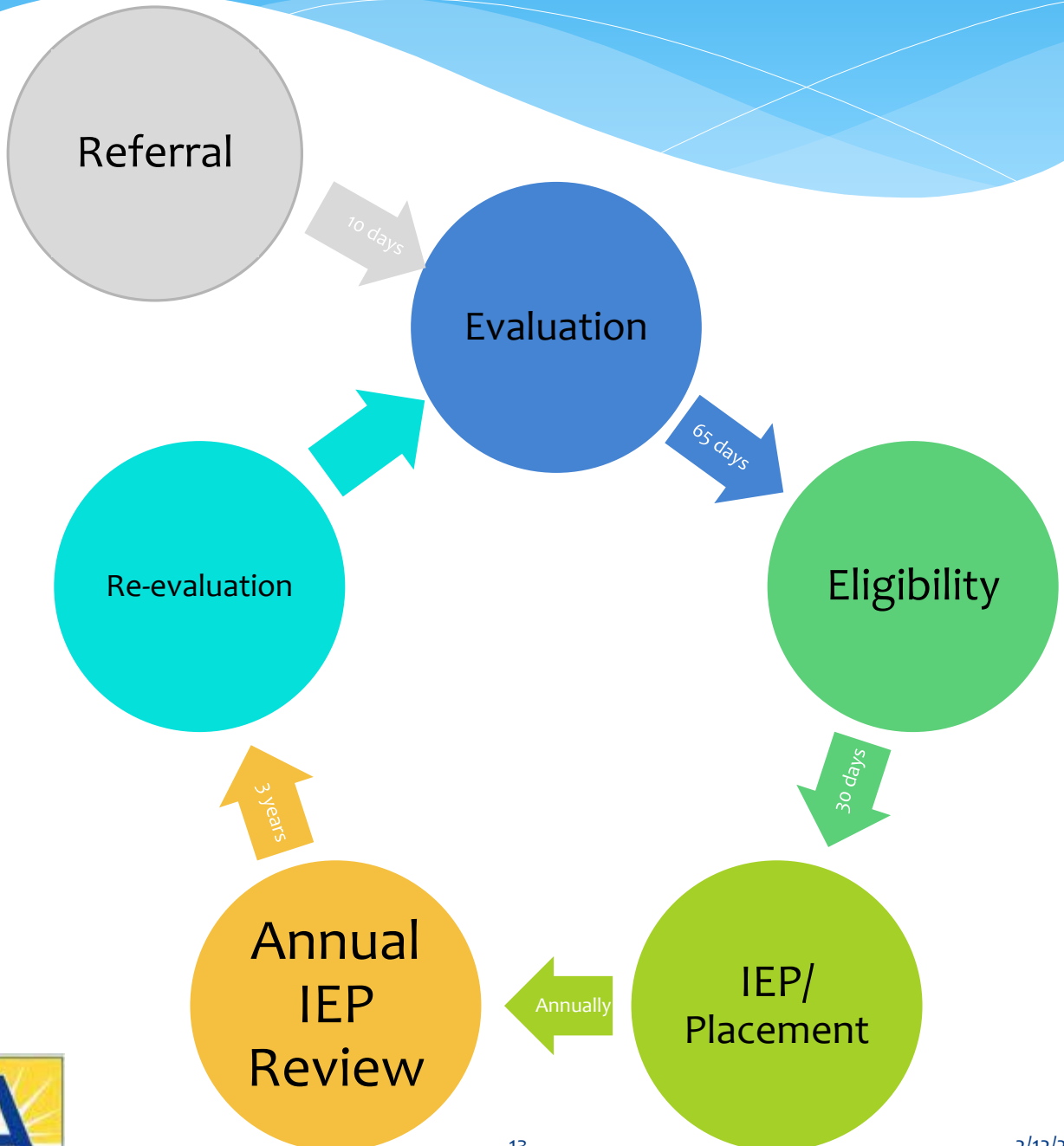
Children with Disabilities in Virginia

- * Autism
- * Deaf-Blindness
- * Developmental Delay (up to age 6) (DD)
- * Emotional Disability
- * Intellectual Disability
- * Hearing Impairment
- * Multiple Disabilities
- * Orthopedic Impairment
- * Other Health Impairment (OHI)
- * Specific Learning Disability
- * Speech or Language Impairment
- * Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- * Visual Impairment, Including Blindness

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/disabilities/index.shtml



The Special Education Cycle



Evaluation

- Evaluated in all suspected areas of disability.
- Evaluation must be completed in 65 administrative days.
- Eligibility “packet” is available to parents at least two days prior to the meeting.
- All information, including information submitted by families, is considered.



- ✓ Think about what information you may wish to submit about your child.
- ✓ Consider submitting a **parent narrative**.
- ✓ Make arrangements to obtain packet at least two days prior to the meeting.
- ✓ Schedule time to review the packet.
- ✓ Prepare notes, questions and talking points for the meeting.

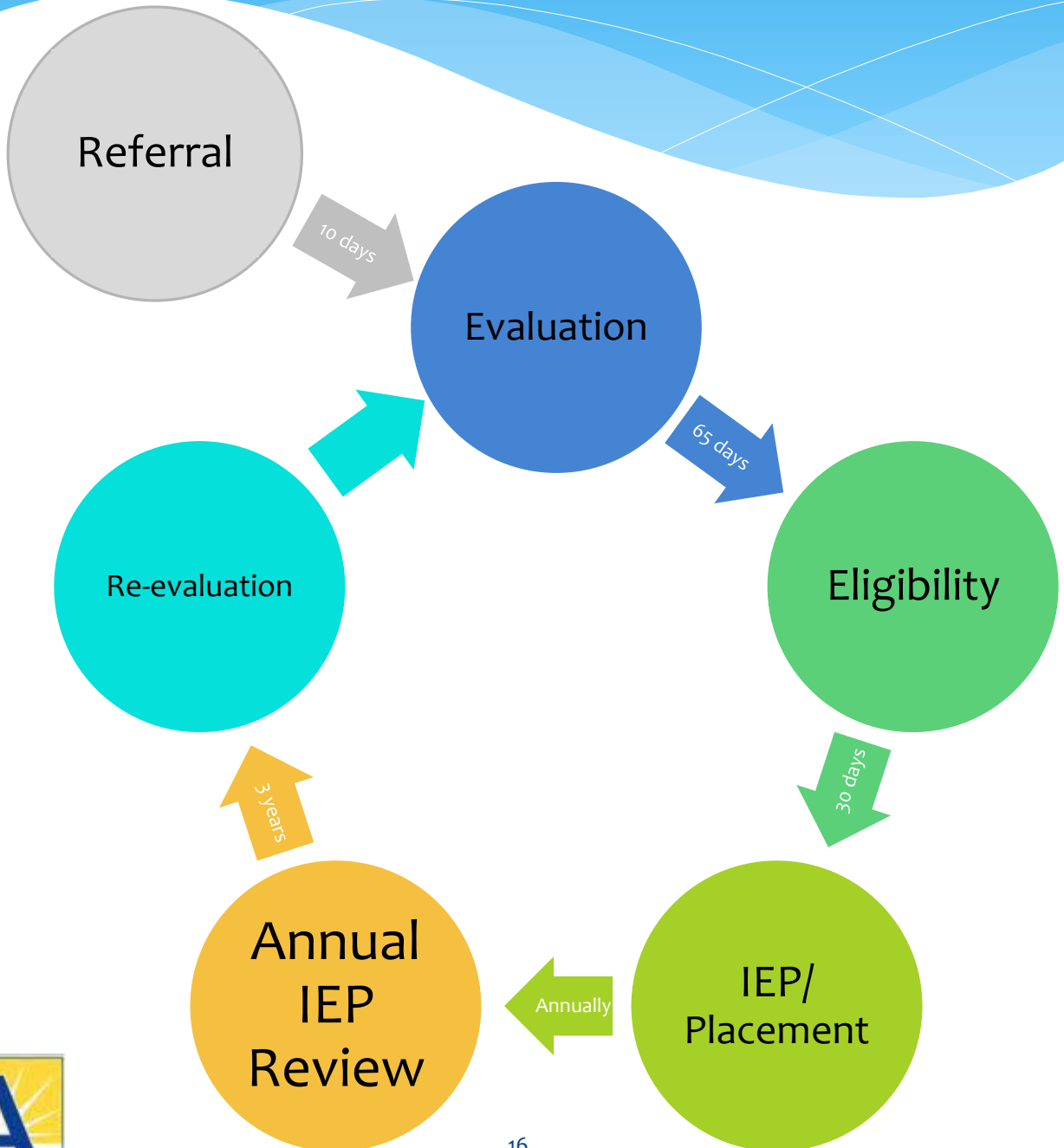


What types of evaluations are usually completed?

- **Speech Only Evaluation**
 - Speech/Language
 - Teacher Narrative or Observation
- **Full Study**
 - Socio-cultural
 - Psychological
 - Educational
 - Teacher Narrative
 - *Parent Narrative*
 - Medical
 - Others, as Needed



The Special Education Cycle



Eligibility

* Let's Look at an Eligibility Meeting

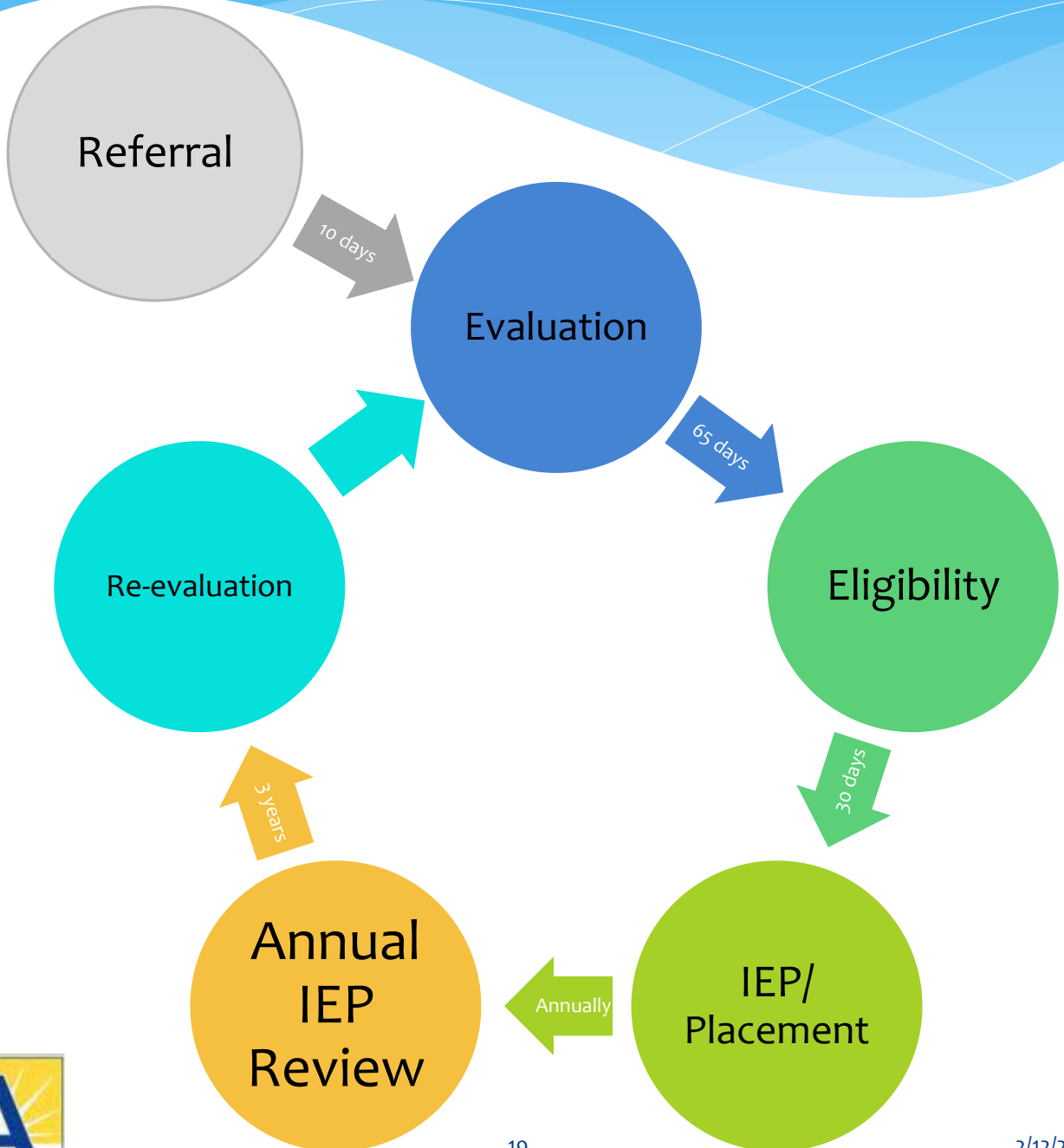


Eligibility

- The Eligibility Committee convenes during a meeting to determine whether or not a student is a “child with a disability” who requires special education.
- Parents are equal members of the committee.
- The committee strives to reach consensus.
- Parent consent is **REQUIRED** to find a student eligible, and/or to terminate eligibility.



The Special Education Cycle



Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

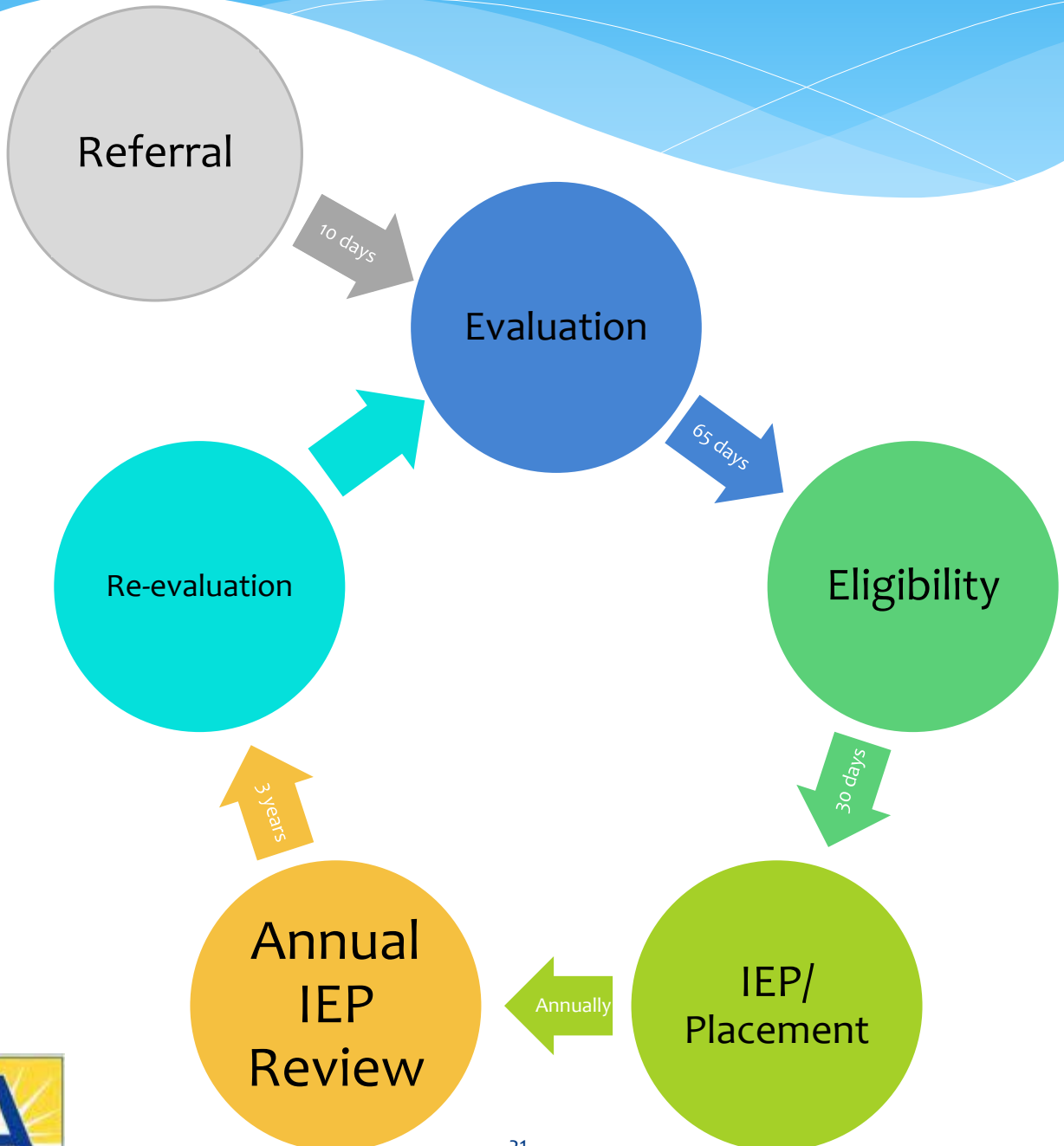
The IEP is developed by a team that includes parents. The IEP addresses strengths and weaknesses through measurable annual goals, modifications and accommodations; outlines service delivery; and is reviewed at least annually.

The IEP is developed with **30 calendar days** of eligibility.

APS' best practices encourage forwarding a draft of goals to family at least day prior to the IEP meeting.



The Special Education Cycle



Reevaluation

At least every three years, the school must reevaluate your child to determine whether your child is still a child with a disability who is in need of special education and/or related services.

In advance of the meeting, an **Assessment Review Meeting** will be held to decide whether additional assessments are needed to determine continued eligibility.



Team Collaboration

Parents are equal and important members of all educational teams.

Developing partnerships with school staff:

Communication is key.

Celebrate accomplishments!



Troubleshooting

- Focus on the child.
- Share information.
- Solicit staff feedback.
- Utilize team building strategies.
- Be honest and direct.



Conflict Resolution Options

- Talk with teacher or service provider.
- IEP Meeting
- Talk with building Special Education Coordinator (SEC).
- Talk with building administrator.
- Special Education Review Committee (SERC)
- Mediation
- Due Process Hearing/State Complaint



Thank You!

- Your involvement makes a difference in your child's education.
- Please let us know how the Parent Resource Center (PRC) may be of assistance to you.
- We would be grateful if you would complete the session evaluation and leave it in the red box.

