

When it comes to obtaining Parental Consent, districts sometimes need to be creative in their methods. After working closely with over 150 LEAs in New Jersey for the SEMI program, PCG has encountered several districts who have successfully managed the Parental Consent process. Below is a list of best practices that we've encountered since Jan 2005. Districts that have a high percentage of Parental Consents for the special education Medicaid population almost always:

- have a dedicated SEMI Coordinator who is responsible for managing the parental consent process; and
- use multiple methods to obtain consent.

Best practices for obtaining Parental Consent

- **Referral Process:** Make the Parental Consent part of the special education referral process. Before a student is evaluated for services, have the parent/legal guardian sign the consent. This can be done in the Special Services Department at the same time the parent/legal guardian is completing paperwork to have their child evaluated.
- **School Registration Packet:** Include the Parental Consent in the initial school registration packet. This procedure yields Parental Consents for both special education and regular education students. In the event a regular education student becomes classified for special education in the future, the Parental Consent will already be on file for that student. It is important to educate building administrators to forward the Parental Consent upon receipt to the Special Services Department.
- **Initial and Annual Review Meetings:** Present the Parental Consent at the initial and annual review meetings. IEP meetings are a perfect opportunity to obtain consent. Once the IEP is signed, present the Parental Consent as a document that also needs to be signed. Another option is to include the Parental Consent in the mailing advising the parent/legal guardian of an impending IEP meeting. In the mailing, ask the parent(s) to bring the signed Parental Consent to the meeting.
- **Registration packets for transfer students:** Include the Parental Consent in the registration packet for special education students transferring into the district. This works especially well in districts where registration takes place in a central location.
- **Committed staff member:** Dedicate a staff member who will be responsible for tracking the Parental Consent process. This should include: generating the Parent Consent and Medicaid Eligibility report from EasyTRAC, identifying students with no consent on file and following up with child study team members to obtain consent.
- **Free Lunch application mailing:** Include the Parental Consent in the free and reduced lunch application mailing at the beginning of the school year. Inform building administrators to forward returned Parental Consents to the Special Services Department.
- **Send form home with students:** Have the homeroom teacher and/or the special education teacher send the Parental Consent home with the student. Returned Parental Consents should be forwarded to the student's case manager or the Special Services Department.
- **Mass mailing:** Mail the Parental Consent home with a cover letter written on district letterhead. For convenience, include a self-addressed stamped envelope. This method may not be as effective depending upon the district's demographics.