



Northern Lights Academy Cooperative #6096-52  
302 14<sup>th</sup> Street ~ Cloquet MN 55820  
Office Phone ~ 218-878-3060  
Fax ~ 218-878-3061  
Barb Mackey, Asst. Director of Special Education  
[bmackey@nlacoop.org](mailto:bmackey@nlacoop.org)

## **Referral Process for The Northern Lights Academy (Setting 4 School)**

**Step 1.** The school team members alert their K-12 special education coordinator that there are concerning behaviors and possible discussion of a referral to NLA, even if it never ends up to be. The student gets put on a “watch” list by the coordinator.

**Step 2\*.** The K-12 coordinator guides the team to check on and follow due process for the student, including holding IEP meetings or making IEP amendments to address behavior goals, teaching of lagging skills, current Functional Behavior Assessment and Positive Behavior Support Plan, data collection, etc. \*This step may be effective enough where the team does not need to proceed to Step 3. **\*Do not skip Steps 1 and 2. These steps require time and data collection to determine if they are successful. This is a due process right of the student.**

**Step 3.** In the event that Steps 1 and 2 are not successful, the student’s IEP manager discusses with the parent/family the possibility of referring the student to the Northern Lights Academy (NLA), a Setting IV special education program. The NLSEC Coordinator can assist the IEP manager with how to do this.

**Step 4.** A referral is only appropriate when the IEP team has conclusive data that shows Setting III services are not meeting the student’s needs and the student is not making progress towards their IEP goals and objectives. This includes but is not limited to number of holds, suspensions, frequency of severe disruptive behaviors, FBA/PBSP documentation, trends, etc.

**Step 5.** A Referral Packet is completed by the IEP team and is submitted to the NLA. This is facilitated by the student’s IEP Manager. The team could use a google folder to collect all the documents and organize them together if that works better for them. The referral should be emailed to [nlaadmin@nlacoop.org](mailto:nlaadmin@nlacoop.org), not directly to the Assistant Director.

**Step 6.** The Referral Packet is reviewed by the NLA Leadership Team, who has the final determination if the Setting IV NLA is the least restrictive learning environment to provide a free appropriate public education for the student. The Leadership Team consists of:

- NLSEC Special Education Coordinator (will attend when a student from one of their districts is being referred)
- NLA Asst. Director of Special Education
- NLA Special Education Teacher(s)
- NLA School Social Worker
- Other staff may be invited as appropriate

The Leadership Team meets weekly and reviews submitted referral(s). Oftentimes, Asst. Director meets with the K-12 Coordinator ahead of this time and then the rest of the team meets. The team determines whether the data and other referral information supports possibly enrolling the student in the NLA. If there is a dispute amongst the team members, the Special Education Director shall make the final decision. The decision is communicated to the student’s IEP Manager with an email copy of the NLA Response to Referral form, cc’d with NLSEC Coordinator.

**Step 7.** If it’s determined the student is a candidate for NLA, then an IEP meeting is called by the referring district to be held at the NLA. The referring district IEP manager will prepare the team meeting notice, document meeting attendance, and the decision(s) made. NLA and referring district staff will be present at the IEP Meeting. A tour of the NLA may be arranged for the parents/guardians and/or student following the meeting if they desire.