



Special Education: Child Find

The purpose of Child Find is to identify, locate, and evaluate children and youth ages 3 to 21 years of age who are suspected of having or have a disability or developmental delay, in order to provide appropriate special education services under the law.

When Should a Child Be Referred to Child Find?

A child should be referred when:

- A health or medical disorder interferes with development and/or learning.
- A child has a diagnosed progressive or degenerative condition that will eventually impair or impede the child's ability to learn.
- A child seems to have difficulty understanding directions like others that are his/her age. A child's speech is not understood by family or friends.
- A child has difficulty acquiring skills with reading, writing, math, or other school subjects and is performing below grade level standards.
- A child appears to have social, emotional or behavioral difficulties that adversely impacts his/her ability to learn and/or interact with others.

What is Special Education?

Under the law, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), ensures that regardless of a student's disability or level of severity, schools must provide an appropriate education to ALL children with a disability (ages 3-21). It also requires that the following six principles be provided for students who receive special education services:

- *Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)* — a public education at no cost to parents/guardians or children designed to meet the individual needs of each student, provide access to the general education curriculum, provides services in accordance to a student's IEP, and results in an educational benefit to the child.
- *Nondiscriminatory Identification and Evaluation* — refers to the process and instruments used to identify individuals with a disability. Schools are required to use nonbiased methods as well as multiple approaches in the evaluation process to ensure that there is no discrimination on the basis of race, culture, or native language. No identification or placement decisions may be based on a single evaluation instrument or test score.
- *Individualized Education Program (IEP)* — this document is the foundation of special education and specifically describes the services to be provided to the student with a disability. The IEP includes a description of a student's current level of educational performance, information on how his or her disability influences academic performance, and details needed adaptations and accommodations. This document also specifies the educational settings in which the student will receive instruction in the least restrictive environment, the learning goals and objectives that will be addressed within a targeted year, behavior management plan (*if needed*), transportation needs, and related services.
- *Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)* — this indicates the educational settings in which a student with a disability receives special education services. The assumption is that all children will be educated alongside their peers without disabilities, to the greatest extent appropriate. It is only when it is determined that a student's education cannot be achieved satisfactorily using supplemental aids and services in general classroom settings that alternative educational settings would be identified. At that time, the LRE might include special education services received part- or full-time in a resource room setting, a self-contained classroom setting, and/or community-based settings.
- *Parent Participation* — parents of a child with a disability must be a member of any group that makes decisions regarding the placement and LRE of their child. Parents have a right to notification of all meetings regarding their child's placement, access to planning and evaluation materials, and notification of any planned evaluations. Parents must be invited to attend IEP meetings.
- *Due Process Safeguards* — these include the protections afforded to children and their parents under IDEA. Safeguards include: obtaining parental consent for all evaluations and educational placement decisions, confidentiality of all records relating to a child with a disability, independent student evaluation at public

expense, and due process hearings when the school and parent may disagree.

Who is Eligible for Services?

A student must be evaluated and identified as having a disability that adversely impacts their educational performance to be found eligible for special education programs and related services. The degree of the student's impairment *must* require special education services to access the general education curriculum. IDEA lists 13 different disability categories under which 3-21 year-olds may be eligible for services. The following disability categories listed in IDEA:

Autism;
Deaf-Blindness;
Deafness;
Emotional Disturbance;
Hearing Impairment;
Intellectual Disability;
Multiple Disabilities;
Orthopedic Impairment;
Other Health Impairment;
Specific Learning Disability;
Speech or Language Impairment;
Traumatic Brain Injury;
Visual Impairment (including blindness).

How Can Children Be Referred?

A referral may be made by school personnel or by a parent/guardian concerned about a child. Parent involvement and informed consent is obtained prior to any further action. Information is confidential and the privacy of children and parents is protected.

Contact Information

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