

# Chapter 1: Child Find

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In this chapter you will -

- learn the definition of Child Find
- understand that screening is different from evaluation

## Overview

Child Find is an ongoing process through which all children, from birth through age 21 (i.e., through the day before the student's 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday), who may need special education services or who may be eligible for early intervention, are identified, located, and evaluated.

Each school district is responsible for actively locating, identifying, and evaluating all children who live within the district boundaries who may qualify to receive special education and/or related services. All school districts must have written procedures for Child Find activities for all schoolchildren, including those attending private, charter, and religiously affiliated schools. These procedures should describe the following activities:

- » annual screening of children under the age of five to identify those who may need early intervention or special education services
- » ongoing review of all children in general education classes
- » ongoing coordination with early intervention programs like Child and Family Connections, Head Start, local preschools, and daycare facilities
- » coordination and consultation with nonpublic schools located within the district
- » referrals of children who might require evaluation for special education from parents, school staff, and representatives from community agencies.

### Worth a Look

The main legal provisions that address Child Find are:

20 USC Sec. 1412(a)(3)  
34 CFR Sec. 300.111  
23 IAC 226.100

## Screening

Screening is the process of reviewing **all** children in a given group with a **set of criteria** for the purpose of identifying certain individuals for evaluations who may be in need of special education. One purpose of screening is to locate children, birth through age 21 (i.e., through the day before the student's 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday), who may benefit from special education services to maintain satisfactory educational performance. No child can be determined

eligible to receive early intervention/special education and related services based only on the results of a screening procedure.

Screening is different from evaluation. Screening generally means reviewing all children in a given group (all kindergartners, all students who are new to the school district, all 3-year-old children in the community, etc.). It is not specific to an individual child except when it is used by a school district to determine whether a child that has been referred for evaluation is in need of evaluation. All children in the group are generally screened through the same review process. Screening does not involve the administration of assessment instruments that would be used in an evaluation. The district must inform the public of the process for conducting group screenings through school handbooks, newsletters, Child Find activities, letters, or similar methods. Written parent/guardian permission is not typically required for this type of screening, although some districts will ask for parental permission. Screening results should be shared with the parents/guardians. Screenings are done to determine which students are in need of an evaluation. Evaluations are done to determine if a child has a disability and requires special education services.

Special education instruction and related services are available for children with special needs from birth through age 21 (i.e., through the day before the student's 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday) who meet specific criteria.

Special needs may be in the areas of -

- » vision
- » hearing
- » health
- » behavior

or involve skills in -

- » fine or gross motor
- » speech/language
- » cognitive processing or learning

### Tips for Parents

Here are some suggestions for how you can best make use of the screening process for your child:

- Ask your child's daycare or preschool teachers if they have concerns about your child.
- Ask your child's doctor if he or she has any concerns about your child.
- Consider the observations of friends and family who may have worries about your child.
- Call your local school principal or local school district office and ask about having your child attend a school's Child Find screening.
- Bring any papers from teachers, doctors, or others to the Child Find screening.

### Important Reminder

Please share this information with your relatives, friends, and neighbors. It is important that parents of young children are aware of the availability of services before school enrollment.

- » social and emotional
- » adaptive or self-help

It is important to locate children with disabilities at a young age so that early help and support can be provided. Studies show that students learn and develop more successfully when they receive help early in their lives.

Screening and evaluation, as appropriate, are available at *no cost* to the family.

### Child Find and English Learners

When your child has a limited English proficiency and you believe that your child also has a disability, sometimes school districts refuse evaluations for special education services for English learners. The rationale they provide is that they will conduct an evaluation only after your child achieves fluency in English. This approach is not allowed by current regulations. When a child is suspected of having a disability an evaluation must not be delayed because a child is an English learner. As stated before in this chapter, it is important to locate children with disabilities at a young age regardless of their proficiency in English.

With English learners, sometimes the opposite is true, and a child is referred for special education services only because that child cannot speak fluent English. It is especially common in relation to children who speak a language other than English at home and therefore cannot pronounce certain phonemes (sounds such as *th*) in English or cannot learn how to read, write, and access academic content in English as fast as their English-speaking peers. Remember that not speaking English is NOT a disability. Not speaking English or not speaking fluent English cannot be a determinant factor in providing special education services. If your child does not have a disability, English language supports should be provided to your child through bilingual education and not through special education.

### Worth a Look

A letter issued by U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, and U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, stated that some school districts have a formal or informal policy of “no dual services” allowing students to receive either EL services or special education services but not both. Other districts may be delaying evaluations of EL students due to their limited proficiency in English. Based on the federal laws, these policies are not allowed.

[Dear Colleague Letter](#) January 7, 2015

