



# Questions and Answers About Child Find

## 1. What is child find?

Child find is a component of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that requires states to have a comprehensive system to identify, locate, and evaluate all children (birth through age 21) who are in need of early intervention or special education services ([34 CFR §300.111](#)).

Child find is an ongoing cooperative effort between state and local education agencies, parents, the community, professionals, related organizations, and private schools. It involves public awareness activities designed to ensure that children with disabilities have access as early as possible to a free appropriate public education, including special education and related services, designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living. A local educational agency (LEA) must implement these policies and ensure that it identifies, locates, and evaluates all children with disabilities who are in need of special education and related services.

## 2. What is a local education agency's (LEA) "child find" responsibility?

LEAs will identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities within their geographic boundaries of responsibility who are in need of special education and related services, including children who are highly mobile, such as migrant or homeless students, wards of the state, private school and homeschool students, regardless of the severity of their disability, and students who are suspected of being children with a disability and in need of special education, even though they are advancing from grade to grade. Before any major identification, location, or evaluation activity a notice to parents must be published or announced in newspapers or other media, with local circulation adequate to notify parents throughout the LEA's jurisdiction.

## 3. What are public awareness ideas for child find?

- ★ Posting the required annual notices.
- ★ Reviewing attendance data.
- ★ Implementing an ongoing public awareness campaign through direct mailings, internet notice (websites, email, social media), news media, billboards, and service announcements.
- ★ Placing brochures in libraries, health and community centers, county agencies; Women, Infants, and Children clinics (WIC), laundromats, pharmacies, gas stations, restaurants, and other public places that families visit such as adult sport activities
- ★ Conducting free universal developmental screenings.
- ★ Establishing written procedures for accepting and processing referrals.
- ★ Lunch menu
- ★ School newsletter
- ★ Parent support groups
- ★ Headstart Centers, preschools, daycares

## 4. What child find activities are the responsibilities of charter schools?

For a school-aged child (grades K through 12), the charter school in which the student is enrolled is accountable for child find activities. It is the school's responsibility to identify and evaluate students with disabilities, including children who are suspected of being children with a disability and in need of special education, even though they are advancing from grade to grade.

**5. What is the LEA's obligation for students transferring from another LEA?**

The new public agency in which the child enrolls must take reasonable steps to identify and evaluate students with disabilities.

**6. Who is responsible for child find activities for school-aged students who are enrolled by their parent/guardian in private schools?**

The school district within whose boundaries the private school is located is responsible for child find activities.

**7. Who is responsible for child find activities for preschool-aged children (3-5 year old)?**

All preschool-aged children are referred to the school district of residence or education service cooperative who provides early childhood services on behalf of the school district, including children who attend private preschools regardless of where the private preschool is located.

**8. What is the LEA's child find responsibility for children under the age of three?**

Children age birth to age three are referred to [First Connections](#) or 1-800-643-8258. The First Connections Program works with families on an individualized basis to assist in locating and coordinating services. The Department of Human Services (DHS) is the Lead Agency for the Program. The Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) is the division within DHS, which has administrative responsibility for implementation of the program.

**9. Who is responsible for child find activities for the student who is homeschooled?**

The school district within whose boundaries the homeschooled student resides is responsible for child find activities.

**10. Who is responsible for child find activities for students in residential facilities?**

Child find is the responsibility of the school district in which the residential facility is located.

**11. Who is responsible for child find activities for students in Juvenile Detention Centers (JDC)?**

Child find is the responsibility of the school district in which the JDC facility is located.

**12. Does the LEA have to maintain documentation of child find activities?**

Yes. The LEA must develop and maintain a written child find plan outlining efforts the LEA will undertake to meet its responsibilities. The child find plan must include a campaign of public awareness and procedures for conducting routine school screening.

**13. Who is covered by child find requirement?**

The child find requirement applies to all children ages birth through age 21 who reside within a state, including children who attend public and private schools, highly mobile children, migrant children, homeless children and children who are wards of the state regardless of the severity of their disability ([34 CFR §300.111](#)).

**14. What is a [referral for special education](#)?**

A referral is the formal process of requesting an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services. A referral must be in writing and include the name of the child and the reasons why the person believes the child is a child with a disability.

**15. Who can make a referral?**

Anyone, including parents, who believes a child is a child with a disability may make a referral.

**16. Can an LEA delay a referral by requiring Response to Intervention (RtI)?**

No, if a referral is made, the LEA must proceed with the referral conference to determine if the child is in need of an evaluation. Evaluations of children suspected of having a disability cannot be delayed or denied due to the implication of RtI strategies.

→ [OSEP RTI Memo](#)

→ [OSEP Preschool RTI Memo](#)

**17. Can an LEA (including preschool aged students) delay a referral received in the summer when school is not in session?**

No, a LEA may not delay a referral received in the summer due to staff unavailability. Within 21 days of receipt of the referral, the LEA is required to conduct a referral conference with required referral team members and follow all timelines associated with any requested evaluations.