OSSE is Committed to Ensuring Child Find

The Office of the Superintendent of Education (OSSE), as the state educational agency (SEA), has the duty to develop and maintain a system of policies and procedures to support coordination between local agencies involved in Child Find activities. OSSE relies on parents, doctors, daycare providers, schools, school districts, public health centers, and other social or medical service providers to refer children who may have a disability for proper assessment. All children, birth through age 21, are eligible for referral, including children who are homeless or are wards of the State, and children attending private schools, regardless of the severity of their disability or need.

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Office of the State Superintendent of Education

DIVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Comprehensive Child Find in the District of Columbia

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), **Child Find** is a process of continuous public awareness activities designed to ***locate***, ***identify***, and ***evaluate*** children who may require early intervention or special education services. This brochure is designed to answer frequently asked questions regarding the Child Find process.

CHILD FIND PROCESS: IDEA Part C (Birth through Age 2) to IDEA Part B (Ages 3 through 21)

What is Part C?
Part C is a part of the federal law under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that funds the District of Columbia's efforts to provide early intervention services to eligible children age birth through two years old.

What are early intervention services?
These are services such as occupational, physical and speech/ language therapy, as well as special instruction, vision, and audiology (hearing) services designed to meet the specific needs of a child from birth through age 2 and the needs of the family related to enhancing the child's development.

Who provides early intervention services?
The District of Columbia's Early Intervention Program (DC EIP), located within the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), is the single point of entry for infants and toddlers whose families or others have concerns about their development. DC EIP provides services through program staff and approved contractors.

How does a parent/guardian know if an infant or toddler has early intervention needs?
Children with developmental delays or who meet other criteria may need early intervention. Anyone, including parents, guardians, family members, friends, physicians, and child care staff can call the DC EIP Child Find Hotline at (202) 727-3665 for information about eligibility and how to make a referral.

What happens after a referral is made to DC EIP?
DC EIP will work with the family to determine if an evaluation of the child's developmental levels is needed. As part of this process, a screening may be completed with the parent's permission. If the evaluation indicates that a child is eligible for services, an Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) will be developed with input from the family. This plan will describe the services needed by the child and family and how they will be provided.

Do parents/guardians need to pay for early intervention services?
Federal law requires that certain services, including the following, be provided at no cost to families: developmental evaluations and assessments, IFSP development, and service coordination. Families may have to assume some or all of the costs for direct therapeutic services, depending on the family's ability to pay. Medicaid or private insurance may also be used to cover the costs.

Where are early intervention services provided?
Early intervention services are provided in the child's natural environment or primary day setting, including the family home and community child care centers.

Do early intervention services stop when a child turns 3 years old?
Yes. However, children can continue to have their needs met by Part B services, if found eligible. Children receiving Part C services begin transitioning to Part B after turning two years old. Those children referred to Part C between the ages of two (2) and three (3) years old, but who are found ineligible for Part C may still access the Part B Early Stages Child Find Process at age 2 years and 8 months.

What is Part B?
Part B is a part of the federal law under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that requires states to provide special education services to eligible school-aged children ages three (3) through 21 years old.

What are special education services?
Special education services are specialized instruction and related services designed to assist eligible school-aged children with accessing curriculum. If eligible, students may receive related services such as: speech-language therapy, audiology services, interpreting services, psychological and counseling services, physical and occupational therapy, orientation and mobility services, and transportation services.

How does a parent/guardian know if a child needs special education services?
Parents/guardians may not know for sure if an infant or toddler needs special education services. A child should be referred for an evaluation as soon as a parent or other adult, such as a teacher or counselor, notices a delay or decrease in development or school performance.

Who is responsible for providing evaluations under Part B?
Upon referral, the local education agency (District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) or independent charter schools) in which the child is enrolled must evaluate the child. Children not yet enrolled in school can be referred to Early Stages, a DCPS program that provides evaluations for children between the ages of 2 years 8 months through 5 years 10 months. DCPS is the only geographical local education agency, and therefore is responsible for all Child Find activities provided to students who are not enrolled in independent charter schools. Please visit www.earlystagesdc.org for more information.

What happens after a request for an evaluation is made?
Early Stages or the school district will seek the parent's permission to complete an initial evaluation, and schedule a subsequent meeting to determine eligibility for special education services. Students who are found eligible for Part B services will have a service plan known as an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that describes the amount and nature of the services.

Do parents need to pay for evaluations or special education services?
No. Federal law requires that special education services be provided at public expense to students who are eligible. The school district will pay for evaluations, special education and related services, and supports that are appropriate under the student's IEP. With some limitations, Medicaid or private insurance may be billed for the costs of services.

Where are special education services provided?
Special education services are typically provided at a student's school, but may also be provided in other least restrictive environments (LRE) in accordance with the student's IEP.

Do special education services stop when a student turns 21 years old?
Yes. Students may receive services through the end of the semester that they turn 22 years old. Services may stop sooner for students who formally exit special education or graduate with a regular high school diploma prior to their 21st birthday. Students exiting Part B may continue to receive supports and services from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) at the District of Columbia's Department on Disability Services. For more information please call: (202) 730-1700.

Where can parents learn more information about Part C and/or Part B services or express a concern?
Parents can learn more about Part C early intervention services and/or Part B special education services from the Procedural Safeguards Notices (PSN) that are available online at: www.osse.dc.gov. The PSN for Part C (known as "Families Have Rights") and Part B (known as "Rights of Parents of Students with Disabilities") includes information about families' rights and the different options available for addressing concerns.

For more information or for answers to general questions, please call: (202) 741-0271