



Child Find Frequently Asked Questions For Children Ages 3-5

1. What is Child Find?

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

Child Find is a continuous process of 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. (115.77, Wis. Stats.)

Child Find Requirements

2. Who is covered by Child Find requirement?

The Child Find requirement applies to all children ages birth through 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)

3. What are the minimal requirements to meet Child Find?

The following two notices must be posted:

- Notice to Parents and Individuals Required to Make Referrals

At least annually, the LEA must inform parents and persons required to make referrals under state law about the agency's referral and evaluation procedures. The Department of Public Instruction's (Department's) Model Notice to Parents and Individuals Required to Make Referrals (<https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/laws-procedures-bulletins/procedures/childfind>) may be used to meet this requirement. The notice must contain the required information and be disseminated in a manner that will reach all parents and individuals required to make referrals. The notice may be placed in a newspaper with LEA-wide circulation or placed in a LEA publication mailed to all postal addresses within the LEA. Posting the notice on the LEA's website is not sufficient.

- **Notice of Child Find Activity: Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information**

Before any major Child Find activity, the LEA must give notice to parents of its procedures to protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable information used to meet special education requirements. The Department's Model Notice of Child Find Activity: Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information (<https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/laws-procedures-bulletins/procedures/childfind>) may be used to meet this requirement. The notice must be published in newspapers or announced in other media, with circulation adequate to notify parents throughout the LEA of the activity. Posting the notice on the LEA's website is sufficient to meet this requirement.

In addition, the LEA must:

- Establish written procedures for accepting and processing referrals.
- Document and date the receipt of each referral.
- Provide information and in-service opportunities to its entire licensed staff to familiarize them with the agency's referral procedures.
- At least annually, inform, parents and persons required to make referrals about the LEA's referral and evaluation procedures.
- Within 15 business days of receiving a referral, send the child's parents a request for consent to evaluate or a notice that no additional data is necessary. (Wis Stats 115.777(3)(a-e))

4. What is the LEA's Child Find responsibility for children under the age of three?

LEAs are responsible for maintaining a comprehensive Child Find system from birth through age 21 for identifying children and youth with disabilities. The county Birth to 3 Program is responsible for ensuring all children eligible for the Birth to 3 Program are identified, located, and evaluated. LEAs are encouraged to enter into local agreements with county Birth to 3 Programs to establish the manner in which a collaborative Child Find system can be maintained for their community.

5. What are the Child Find requirements specific to parentally placed private school children?

A LEA is responsible for Child Find activities for parentally placed private school children attending private schools located within the boundaries of the LEA. This would include children residing outside the boundaries of the LEA but attending a private school within the boundaries of the LEA.

6. How do LEAs include children who are homeless in Child Find efforts?

LEAs should develop an Informed Referral Network (see question #8) as a means of making connections so that families residing in emergency shelters (domestic, abuse and homeless), transitional housing programs, and temporary housing arrangements are included in Child Find efforts.

Identifying, Locating, and Evaluating Young Children

7. How are LEAs meeting the Child Find requirement to identify, locate and evaluate children with disabilities?

- Posting the required annual notices (see question #3).
- Using the school census to locate children for screening.
- Implementing an ongoing public awareness campaign through direct mailings, internet notice (websites, email, Facebook, twitter), news media, billboards, and service announcements.
- Placing brochures in libraries, health and community centers, county agencies, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) clinics, laundromats, and other public places that families visit.
- Conducting free universal developmental screenings.
- Developing interagency agreements with county Birth to 3 Programs.
- Developing an Informed Referral Network.
- Establishing written procedures for accepting and processing referrals.

8. What is an Informed Referral Network?

An Informed Referral Network is comprised of community partners working together to serve young children and their families. Partnerships with community agencies are a way to learn more about screening opportunities available for all children and share information about community resources.

Screening

9. What is screening?

Screening is a preliminary process to identify children who may need further evaluation in order to determine the existence of a delay in development or a particular disability.

Screening is universal for an entire group of children as opposed to an individual child or a smaller group of children suspected of having a disability.

10. Is screening a requirement of Child Find?

No, screening is not a requirement of Child Find; however, it is an activity that can be part of the LEA's comprehensive Child Find system to locate and identify children who may be in need of special education and related services. Screening young children provides parents and professionals with information on whether a child's development is similar to children of the same age.

11. Is there a required screening instrument?

No, LEAs may make the decision on what screening instrument should be used. When selecting a screening instrument, the LEA should consider whether it is:

- Age appropriate
- Addresses all developmental domains (cognition, social/emotional, motor, communication, and adaptive)

- Based on valid, reliable and normative samples
- Easily administered
- Cost effective

One screening instrument widely used in Wisconsin by doctors, health departments, WIC, Birth to 3 Programs, Head Start, childcare and other agencies is the Ages and Stages Questionnaire – 3 (ASQ-3).

12. Should locally developed screening tools be used?

Best practice would be to use a screening tool based on valid, reliable and normative samples.

13. Can screening be used to delay an evaluation for special education and related services?

No, if a child is referred for an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education and related services, the LEA must implement the requirements in CFR 300.301 through CFR 300.311.

14. Is signed parent/legal guardian consent required for a Child Find screening?

No, screening tools are quick, low cost, single instrument tools available to all children to assess age appropriate skills and do not require prior written notice or informed consent from parents.

15. Who is involved in Child Find screening?

Each LEA identifies a screening team and process. The screening team should include LEA personnel who have knowledge about screening tools and may include health professionals and community partners/agencies.

16. Can special education staff, such as early childhood special education teachers; speech and language pathologists (SLPs); occupational therapists (OTs); and physical therapists (PTs), screen children?

Yes, special education personnel may conduct universal screening available to all children but are not allowed to provide additional screening or follow-up to an individual child. When additional screening or follow-up to an individual child by special education staff happens without a referral and written consent, a violation of due process has occurred.

17. Are hearing and vision screenings mandatory when conducting Child Find screening?

No, hearing and vision screenings are not mandatory when conducting Child Find screening.

18. Is a parent completed questionnaire, such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 (ASQ-3), sufficient to conduct Child Find screening?

Yes, research shows that parents/legal guardians are accurate reporters of their child's development. No additional screening by the LEA would be required; however, the screening results from the questionnaire should be provided to the family. This can be done through a letter, home visits, or conference call.

19. What is the LEA responsibility when it receives a request for screening for an individual child?

A LEA must have a process in place to address a request for an individual screening consistent with universal screening provided to all children. This includes screening requests made when schools are not in session. If, however, there is reason to believe a child is a child with a disability, a referral should be made.

20. Can a LEA offer monthly screenings at various locations?

Yes, screenings can take place monthly in a variety of places. LEAs, however, also need to have a process in place to address Child Find screening requests from families unable to attend scheduled monthly screenings.

21. Can a child participate in a screening conducted at his or her child care that is outside of their resident school district?

Yes, the child may participate in a screening outside of their resident school district. However, if there is a suspected disability, a referral would be made to the resident district.

22. Can a child participate multiple times in a LEA offered universal screening?

Yes, as this is a universal screening open to all children. Child Find activities provide information on typical development and parents may wish to access this free information on a regular basis.

23. If there is a concern only with a child's speech development, can a screening be conducted solely for speech and language?

No, as screening is intended to address all areas of developmental domain, the screening would need to be consistent with the universal screening conducted for all children and be provided by the screening team.

24. What happens after screening?

After screening a child, the results of the screening should be shared with parents. If there is reason to believe a child is a child with a disability, a referral should be made.

Additionally, the LEA may share community resources available to the family or may provide activities and suggestions for parents to use with their child.

25. Can special education staff, such as a speech and language pathologist or early childhood special education teacher, ask a parent to bring a child in after a screening for additional follow-up or screening?

No, if there is a concern regarding the child's screening results, a referral for special education evaluation should be made. Additional follow-up would require a referral and written consent through the special education evaluation process.

26. Does the LEA need to maintain screening records for a child?

It is a local decision as to whether the LEA maintains the screening records for a child.

Referral

27. 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.

28. Who can make a referral?

Anyone, including parents, who believes a child is a child with a disability may make a referral. A physician, nurse, psychologist, social worker, or administrator of a social agency who reasonably believes a child brought to him or her for services is a child with a disability has a legal duty to refer the child, including a homeless child, to the school district in which the child resides. (115.77, Wis. Stats.)

Additionally, a person licensed under 115.28(7), Wis. Stats., who is employed by a LEA and who reasonably believes a child has a disability must refer the child.

Before referring the child, the person making the referral must inform the child's parent that the referral will be made.

29. Can a LEA delay a referral by requiring Response to Intervention (RtI)?

No, if a referral is made, the LEA must proceed with the special education evaluation to ensure that evaluations of children suspected of having a disability are not delayed or denied due to the implication of RtI strategies.

30. Can a LEA 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 15 business days of receipt of the referral, the LEA is required to conduct a review of existing data with IEP Team members and send the child's parents a request for consent to evaluate or a notice that no additional data is necessary.