

# Child Find

Onalaska School

District

# What is Child Find?

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Child Find is a continuous process of public awareness activities, screening and evaluation designed to *locate, identify, and refer as early as possible* all young children with disabilities and their families who are in need of Early Intervention Program (Part C) or Preschool Special Education (Part B/619) services of the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#)

- IDEA requires all states to have a "comprehensive Child Find system" to assure that all children who are in need of early intervention or special education services are located, identified, and referred.
- To receive Early Intervention Program or Special Education, children must meet eligibility guidelines according to the IDEA.

A Comprehensive Child Find System includes: (<http://www.childfindidea.org/>)

## **Definition of Target Population**

The population to be identified must be defined and described. To identify children who may have health or developmental issues as early as possible, it is important to think broadly about needed programs and services and conduct child find activities accordingly. For example, needs may range from an eye exam for a child having minor vision difficulties to a full evaluation for a child in need of more comprehensive or ongoing early intervention services. Multiple state programs have a responsibility to identify children in need of these services. Programs that are responsible for serving identified children include: early intervention, preschool special education, Head Start, Title V programs for children with special health care needs, and state Medicaid and SCHIP initiatives.

The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) targets all children with disabilities aged birth to 21 who reside in the state. Part C of IDEA, early intervention, focuses on children aged birth to three.

## **Public Awareness**

Early intervention systems must include a public awareness effort that focuses on the early identification of children who are eligible for services. Information about services and how to access them may be disseminated through the mass media and other communication mechanisms, and throughout the state, on a regular basis to parents, physicians and others who may make referrals.

## **Referral and Intake**

A mechanism must exist for a broad range of referral sources to be informed about eligibility, identification of children who may be eligible, and about how to make appropriate referrals to public agencies. Once the public agency receives a referral, a services coordinator needs to be appointed as soon as possible.

### **Screening and Identification of Young Children who may be Eligible for IDEA services**

Each statewide system should include procedures for screening of health and development as one component of a comprehensive child find system. Use of standardized, validated, accurate measures is highly recommended. Informal detection methods (checklists, observations, review of milestones, or use of selected items on validated screens, etc.) are not recommended because they miss the majority of children with disabilities. However, some informal methods (such as checklists) may encourage parents and caregivers to ask questions about a child's health or development that lead to screening and/or evaluation. Parents, grandparents, and other caregivers can use standardized screening tools that have been designed for this purpose.

Screening is mandated under EPSDT (Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment) and is required of pediatric healthcare providers who deliver routine health supervision services.

### **Eligibility Determination**

Each state has eligibility criteria for early intervention that needs to be consistent with federal regulations. In addition, some states have elected to serve children who are at risk of developmental disability. These states must describe their criteria and procedures for determining which children meet the "at risk" criteria. Services must be available for conducting diagnostic assessments and for identifying the intervention services needed.

### **Tracking**

States need to have a tracking system to determine which children are receiving services and ensure follow-up once children are referred

### **Interagency Coordination**

Child find activities need to be coordinated across state and local agencies to ensure efficient use of resources. Information about child find procedures and activities must be available to all individuals and agencies serving infants and children

### Further information from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction states:

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to set policies that **ensure all children with disabilities in Wisconsin who are in need of special education and related services are identified, located, and evaluated.** (34 C.F.R. §300.111(a)(1)). Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must implement these policies. (Wis. Stat. §115.77(1m)(a)). LEAs engage in Child Find through a variety of methods. These include:
- 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 DPI's Model Notice to Parents and Individuals Required to Make Referrals (<http://www.dpi.wi.gov/sped/referral-english.html>) 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 throughout the LEA. The

notice may be placed in a newspaper with LEA-wide circulation, or placed in an LEA publication mailed to all postal addresses within the LEA. Placing the notice on the LEA's website is not sufficient.

- Before any major child find activity, the public agency must give notice to parents of its procedures to protect the confidentiality of personally-identifiable information used to meet special education requirements. The DPI's Model Notice of Child Find Activity: Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information (<http://www.dpi.wi.gov/sped/cf-english.html>) 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. Placing the notice on the LEA's website is sufficient.
- LEAs should develop an informed referral network (i.e., physicians, Head Start programs, child care programs, public health, social services, and others in the community that come in contact with young children) and include families residing in emergency shelters (domestic abuse and homeless), transitional housing programs, and temporary housing arrangements. Additional information on informed referral networks can be found on: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/pdf/bul99-09.pdf> (page 14, Section D).
- LEAs may choose to conduct a universal preschool screening event.
- LEAs are encouraged to work collaboratively with county Birth to 3 programs to engage in Child Find efforts. This collaborative work is often documented in an interagency agreement.
- LEAs may use an annual census to locate children with disabilities.

# Onalaska's Child Find Process

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## What:

- A universal screening designed to provide an overall developmental review to any child between the ages of two to four years old not already enrolled in a school setting. All children within this age range and living in the Onalaska community are invited to attend.
- The screening will serve as a developmental review and will assume a positive orientation and go beyond the concept of screening for deficits.
- Parents will be asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding their child's development while their child participates in a play based universal screening.
  - Screening will address development in the areas of motor, social-emotional, cognitive, adaptive and communication/articulation.
- Specialists in the early childhood field will be available to address any questions or concerns raised by parents. Information regarding normal child growth and development as well as information regarding resources and services available within the community will be shared.
- Parents will also receive affirmation of their child's developmental achievements and emotional support in their roles as parents.

## Why:

- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to set policies that ensure all children with disabilities in Wisconsin who are in need of special education and related services are identified, located, and evaluated. (34 C.F.R. §300.111(a)(1)). Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must implement these policies. (Wis. Stat. §115.77(1m)(a)).

## Where:

- Screenings will take place in various Onalaska community locations. See our Early Childhood Screening flier for specific locations.

## When:

- Screenings will take place various times per school year. See our Early Childhood Screening flier for specific dates.

## How:

- The School District of Onalaska will disseminate information and invite community families to screenings through a variety of ways:
  - The school district quarterly newsletter mailed to all families within the community.
  - Monthly newsletters sent by each school building in Onalaska school district and social media pages.
  - Fliers will be posted in various community settings, including medical provider locations
  - An electronic flier sent out to all families enrolled in Onalaska school district.
  - Further information and resources will be posted on the school district's website.
- Families will register online for a specific date and time they wish to attend. Please refer to the flier for exact dates, times and registration information.
- During screenings children will participate in group activities, individual play and various screenings. Screening tools will include:
  - Play based observations during a variety of free play and structured activities
  - Ages and Stages Questionnaire
  - Articulation Screening
  - Hearing and Vision Screening
  - Parent/guardian Interviews
- Parents/guardians will attend the screenings in full with their child and receive a resource packet including community contacts and resources, activities to use at home to promote healthy development and other helpful developmental information.
- Following a screening, staff members will consult regarding observations, interviews, screening results and any concerns present. Parents/guardians will be notified of these findings shortly after.
- If concerns are present during a screening, parents will be notified and school staff will take the appropriate actions in determining whether a formal evaluation is warranted.
- If no concerns are present, no further action is necessary.

## Who:

- Staff involved in the Onalaska Child Find screenings include, but are not limited to:
  - School Psychologists, Early Childhood Teachers, Preschool Teachers, Speech and Language Therapists and School Nurses.

# Child Find Screening vs. Evaluation

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Characteristic	Screening for Preschoolers (age 3-5) for the Purposes of Child Find		Evaluation for Eligibility
<p><b>Target Students</b></p>	<p><b>All children</b>, age 3-5, who are not in school. Not just for children who are suspected of having problems.</p>		<p>Focuses on an individual child. Involves using a procedure, test, or activity selectively <b>for one child.</b></p>
<p><b>Tools</b></p>	<p>Quick, relatively simple, low cost, repeatable <b>single instrument</b> to assess age-appropriate critical skills.</p> <p>The district has the discretion to select the tool.</p>		<p>Standardized or criterion-referenced <b>tests, observation, parent/teacher report, record review</b>, and other evaluation materials or procedures, if necessary.</p> <p>The IEP team determines the tools.</p>
<p><b>Notice and Consent Requirements</b></p>	<p>Typically public notice is given offering the screening to the target group. Prior written notice and informed <b>parental consent is not required.</b></p>		<p>Part of IEP team process <b>requiring parental notice and written consent.</b> Due process protections are applicable.</p>

<p><b>Purpose</b></p>	<p>The intent is to locate and identify children at risk, determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation, and provide <b>non-special education</b> recommendations. It is prevention related.</p>		<p>Process of eligibility determination to identify whether an individual child is a child with a <b>disability</b> and the nature of extent of the special education and related services the child needs.</p>
<p><b>Provider</b> (who does it)</p>	<p><b>Special education personnel, general education teachers, pupil service providers, community referral network</b> (<a href="http://www.dpi.wi.gov/ec/eccfpage.html">http://www.dpi.wi.gov/ec/eccfpage.html</a>)</p>		<p><b>Special educators, therapists, related service providers, and school psychologists</b> as part of the IEP team process.</p>



# Frequently Asked Questions

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## **1. What is the definition of an evaluation?**

An evaluation is the procedure used to determine whether a child has a disability and the nature and extent of the special education and related services the child needs. Evaluation involves using a procedure, test, or activity selectively for one child. Typical evaluation tools include items such as standardized or criterion referenced tests, observation, parent/teacher reports, record reviews, and other evaluation materials or procedures as necessary. Evaluation is part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process and triggers the protections as defined in the IDEA and Wisconsin State Statutes Chapter 115. Evaluations are conducted by licensed individuals such as special educators, therapists, related service providers, and school psychologists as part of the IEP process. The LEA must provide notice to the parents of a child that described any evaluation procedures the agency proposes to conduct and the names of who will conduct the evaluation (if known). Before conducting an initial evaluation of a child, the LEA must obtain informed consent from the child's parent. (Wis. Stat. §115.782 (b)).

Any physician, nurse, psychologist, social worker, administrator of a social agency, or licensed employee of a LEA who reasonably believes a child has a disability shall refer that child to the LEA. (Wis. Stat. §115.777(1)(a) and (b)). Any other person who reasonably believes a child is a child with a disability may refer the child to the LEA. (Wis. Stat. §115.777(1)(c)).

## **2. What is the definition of screening?**

Screening is a preliminary process to locate and identify children at risk, determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation, and provide non-special education recommendations. The IDEA states that screening for instructional purposes is not considered an evaluation for special education and related services. (34 C.F.R. §300.302.) Screening is universal and for an entire group of children, as opposed to a smaller group of children who are suspected of having difficulties. A screening tool is a quick, relatively simple, low cost, single instrument to assess age appropriate critical skills and do not require prior written notice or informed consent from parents. LEAs have the discretion to choose the screening tool that best meets their needs. Students should not be subjected to screening procedures repeatedly as an informal pre referral process for special education. If a physician, nurse, psychologist, social worker, administrator of a social agency, or licensed employee of a LEA reasonably believes a child has a disability, they must refer the child for a special education evaluation.

There are many ways to conduct screening. Examples may include, but are not limited to: "Child Development Days," "Preschool Round-Up," "Friday Morning" screenings, and Preschool screenings. Although these examples may vary, all involve interagency collaborative efforts to provide parents with educational information concerning normal child growth and development,

an awareness of community resources, and an opportunity for their child to participate in a developmental screening.

Screening may not be used to delay an evaluation for special education and related services. 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.

**3. After screening a child, can a special educator re-screen a child to determine if referral for evaluation should be made?**

No. A special educator may not re-screen a child to determine if he/she should be referred for an evaluation. If, at any time during the screening process, LEA personnel believe the child may be a child with a disability, a referral for evaluation must be made.

**4. What can be done if an LEA receives a high number of referrals for children who do not qualify for special education?**

If a LEA has a high number of children who were referred for an initial evaluation but did not qualify for special education and related services, the LEA should review the eligibility requirements for special education and related services and retrain staff. The LEA may consider developing a policy to more clearly define the circumstances where a child should be referred for an evaluation for special education or related services, this may include:

- Providing training to LEA personnel on screening tools.
- Providing training to LEA personnel on the eligibility criteria to qualify for special education and related services.
- Providing professional development opportunities to LEA personnel on cultural and linguistic differences.
- Involving bilingual/bicultural staff in the screening process.
- Encouraging parent participation in completing developmental questionnaire.
- Providing parents with community resources.
- Including a variety of engaging tasks and activities for children during the screening process.
- Providing parents with information on the following topics: speech and language, social-emotional development, fine/gross motor, autism and sensory concerns, oral and physical health, nutrition, and overall developmental growth and milestones.

# Additional Child Find Resources

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- IDEA Child Find Project:  
<http://www.childfindidea.org/>
- Department of Public Instruction  
<http://dpi.wi.gov/ec/eccfpage.html>
- CESA 6 Child Development Days Model  
[http://www.cesa6.k12.wi.us/products\\_services/earlylearningresources/childdevelopmentdays.cfm](http://www.cesa6.k12.wi.us/products_services/earlylearningresources/childdevelopmentdays.cfm)
- National Early Childhood TA (Technical Assistance) Center  
<http://www.nectac.org/topics/earlyid/earlyid.asp>
- Wisconsin Family Ties (great resource site for families!)  
<http://www.wifamilyties.org/>