



Policy Child Find Resolution # 0320202411 Reviewed May 2026

Child Find is a critical mandate under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), necessitating that all school districts diligently identify, locate, and assess children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their conditions. This obligation persists even if the school is not currently providing special education services to the child. It encompasses all children aged 6 through 21, extending to 22 for those identified under Chapter 14, irrespective of school attendance status, including private, public, highly mobile, migrant, homeless, and wards of the state. The primary goal of Child Find is to ensure that every child with a disability receives a free appropriate public education, tailored to their unique needs, preparing them for further education, employment, and independent living. To this end, states are mandated to establish and execute effective methods for identifying children in need of special education services, with evaluations conducted at no cost to parents.

The implementation of Child Find necessitates comprehensive public awareness campaigns that use various methods, including door-to-door surveys, physician referrals, public education programs, and outreach to private school personnel. Schools must actively engage in systematic screening and referral processes to identify and evaluate students suspected of needing special education services.

Additionally, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act ensures equal access to education for individuals with disabilities, requiring schools to provide accommodations and modifications as needed.

Parents play a crucial role in the Child Find process, as they have the right to request multidisciplinary evaluations if they suspect their child may require special education services. If a school denies such a request, parents retain the right to challenge the decision through impartial hearings or alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. Furthermore, Laboratory Charter School, in adherence to Title IX regulations, prohibits discrimination based on sex or gender identity, including sexual harassment, and provides avenues for reporting and investigating such incidents.

Laboratory Charter School ensures that eligible students with disabilities receive appropriate educational programs and related services, including individualized education plans (IEPs) and multidisciplinary evaluations. The school conducts ongoing screenings to identify students in need of special education services and provides a continuum of supports based on students' needs and abilities.

In conclusion, Laboratory Charter School is committed to fulfilling its obligations under Child Find, Title IX, and other relevant regulations to ensure that all students, regardless of ability, receive equitable access to education and support services.

Who is Covered by Child Find?

Schools are required to locate, identify, and evaluate **all regular education children from ages 6 through 21, and from ages 6 through 22 for students identified under Chapter 14**. The Child Find mandate applies to all children who reside within a State, including children who attend private schools and public schools, highly mobile children, migrant children, homeless children, and children who are wards of the state.

(20 U.S.C.1412(a)(3). This includes all children who are suspected of having a disability, including children who receive passing grades and are "advancing from grade to grade."

Why is Child Find Necessary?

The primary purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is to ensure that all children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education, including special education and related services that are "designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living ..." (20 U.S.C. 1400(d); *Wrights Law: Special Education Law*, pages 48,207)

Another purpose of the law is to help each State implement a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated multi-disciplinary system of Early Intervention Services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. Young children with disabilities must receive appropriate early intervention services to "prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living."

Congress encourages states to provide Early Intervention Services so children with developmental delays and other disabilities will receive treatment early.

Congress enacted the Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers to provide interagency coordination of services to children from birth to two years of age. Under IDEA, states must ensure that children with disabilities are eligible for special education services by age three.

How is Child Find Implemented?

The Child Find mandate requires each state to devise a practical method to determine which children are receiving the needed special education services, and which children are not. After identifying children who may need services, all necessary evaluations must be completed on these children, at no cost to parents.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act mandates "general public notice obligations", i.e., using notices to inform and educate the public about the need to locate and identify all children with disabilities.

What methods should schools use to identify and locate children who may need special education services?

In one case, the Court compared estimates of children with disabilities in the general population with the number of youngsters identified by the school district to determine whether the district had made adequate efforts to identify children under the Child Find mandate. See *Akers v. Bolton*, 531 F. Supp. 300 (D. Kan 1981).

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the Education Department has accepted plans that include door-to-door surveys, brochure mailings, public education programs and other public meetings, physician referrals, contacts with day care providers, and surveys of private school personnel. See *Luling, TX Indep. School Dist.*, 1975-1985 EHLR 257:417. [Note: EHLR is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Law Reporter (IDELR) and is available in many school district and law libraries. It is published by LRP Publications.

Laboratory Charter School publishes the following Annual Notice in the school's Parent- Student Handbook and on the school's website: <https://laboratorycharterschool.com>

It is the policy of Laboratory Charter School that all students with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disability, who need special education and related services, are identified, located, and evaluated. This responsibility is required by a Federal law called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, 20 U.S.C. 1200 et. seq. ("IDEA 2004"). Chapter 711 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code requires the publication of a notice to parents sufficient to inform parents of children applying to or already enrolled in the Laboratory Charter School of (1) available special education services and programs, (2) how to request those services and programs, and of (3) systematic screening activities that lead to the identification, location and evaluation of children with disabilities enrolled in Laboratory Charter School. The purpose of this Annual Notice is to comply with the school's obligations under Chapter 711 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code. This Annual Notice is made available both in the school's Parent-Student Handbook and on the school's website: <https://laboratorycharterschool.com>. Additionally, each school must prominently display a Child Find poster explaining the procedure for requesting evaluation.

Section 504

Section 504 is a Federal (Civil Rights) law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities. Section 504 ensures that the child with a disability has equal access to an education. The child may receive accommodations and modifications.

Unlike the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Section 504 does not require a public school to provide an individualized education program (IEP) designed to meet a child's unique needs and provide the child with educational benefit. Under Section 504, fewer procedural safeguards are available to the child with a disability and the child's parents than under IDEA.

- All public schools and school districts, as well as all public charter schools and magnet schools, that receive Federal financial assistance from the Department must comply with Section 504.
- Section 504 provides a broad spectrum of protections against discrimination on the basis of disability.
- All qualified elementary and secondary public-school students who meet the definition of an individual with a disability under Section 504 are entitled to receive regular or special education and related aids and services that are designed to meet their individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of students without disabilities are met.
- Section 504 also requires, among other things, that a student with a disability receive an equal opportunity to participate in athletics and extracurricular activities, and to be free from bullying and harassment based on disability.

The Meaning of Disability Under Section 504

Below is a discussion of what it means to be a student or individual with a disability, and of related terms that help to comprehensively define disability as it is used in Section 504 and its implementing regulations.

Disability. Under Section 504, an individual with a disability (also referred to as a student with a disability in the elementary and secondary education context) is defined as a person who: (1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity; (2) has a record of such an impairment; or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment.

The determination of whether a student has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity (and therefore has a disability) must be made on a case-by-case basis. In addition, when determining if someone meets the definition of a disability, the definition must be understood to provide broad

coverage of individuals.

Physical or mental impairments: Section 504 defines a physical or mental impairment as any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory, including speech organs, cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genito- urinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin, and endocrine.

The Section 504 definition of physical and mental impairment also includes any mental or psychological disorder. The definition does not include all specific diseases and conditions that may constitute physical or mental impairments, given the difficulty of ensuring the completeness of such a list.

Major bodily functions are also major life activities under the law, and these major bodily functions include functions of the bowel, bladder, and brain; normal cell growth; and the immune, endocrine (for example, thyroid, pituitary, and pancreas), respiratory, reproductive, circulatory, digestive, and neurological systems.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Laboratory Charter School provides a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to students who are found eligible for special education services.

The primary purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is to ensure that all children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education, including special education and related services that are "designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living ..." (20 U.S.C. 1400(d); Wrights law: Special Education Law, pages 48, 207).

Another purpose of the law is to help each State implement a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated multi-disciplinary system of Early Intervention Services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. Young children with disabilities must receive appropriate early intervention services to "prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living."

Congress encourages states to provide Early Intervention Services so children with developmental delays and other disabilities will receive treatment early. Congress enacted the Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers to provide interagency coordination of services to children from birth to two years of age. Under IDEA, states must ensure that children with disabilities are eligible for special education services by age three. The Child Find mandate requires each state to devise a practical method to determine which children are receiving the needed special education services, and which children are not. After identifying children who may need services, all necessary evaluations must be completed on these children, at no cost to parents. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act mandates "general public notice obligations", i.e., using notices to inform and educate the public about the need to locate and identify all children with disabilities.

Qualifying for Special Education and Related Services

Under the Federal IDEA 2004, there are two steps for a student to qualify for special education and related services. The first step is a finding that the student has one or more of the following disabilities that interfere with his or her educational performance: (1) autism or pervasive developmental disorder, (2) deaf-blindness, (3) deafness, (4) emotional disturbance, (5) hearing impairment, (6) intellectual disability (formerly known as mental retardation), (7) multiple disabilities, (8) orthopedic impairment, (9) other health impairment (includes ADD, ADHD, epilepsy, etc.), (10) specific learning disability, (11) speech or language impairment, (12) traumatic brain injury, and/or (13) visual impairment including blindness. IDEA 2004 provides legal definitions of the above-listed disabilities, which may differ from those terms used in medical or clinical practice or daily language. The second step in determining eligibility for special education and related

services is a finding by the school's multidisciplinary team (MDT) that the student has one or more of these disabilities and **needs specially designed instruction**.

What Parents Can Do If They Think Their Child May Qualify for Special Education

Parents who believe their child is eligible for special education may request at any time that the school conduct a multidisciplinary evaluation. Some potential signs of a student having a qualifying disability include experiencing years of difficulties in reading, writing, or solving math problems, difficulties focusing and concentrating on schoolwork, difficulties sitting still in the classroom, and difficulties controlling emotions (such as anxiety and depression) and/or behaviors. **Requests for a multidisciplinary evaluation must be made in writing to the school's Director of Student Services or building Principal.** If a parent makes an oral request for a multidisciplinary evaluation, the school shall provide the parent with a **permission-to-evaluate form within 10 calendar days of receipt of the request.**

If the school denies the parents' request for an evaluation, the parents have the right to challenge the denial through an impartial hearing or through voluntary alternative dispute resolution such as mediation as outlined in the Procedural Safeguards Notice, which can be found on the school's website and indicated below.

BUREAU OF SPECIAL EDUCATION'S CONSULTLINE, A PARENT HELPLINE
800-879-2301
consultline@odr-pa.org

Laboratory Charter School's Screening and Referral Processes

Through our systematic screening and referral processes, Laboratory Charter School identifies and refers students for evaluation who are believed to be eligible for special education services. These screening and referral processes include the benchmark assessments, standardized reading and mathematics assessments, classroom performance, vision and hearing screenings, and the comprehensive MTSS system.

The school regularly assesses the child's current achievement and performance, designs school-based interventions, and evaluates their effectiveness. The screening of a student by a teacher or specialist to determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation is not to be considered an evaluation for eligibility for special education and related services. If a concern can be addressed without special education services, or if the concern results from limited English proficiency or a lack of appropriate instruction, a recommendation may be made for systematic interventions through the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) process.

Parents have the right to request a multidisciplinary team evaluation at any time, regardless of the outcome of the screening process. Moreover, screening or pre-referral intervention activities may not serve as a bar to the right of a parent to request an evaluation, at any time, including prior to or during the conduct of screening or pre-referral intervention activities.

If parents need additional information, they should call or email the school's Director of Student Services @ 267- 817-4720 x1222.

