

Child Find Public Awareness Requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Collaborative Child Find Initiative: Community Awareness Strategies

Child Find is one of the most important public awareness requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for both Part C – Washington State Early Support for Infants & Toddlers (ESIT) Program and Part B – Special Education Preschool Programming through Washington State Public Schools. Together, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must ensure statewide systems are in place to actively identify, locate, and evaluate children birth to twenty-one who may have developmental delays or disabilities as early as possible, and who may require early intervention services (Part C) or be in need of special education and related services (Part B).

Local school districts need to have Child Find notices that are inclusive of children ages birth through 21. When a district receives a referral, they are responsible for getting the referral to the appropriate evaluation team based on the age of the student that will determine eligibility. In the case of a referral for an infant/toddler, districts have joint child find responsibilities with their local IDEA Part C Early Intervention Provider Agency (EIPA). For children ages 0–3, the district’s obligation is focused on location, identification, and then referral to the local EIPA for evaluation and eligibility. [[WAC 392-172A-02040](#)] Under IDEA Part C, local EIPAs are responsible to coordinate the early identification (Child Find) of eligible infants and toddlers and their families (including targeted outreach to traditionally underrepresented populations) within their local geographic service area. [[WAC 110-400-0070](#)].

Given the changes in the birth to five early childhood special education landscape, influenced by the passing of [SHB 6787](#), community level partners are encouraged to collaborate to identify what specific enhancements and/or updates may be appropriate for their unique Child Find systems. Grass roots development activities and implementation strategies are proven to be the most effective. They help ensure an equity mindset that must visibly and transparently serve as the underpinnings of a family-centered, coordinated, culturally and linguistically responsive local child find system.

Consider all of the community partners who need to be at the planning table – parent leaders, school and early intervention leaders, Tribal partners, early care and learning educators, early support practitioners, advocates, and other valuable stakeholders. Examples of planning topics that local community partners may contemplate include consideration of (a) centralized



referral options, (b) interpretive supports, (c) joint Part C and Part B screening teams, (d) shared assessment tool kits, (e) joint in-service child find trainings, and (f) referral flow charts with local contact directory. Additional Child Find planning ideas and resources can be located on the federal-funded [Early Child Technical Assistance Center](#) website.

As local Child Find plans and activities continue to evolve, technical assistance needs may be identified. Technical assistance is available under Part C by contacting Michelle Baker, ESIT Program Consultant at michelle.baker@dcyf.wa.gov. Technical assistance under Part B is available through Ryan Guzman, OSPI Early Childhood Special Education Coordinator at ryan.guzman@k12.wa.edu.