

What is the CHILD FIND program?

- Child Find is a legal requirement in which schools have to identify all children who have disabilities and who could qualify for special education services.
- Child Find includes all children from birth to 21 years of age.
- The school must evaluate any child who knows or suspects they may have a disability.

You may not have heard about the mandate called Child Find. It is a legal requirement for schools to find children with disabilities and need services. Identifying these children is the first step in providing them with the help they need to progress in school.

Child Find is part of a Public Law 108-446, called the “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act” 2004 (IDEA). This law protects the rights of students with disabilities.

Who is protected by Child Find?

Children with disabilities from birth to 21 years of age are covered. This includes children who receive education in their homes or who attend a private school.

Child Find requires that school districts have a process to identify and evaluate children who may need special education and related services, such as emotional therapy speech therapy. Even infants and very young children can be evaluated and receive help for learning disabilities and developmental delays through programs early intervention government. These programs help families find out if their young children are making adequate progress. Then, if necessary, these programs can connect families to appropriate services for their children at an early age.

Families with children who do not attend public schools may not know what help is available. Schools use various methods to communicate with these families. Efforts to contact them could include campaigns in local media, notices for families and notices placed in public places.

Does Child Find mean that the school has to agree with all evaluation requests?

If the school knows or has reason to suspect that a child has a disability, then by law (IDEA) is required to make an evaluation. For example, a child's teacher or family may be concerned about that child's academic performance and request an evaluation. By law, the school must consider that request as something important.

However, the school does not have to agree with *all* evaluation requests. If there is no reason to think that your child has a disability that requires services, the school does not have to perform an evaluation.

What happens if the school does not want to evaluate your child?

The Child Find mandate gives families some power. If the school rejects an application for an evaluation, families can proceed with a due process hearing. This hearing gives the family and the school the opportunity to present their ideas to an independent and trained hearing officer. Teachers or professionals who are not school employees can explain what they know about the child. The family can present evidence such as evaluation results and examples of the child's school work.

In some cases, when the school does not perform the evaluation, the family can sue for monetary damages.

The Child Find mandate makes schools legally responsible. Understanding the responsibility schools have can help your child get the services he/she needs.

The Bethany school district will help parents child ages from 3- 21 in the process to refer to the Early Intervention Agency (405) 789-3801 office itself. Services for students (ages 3-21) are provided by the Bethany School District (405) 789-3801.