



Developmental Concerns and Disabilities

Supports for Children with Developmental Concerns or Disabilities and Their Families



Learning Objectives

- ❑ Understand PSESD's requirements around inclusion and serving children with special needs.
- ❑ Classify basic features of federal special education legislation (IDEA) as it applies to Early Head Start, Head Start, and ECEAP programs.
- ❑ Discuss ways developmental concerns are identified.
- ❑ Describe the required follow up process once developmental concerns are identified.
- ❑ List program requirements related to children who have IFSPs and IEPs.

What is Inclusion in Early Childhood Education?

A 2009 joint position statement from Division for Early Childhood and the National Association for the Education of Young Children describes inclusion in the following statement:

“Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential.”

Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in PSESD Early Childhood Programs

Children with disabilities and their families are welcome and included in all aspects of PSESD Early Learning Programs.

Enrollment may not be denied on the basis of disability, developmental delay, or challenging behavior.

Please review *Inclusion of Children with Disabilities and Developmental Delays Guidance* on the Early Learning Program Manual.

(http://earlylearningwa.org/images/ProgramManual/Education/Inclusion_Services/Disability_Services/05.001.01_Inclusion_Of_Children_With_Disabilities_And_Developmental_Delays_Guidance.pdf)

Federal Laws related to Disabilities and Special Education



Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

IDEA is the federal law that outlines rights and regulations for students with disabilities. Under IDEA, all children, birth through age 21, are entitled to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

Important features of IDEA:

- IDEA includes a system of procedural safeguards designed to protect the rights of children with disabilities and their parents.
- Children must be found eligible (or qualify) for services under IDEA through an evaluation process. This process follows a specific timeline.
- Special education services for infants and toddlers, from birth to age 3, are referred to as **Part C**. Special education services for preschool and school age children, age 3 through 21, are referred to as **Part B**.

Part C of IDEA

Services for children, birth to age 3, are covered under Part C of IDEA. Part C services are often referred to as Early Intervention Services or Birth to Three Services.

- Under Part C, infants and toddlers who qualify for services will receive an Individualized Family Service Plan or IFSP.
- An IFSP is developed with the child's family to identify goals for the child and family and to specify services/therapies the child will receive in order to make progress toward goals.
- IFSPs focus on the needs of the entire family, and they are updated every 6 months.
- Services are typically provided by a local early intervention agency.

Part B of IDEA

Services for children ages 3 through 21 are covered under part B of IDEA.

Under Part B, children who qualify will receive an Individualized Family Service Plan or IEP.

An IEP includes the child's present levels of functioning, educational needs, goals and outcomes, and services a child will receive in order to make progress on goals.

An IEP focuses on the educational needs of the child and is updated annually.

Part B services are typically provided by the child's home school district.



How a child qualifies for services



Screening, Assessment, and Evaluation

Screening, assessment, and evaluation are part of the process children go through to qualify for special education services under IDEA.

Screening, assessment, and evaluation refer to different processes and have different purposes.

As early childhood professionals assisting families with the process of accessing services, it is important to have a working knowledge of the differences between screening, evaluation and assessment, and to use the terms correctly.

Screening

The primary goal of screening is to document typical aspects of a child's health and development, while identifying potential problems that need further assessment and follow up (Luehr & Hoxie, 1995).

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

The Ages and Stages Questionnaire used in our programs is a screening tool. We use this screening tool, as well as the hearing and vision screenings, to help determine if a child has a potential developmental concern.

Evaluation and Assessment

Evaluation is completed by a qualified professional or team and is used to determine the existence of a delay or disability and to identify the child's strengths and needs in all areas of development.

Assessment is used to determine the individual child's present level of performance and developmental and/or educational needs. Professionals gathering information regarding a child in the eligibility process may ask for screening and assessment information from you as well as conducting their own formal assessment process.

How is Eligibility Determined for Early Intervention/Part C Services?

With parent consent, a team of qualified professionals assess the child using standardized assessment tools.

Based on the assessment tool, the child must demonstrate a delay of at least 25% in one or more of the following areas:

- Cognitive Development
- Physical Development (gross and fine motor skills)
- Language Development (receptive and expressive language)
- Social-Emotional Development
- Adaptive and Self-Help Skills

How is Eligibility Determined for Preschool and School Age Children?

The eligibility process follows these steps after a child is referred to the local school district:

The child goes through a screening process.

Based on the screening results, the school district makes a decision about proceeding to a full evaluation.

If proceeding to evaluation, written parental consent is obtained and the school district has 35 days complete the evaluation.

If the evaluation process determines that the child meets eligibility criteria, an IEP meeting is scheduled with 30 school days. The family is part of the IEP team and meet with the team to jointly develop the IEP.

Performance Standards

HEAD START, EARLY HEAD START AND ECEAP



Washington State Department of Early Learning

Performance Standards

Both Head Start and ECEAP have performance standards relating to children with IFSPs and IEPs.

Head Start Performance Standards (Subpart F, 1303.60):

A program must ensure enrolled children with disabilities, including but not limited to those who are eligible for services under IDEA, and their families receive all applicable program services delivered in the least restrictive possible environment and they fully participate in all program activities.

At least 10% of children served in Early Head Start and Head Start programs must be on IFSPs or IEPs.

Performance Standards

ECEAP (E10)

If a child is identified as having special needs, contractors must work with the Local Education Agency *(LEA) to develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that identifies and plans for needed services.

*For preschool age children, the LEA is the child's school district.



The process of identification:

Identifying Children with Potential Delays or Disabilities

While some children may enter our programs with a current IFSP or IEP, other children will be identified and referred after entering our program. Our 45 day screenings (hearing, vision, ASQ) are tools we use to identify potential concerns. In addition, concerns may surface through:

Parents express concern during enrollment, home visits, or conferences

Information provided by pediatrician or healthcare provider

Teachers note concerns through ongoing classroom observations and GOLD Checkpoints

How Do We Help Families Refer a Child for Special Education Services?

Begin the process with a conversation with the family to outline strengths and areas of concern.

Program staff provides family with information regarding the option of pursuing special education services. It is important to distinguish roles regarding this process. It is the role of the parents to initiate a referral. It is the role of the program staff to communicate concerns, inform parents of the option to pursue an evaluation for special education services, and to assist parents through the process if parents wish to proceed.

If parents disagree with the recommendation to refer, they have that right. The program will continue to fully include the child and family.

Early Intervention/Part C Referrals

Both King and Pierce Counties have a **single point of entry** for referrals.

Pierce County Parents may call a Family Resource Coordinator at:

- 253-798-3790,
- email pcfrc@co.pierce.wa.us
- or faxing 253-798-2818

King County Parents may call the central referral line:

- 1-800-322-2588

King County Parents may also contact a birth to three provider directly.

- List of King County Providers

http://www.kingcounty.gov/~media/health/ddd/documents/2015%20Documents/Early%20Intervention%20Documents/Early_Intervention_Provider_Referrals_in_King_County_1-2015.ashx?la=en

Part B/Preschool Referrals

Teachers and/or Family Support discuss concerns with families and inform parents of their option to request an evaluation for services through the child's school district.

Provide parents with the contact information for the Child Find Office or Child Find Coordinator in the child's home school district to request an evaluation for special education. The school district will then work with the family to schedule screenings, evaluations, etc.

**Some programs may already have agreements with school districts in place that specify a specific process. Please check with your program director regarding referral procedures that might be in place for your district, program or agency.*



For teachers and family support:

When a Child Does Not Receive an IFSP or IEP:

Sometimes a child's parents do not agree to a referral, and this is their right. Other times, a child might go through the evaluation process, and it is determined that the child does not qualify for services. In both cases, the EHS/HS or ECEAP program will continue to serve the family and work closely with the child's family to meet the child's needs in the program.

PSESD Education Coaches and Disabilities Consultants are available to assist in developing plans for accommodating and individualizing for children who may have delays and are not receiving additional services, as well as for children who do have IFSPs or IEPs.

Documenting the Process:

Early Head Start and Head Start

Teachers document all steps in the referral process on the Disabilities Services Checklist

(http://earlylearningwa.org/images/ProgramManual/Education/Inclusion_Services/Disability_Services/05.001.02_Disabilities_Services_Checklist_Form.pdf).

NOTE: This is a paper document that is kept in the family file.

ECEAP

Steps in the referral process are documented in ELMS.

When a Child Receives or is Enrolled with an IFSP or IEP:

Parents and staff sign a *Release/Exchange of Confidential Information with School District (Non-Health) form*. (*Located in ELPM*)

Staff obtain a paper copy of IFSP or IEP for family file

- Information from the IFSP or IEP is entered into ELMS or ChildPlus
Screencast directions for IFSP/IEP entry in ChildPlus:
<http://www.earlylearningwa.org/index.php/for-staff/all-staff-hub/childplus-head-start>
- Directions for IEP entry in ELMS:
http://www.earlylearningwa.org/images/ForStaff/HUB_All_Staff/ELMS/ELMS_Adding_IEPs_in_ELMS.pdf
- Staff read IFSP or IEP to become familiar with goals and services. PSESD Education Coaches and/or Disabilities Consultants are available to answer questions about information on IFSPs and IEPs.

When a Child Receives or is Enrolled with an IFSP or IEP continued:

Teachers are required to base at least one Individual School Readiness Goal (ISRG) on an IFSP or IEP goal. Choose the goal in collaboration with the parent(s).

Teachers and Family Support Staff collaborate and partner with service providers from the early intervention agency or school district providing special education services.

It is a parent's right to have an advocate. Inform the child's family that they can invite a EHS/HS or ECEAP staff member to any IFSP/IEP meetings.

Remember that as IFSPs or IEPs are updated, program staff must update information in ChildPlus and ELMS, and update ISRG as appropriate to align.



Resources to note:

Helpful Resources

Glossary of Terms (Find this document on HUB)

- This document is located on our Special Services Hub and provides definitions for confusing terms and acronyms commonly used in special education.

Head Start Center for Inclusion: (<http://headstartinclusion.org/>)

- This is a great resource for individualizing classroom strategies for children with special needs, as well as tips on preparing for and participating in IEP meetings.

Helpful Resources

PAVE: Partnerships for Action, Voices for Empowerment (Find at <http://wapave.org/>)

- This organization provides a range of resources and information for families of children with disabilities, as well for professionals working with children with disabilities.

Wright's Law (Find at <http://wrightslaw.com/>)

- This organization provides accurate, reliable information about special education law, education law, and advocacy for children with disabilities. Also included are “yellow pages” by state.