

## **IDEA and Child Find**

**The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** is a federal law that sets forth specific requirements that must be met so that each child with a disability who is found eligible for special education will receive an appropriate program to meet their specialized educational needs. The decision-making process is undertaken by a planning and placement team (PPT) composed of the child's parents or guardians, teachers, related service staff and school administrators (or administrative designee).

Before a program is developed, the following steps must occur:

**Child Find:** Each public school district is responsible for identifying, locating, and evaluating all children who may be eligible for special education. This is known as "Child Find." Parents, teachers, or other school personnel may refer a child for evaluation to determine whether a child may be eligible for special education.

RSD #17 assumes the responsibility for the location, identification and referral of all children requiring special education and/or related services from birth through age 22, including students who are in private schools, in religiously affiliated schools, migrant children, homeless children, and those who are in need of special education even through they are advancing from grade to grade. The district's child find process includes a variety of community resources and conducts many systematic activities in its effort to identify children requiring services. This includes local daycares and nursery programs, notifications through local media, and partnerships with Birth to Three agencies. In addition, the district provides an interactive mobile app, **Sparkler**, free of charge to families in Haddam and Killingworth who would like to track their child's developmental progress. Directions for accessing the app are available on the Student Services website ([www.rsd17.org](http://www.rsd17.org)).

**Birth to Three:** Parents who are concerned about the development of their child ages 0-3 are encouraged to call **1-800-505-7000 (Infoline)** to discuss their concerns and make a referral to the Birth to Three system. Children may also be referred by medical providers, social services and school system staff. Children who are eligible for services work with providers available through Birth to Three such as speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and others. The school district works in collaboration with the Connecticut Birth to Three system and families to ensure that eligible students experience a smooth transition to the public school system before they turn three years old.

**Evaluation:** If the PPT suspects that a child may have a disability, school personnel will evaluate the child in all areas of suspected disability. When the evaluation process is completed,

the PPT will meet to review the results of the evaluation and determine whether the child is eligible for special education and related services.

**Determination of Eligibility:** To be eligible for special education and related services, a child must be determined to have one of the following disabilities, and due to this disability, require special education and related services:

- Autism
- Deaf-blindness
- Deafness
- Emotional disturbance
- Hearing impairment
- Intellectual disability
- Multiple disabilities
- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment/attention deficit
- Specific learning disability/dyslexia
- Speech or language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual impairment including blindness
- Developmental delay (only for ages 3-5)

If the child is found eligible, the PPT designs an individualized education program (IEP).

For more information on identifying children with disabilities and the individualized education program, visit the Bureau of Special Education's PPT Process and IEP Forms page at [www.ct.gov/sde/ PPT-IEP](http://www.ct.gov/sde/PPT-IEP).

**Additional Child Find Resources:** For more information about Child Find and statewide and national Child Find initiatives, please visit the following links:

- [Interagency Collaboration for Colorado Part C Child Find: Facilitating the Handshake between Child Welfare and Early Intervention Services](#)
- [The Early Connections Project: Promoting Early Identification and Support for Families of Young Children, University of New Hampshire](#)
- [University of Connecticut Center for Excellence in Disabilities](#)