



**Child Find:
Identifying Children for IDEA Services in a
Remote and Virtual Context**

Brookes Coffee Chat
Marisa Macy, Ph.D.

Webinar Tips

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OVERVIEW

- Child Find is...
- Need for Child Find
- Virtual & Remote Child Find
- Family Communication
- Additional Resources



A Tale of Two Children

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • <u>Adriana</u> | • <u>Kendra</u> |
| • Child Find | • No Child Find |
| • Access | • Lacking access |
| • Coordinated services | • Lacking coordinated services |
| • Early necessary resources | • Lacking early necessary resources |



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**TIMELY EARLY
INTERVENTION SERVICES
CAN IMPROVE
DEVELOPMENTAL, HEALTH,
AND BEHAVIORAL
OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG
CHILDREN.**



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**Individuals with
Disabilities
Education Act
(IDEA)**



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Child Find - IDEA

The passage of P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act, (20 USC 1401 et seq) in 1975 required each state and territory in the United States to create and implement a system to **actively locate and screen children** with disabilities, from age 5 to 18. This Child Find mandate has since been extended first to preschool age children and finally to infants and toddlers, including those who are at-risk for disabilities.

Child Find is...

"A comprehensive child find system, consistent with part B, including a system for making referrals to service providers that includes timelines and provides for participation by primary referral sources and that ensures rigorous standards for appropriately identifying infants and toddlers with disabilities for services under this part that will reduce the need for future services" (IDEA, Part C, Section 635, a5).

Prevalence of Disability and Risk in Young Children

- In the United States, historical as well as current findings consistently suggest that approximately 15-17% of children ranging in age from birth to 21 years are diagnosed with a developmental-behavioral disorder or disability (IDEAdata.org).
- Infants and toddlers = 2-3%
- Preschoolers = 5-7%
- School-age = 10% or more



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Early Intervention (EI)

- Birth to 3 year olds
- IDEA Part C
- 388,694
- About 2-3% of population of infants and toddlers

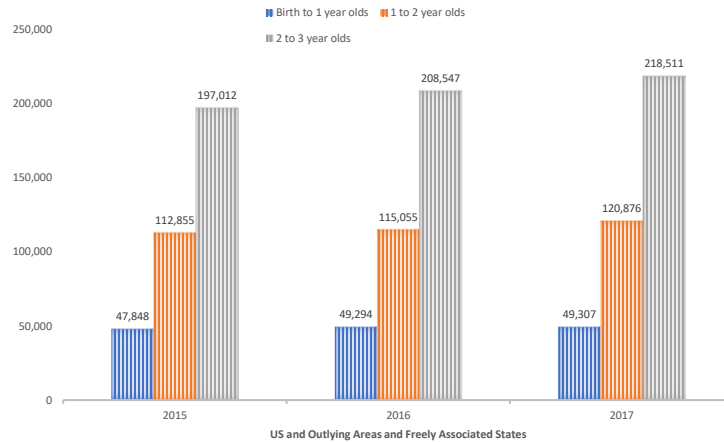


(IDEAdata.org)

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Source: IDEAdata.org

NATIONAL IDEA PART C CHILD COUNT FOR NEWBORN TO AGE 3



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Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

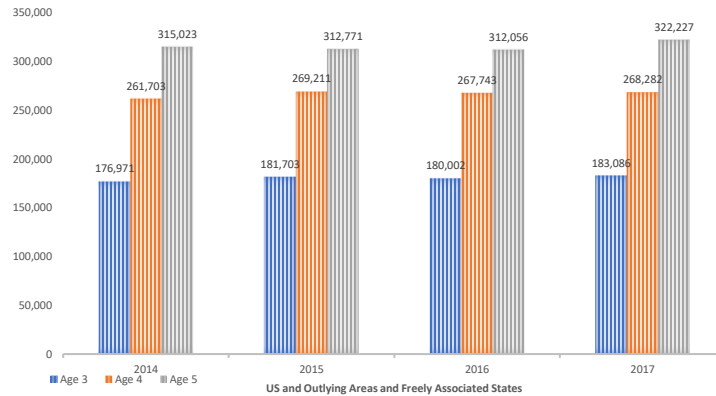
- 3 to 6 year olds
- IDEA Part B, Section 619
- 773,595
- About 5-6% of population



(IDEAdata.org)

Source: IDEAdata.org

NATIONAL IDEA PART B, SECTION 619 CHILD COUNT FOR AGES 3, 4, AND 5



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Need for Child Find

- Substantial numbers of children have developmental delays,
- many more children are faced with multiple risk factors in their lives,
- many developmental delays remain undiagnosed in young children, and
- the lag time from identification to entry into a program is considerable.

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Problems with Child Find in Education Settings

- Existing Child Find programs vary enormously across communities and states.
- Unevenness of accessibility to early detection/child find programs across ethnic and income groups.
- Fragmented referral system.

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Problems with Child Find in Health Settings

- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP, 2006, 2010, 2020) recommends that all children receive early identification services including surveillance and screening, and if needed, developmental or medical diagnostic evaluation.
- Despite this recommendation,
 - many pediatric or other health care practices do not routinely screen their young patients
 - nor consistently refer children identified by a screening test for follow-up assessment to determine their eligibility for services.

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Problems with Child Find in Social Service Settings

Many social service agencies offer only limited child find services for young children with whom they come in contact because of poverty, violence, neglect, abuse or homelessness.



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Early Identification

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends periodic screening for all children, and
- The federal IDEA program mandates that each state conduct periodic and appropriate early detection/child find activities for infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children.



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IDEA Child Find Components

1. Establish a lead agency.
2. Ensure widespread dissemination.
3. Create a central directory.
4. Evaluate the state's Child Find efforts.



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Establish a lead agency.

- Under Part B of IDEA (for children ages 3-21), the lead agency for Child Find must be the local education agency (LEA) of the state's Department of Education, or in other words, the child's school district.
- Under Part C of IDEA (for children birth through age 3), the lead agency does not have to be an educational agency and differs from state to state. In some states the lead agency for Part B (i.e., Department of Education) is the same as for Part C, while in other states a health or social service agency is assigned the responsibility (e.g., Department of Public Welfare, Department of Social Services, or Department of Health).



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- Child find services are provided at no cost to the parents and family of the child under the IDEA principle of Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).
- Anyone can refer a child to child find; it is often parents or familiar caregivers that notice the child is developing differently from peers through their observation of the child's development, or as a result of completing developmental questionnaires.



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Ensure widespread dissemination.

- Another IDEA requirement is that the public be informed about the availability of Child Find services, including conducting of screening activities and opportunities.
- Effective community outreach initiatives for young children are especially important, since many young children do not participate in public preschools or community programs where screening occurs routinely.



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Create a central directory.

- Each state system is required to have a central directory of information that addresses child find and referral services.
- The central directory needs to include agencies and services in the state that provide IDEA screening and assessment, as well as related services that parents might need such as parenting classes and community mental health services.



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Evaluate state's Child Find efforts.

IDEA requires state educational agencies to evaluate their Child Find efforts; however, most states track only the numbers of children screened through state initiatives and the numbers of children found eligible for services.

Child find data from states are reported yearly to the federal government through the State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR).

States with lower than expected numbers of children enrolled in special education services are required to create a state plan that explains how these numbers will be increased by detailing their future expanded child find efforts.



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Developmental-behavioral screening is...

a brief, easy to complete formal test of young children's developmental-behavioral skills that reliably discriminate those children who should be referred for further more comprehensive assessment from those who should not be referred.



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Recommendations for Child Find

- Coordinated services
- Accessibility
- Necessary resources
- **Alternatives for face-to-face early detection activities**

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Virtual/Remote Child Find

- Developmental screening over the phone.



- Developmental screening online.



Virtual/Remote Child Find

- Developmental screening on a virtual home visit.



- Developmental screening via snail mail.



Developmental
screening over the
phone.





Phone



Procedure

Staff mail questionnaires to parents. Staff make a follow-up telephone call. Parents can complete questionnaires independently or with help from staff to read or understand items. Staff score and discuss results with parents.

Considerations

Be sure families have time and resources to talk on phone.

Parents need a copy of the questionnaires either mailed, dropped off, or accessed online so that they can see illustrations of items.



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Developmental screening online.





Online



Procedure

Staff invite parents of young children to complete questionnaires, and parents independently complete questionnaires online.

The online system scores and generates a report for professional review.

A reply (e.g., letter) can be generated for parents whose children appear to be developing typically.

Children who are identified as at risk or whose parents indicate concerns require a personalized response (e.g., telephone call, video conferencing).

Considerations

Be sure families have the technology needed for online developmental screening activities.

It is important to know if parents tried items with their children.

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Developmental screening on a virtual home visit.





Virtual Home Visit



Procedure

- Staff provide questionnaires in advance for parents to review and complete independently and the staff follow up with a home visit, or staff provide the support necessary during a home visit for parents to complete the questionnaires.
- Staff score questionnaires and discuss results with parents during the visit.

Considerations

- Be sure families have the technology needed to conduct a virtual home visit.
- Materials available in the home or kit can be used.
- Adequate time is necessary for parents to try and/or observe items with the child.
- Staff may translate or adapt for cultural, language differences.

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Developmental screening via snail mail.





Physical Mail/Postal



Procedure

Staff mail questionnaires to parents. Parents complete independently and mail back to a central location for scoring and feedback.

Considerations

- Be sure to have the correct mailing address for families.
- Return rates for questionnaires can be increased with a variety of strategies, for example making reminder phone calls to parents and sending a second questionnaire and reminder if the first one isn't returned.

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Oh, What Fun It Is to Try

- Become familiar with virtual and remote Child Find strategies.
- Consider what you already know about the child and gather additional information using a variety of virtual methods.
- Design virtual activities for observation and assessment.



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Electronic Communication with Family

- Trust, reflection, and effective communication skills are necessary to building positive relationships with families of young children.



Macy, Spinetti Rincón, & Hogan, (in press)

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Electronic Communication with Family

- Face-to-face (F2F) communication is one way to interact with families of young children, however alternatives to F2F communication are just as important.
- The way we communicate and interact with one another have changed with recent events due to the global pandemic from Covid-19.



Macy, Spinetti Rincón, & Hogan, (in press)

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Electronic Communication with Family

- Electronic Mail or e-mail
- Text Messages
- Online
- Virtual Conferences



Macy, Spinetti Rincón, & Hogan, (in press)

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Publications – Resources

Macy, M. (2012). The evidence behind developmental screening instruments. *Infants and Young Children: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Special Care Practices*, 25(1), 19-61.

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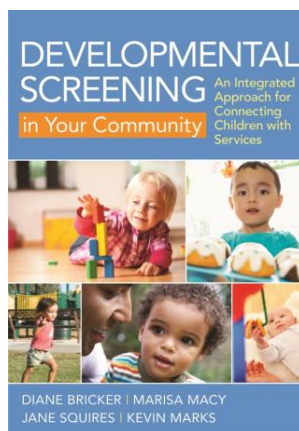
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Bricker, D., Macy, M., Squires, J., & Marks, K. (2013). *Developmental screening in your community: An integrated approach for connecting children with services*. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing.



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In Summary

- Child Find is a required component of the IDEA legislation.
- Early identification of delay/disability is important to the health, education, and social development of young children.
- It is important to have remote and virtual options for Child Find activities.
- Developmental-behavioral screening efforts are needed in a Child Find system.
- Strategies for virtual/remote Child Find may include:
 - Online
 - Phone
 - Snail mail
 - Virtual home visit
 - Electronic communication with parents of young children

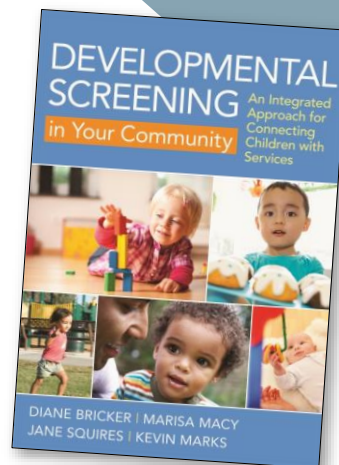


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Questions?

Thank you!

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