



Child Find – Identifying Children with Disabilities

School districts across the state of Ohio are participating in an effort to identify, locate and evaluate all children from birth through 21 years of age who may have disabilities. Disability, in this instance, means such conditions as hearing impairments, visual impairments, speech or language impairments, specific learning disabilities, emotionally disturbed, multiple disabilities, mental retardation, other health impairment, physical impairments, autism, and traumatic brain injury.

Public schools have responded vigorously to federal and state mandates requiring the provision of a free appropriate public education regardless of a child's disability. But before school districts can serve children, they must be found. Many children with disabilities are not visible because they do not function in the mainstream of the community, such as children who are homeless and children of migrant families. Also, many unidentified children with disabilities are preschoolers. Parents may not be aware their child has a disability or that there are programs and services available.

The school district will ask for information about the child, asking such questions as: What is the problem? What has already been done about the problem? What background information is available? This information may be collected in several ways, including interviews, observations, screening and testing. This information may be obtained from parents and the student or from other agencies that have information about the student. This information will be used to decide whether the child has a disability and needs special services.

All information collected will be held in strict confidence and released to others only with parent permission or as allowed by law. For example, the school district will send records on request to a school district or other educational agency in which a student intends to enroll. The parents may have a copy of those records upon request.

The school district will keep a record of all persons who review confidential records with the exception of authorized school employees or other educational agency personnel. The school will also maintain a list of those employees who may have access to records.

The school district or other educational agency will inform the parents when personally identifiable information that has been collected, maintained or used is no longer needed to provide educational services to the child. All personally identifiable data will be kept for at least five years or longer if required for audit purposes or otherwise required by law.

Parents and students have rights in this process. Parents have the right to:

- Review their child's records;
- Refuse permission to release information (except as required by or permitted by law to be released); and

- Request that information they believe to be inaccurate, misleading or in violation of their child's privacy or other rights be changed. The district has a process to resolve disagreements about information collected.

The school district has appointed one person to make sure that information about students is kept confidential. Contact your school district board of education office for this person's name.

The school district's policies and procedures for special education are available. Contact the school district superintendent.

The school district operates a Child Information Management System that assures a practice method of identifying which children are currently receiving special education services and which children are not. Certain data regarding children are maintained within this system.

School districts are interested in meeting the needs of children with disabilities. If you have or know of a child who may have a disability, contact your local school for more information and help.