

Referral Timelines for Child Identification Birth to 21 Years

Rationale

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) establishes timelines for certain child identification activities within Part C and Part B. Federal guidelines have been designed to insure that infants, toddlers, preschoolers and older students up to twenty-one years have access to a timely, responsive system of identification. In early childhood, because of the rapid rate of development at this age, adherence to these timelines is critical.

...planning, development, coordination and implementation in the areas of public awareness, community referral, community and building based screenings, diagnostic evaluations, service coordination and staff development..." Reference: 4.01(1)(c) ECEA Rules, June 2000

General Statutory Requirements for Child Identification

"Child find, which includes locating, identifying and evaluating children, is an ongoing activity that SEAs and LEAs should be engaged in throughout the year for all children in order to meet the statutory obligations to ensure that all children in the State are located, identified and evaluated, and that all children have the right to FAPE." Reference: 300.453 (Expenditures: Discussion Federal Register/Vol.64, No. 48/Friday, March 12, 1999/Rules and Regulations)

"The child find process shall include specific strategies for children from birth through five years of age, children in school, children out of school who are discontinuers or dropouts. **It shall be available throughout the year** and shall include the following components:

Strategies for Meeting the Requirement for Year Round Child Find:

- ❖ *Increase the level of LEA Part B funding allocated to child find activities*
- ❖ *Administrators and child find staff collaboratively and systematically evaluate and plan for the child identification process birth to twenty-one years using the Colorado Child Identification Effectiveness Indicators*
- ❖ *Extend contracts for staff who need to be available over long breaks from school*
- ❖ *Include child find responsibilities in the duties of Extended School Year (ESY) staff*
- ❖ *Contract for "on call staff" to cover during extended breaks*
- ❖ *Reduce staff hours during school year and use those hours in the summer or give comp time for extra hours worked in summer*
- ❖ *Pay stipend to compensate for extra duties as assigned*

Timeline Requirements for Birth to Three Years of Age

Child Find has primary responsibility for screening and evaluation at this age level; however, many districts meet this requirement by collaborating with other community resources. For children ages birth to three years, all timelines are defined as calendar days. The Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) must be completed within forty-five (45) calendar days from the point of referral. The point of referral is defined as that point in time when a community member such as a parent, doctor, caregiver, public health staff, home visitor or Child Find staff first requests a developmental screening or multidisciplinary evaluation. The person who received the referral then has two (2) days to schedule next steps in the process as defined in each community. If an evaluation is indicated or requested, in the case of children who are categorically eligible, a multidisciplinary evaluation and the IFSP must be completed within forty-five (45) calendar days from the point of referral.

Timeline Requirements for Three to Twenty-One Year Olds

Child Find also has primary responsibility for screening and evaluation at this age level. For children ages three to twenty-one years, all timelines are defined as school days. A school day is defined as any day that education is provided including: over an extended break when summer school might be in session or in year round schools when one track is off and another is on. An evaluation must be completed and eligibility determined within forty-five school days of the initial referral or request for evaluation by the parent. It is not permissible for the LEA to postpone the opportunity for the parent to sign permission for evaluation and, therefore, delay the evaluation and staffing process over extended school breaks. If the classroom observation is not possible because the childcare center or other educational facility is not in session, only that part of the evaluation should be postponed. All other aspects of the evaluation should be completed and eligibility considered within the forty-five school days, including the development of a preliminary IEP, which can be reviewed when the classroom observation information is available.
