



# Child Find: Through the Lens of Early Childhood

Cathy Daentl, EL-TAI Specialist  
January 7, 2026





# EL-TAI

## Early Learning Technical Assistance & Implementation

*Our mission is to strengthen the capacity of early childhood teams through effective coaching, collaborative problem-solving, professional learning, and data-informed systems improvement. We support educators in creating inclusive learning environments and delivering high-quality instruction that ensures the rightful presence and meaningful participation of students with IEPs, leading to positive outcomes.*



Early Learning Technical Assistance & Implementation

# Intended Outcomes



- Participants will learn what Child Find is and how it relates to children not yet of school age
- Participants will learn how to access services
- Participants will learn practical ways to participate and support your child throughout the Child Find process



# What is Child Find?



Child Find is a **continuous process** of public **awareness activities, screening and evaluation** designed to **locate, identify, and refer** as early as possible all young children with disabilities and their families who are **in need of an Early Intervention Program (Part C) or Early Childhood Special Education (Part B) services** of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (**IDEA**).

The law: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/early-childhood/child-find>

# What is Child Find?



Child Find is a **continuous process** of public **awareness activities, screening and evaluation** designed to **locate, identify, and refer** as early as possible all young children with disabilities and their families who are **in need of an Early Intervention Program (Part C) or Early Childhood Special Education (Part B) services** of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (**IDEA**).



The law: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/early-childhood/child-find>

# Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)



Comprehensive Child Find System ensures that all children who are in need of early intervention or special education services are identified, located, and evaluated.

The law: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/early-childhood/child-find>

# Child Find Is For ALL Children



Infants, toddlers and preschoolers

Private, public or tribal school children

Highly mobile children

Homeless children

Home schooled children

Migrant children

Wards of the state



# Child Find Is For ALL Adults



Parents	Librarians
Legal Guardians	Coaches
Grandparents	Public Health personnel
Aunts/Uncles	Faith-based personnel
Child Care Providers	Law Enforcement personnel
Public/private school personnel	Migrant Services personnel
Medical personnel	Military Education System personnel
Mental Health personnel	

Child Find is for **ANYONE** who is **CURIOUS** about, **WONDERING** about, or has **CONCERNS** about a child's development

# Lead Agencies in Wisconsin



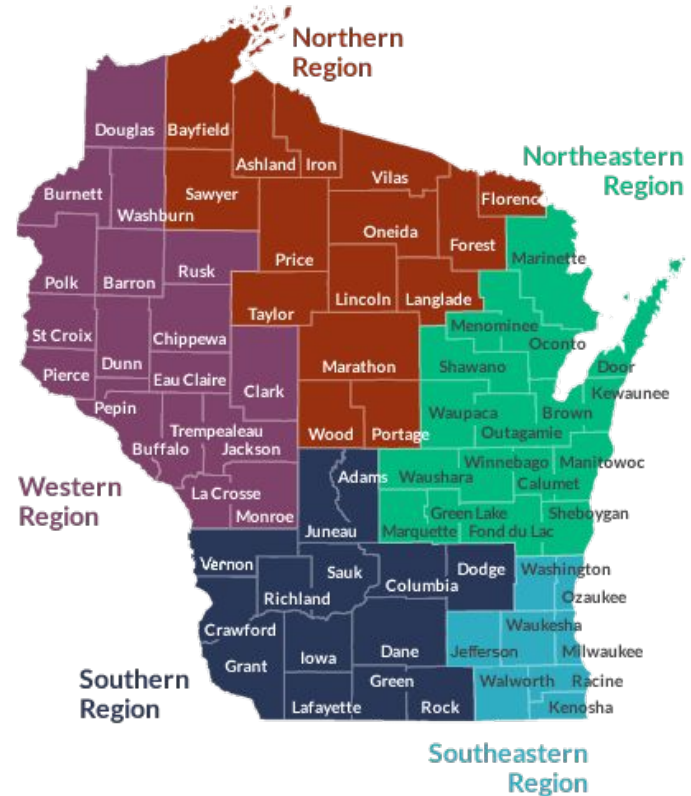
## Part C: Ages 0 through 3



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT  
*of* HEALTH SERVICES

Department of Health Services

County Administrative Agency:  
Birth to 3 Program



# Birth to Three Program Requirements



Under IDEA Part C, a comprehensive child find system includes:

- Public awareness program (34 C.F.R. §303.301);
- Child find activities including coordination with other relevant State agencies (34 C.F.R. § 303.302);
- Referral procedures, including referral timeline (7 days), (34 C.F.R. § 303.303) and post-referral timeline (45 days) (34 C.F.R. § 303.310);
- Screening procedures (at the State's option) (34 C.F.R. § 303.320);
- Procedures for evaluation of the child and assessment of the child and family (34 C.F.R. § 303.321); and
- Procedures for when there is a determination that a child is not eligible (34 C.F.R. § 303.322).

Referral procedures (34 C.F.R. § 303.303)



# Lead Agencies in Wisconsin



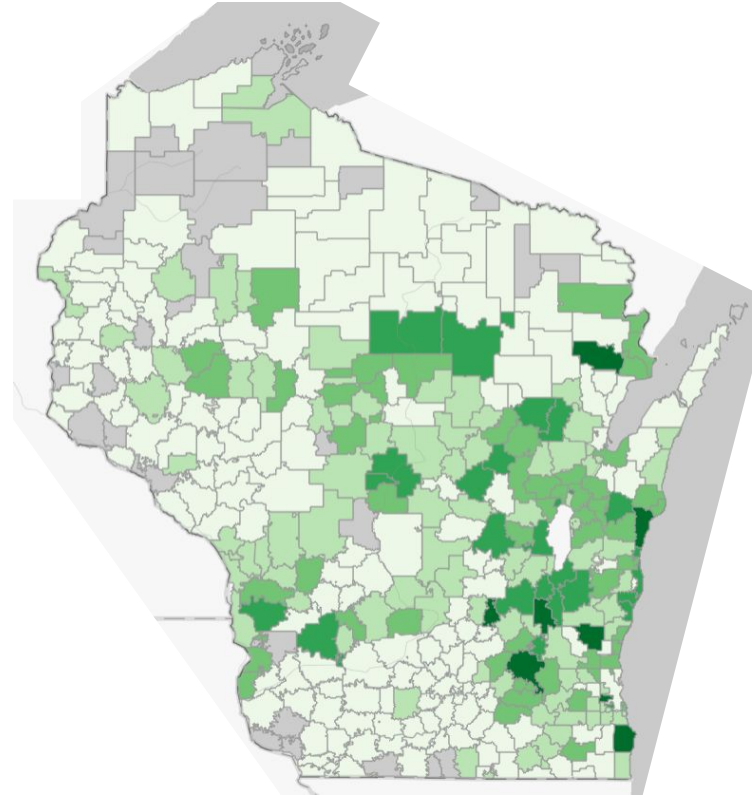
## Part B: Ages 3 through 21



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF  
**Public Instruction**

Department of Public Instruction

Local School Districts



# School District Requirements



## Local Education Agencies are required to post:

1. Model Notice of Child Find Activity: Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information
2. Model Notice to Parents and Individuals Required to Make Referrals
3. According to Wisconsin State Statute 115.77, LEAs shall do all of the following:
  - Identify, locate and evaluate all children with disabilities who are in need of special education and related services
  - Establish written procedures for accepting and processing referrals
  - Document and date the receipt of each referral
4. Provide information and in-service opportunities to **all** of its licensed staff to familiarize them with the agency's referral procedures

# Informed Referral Network



*One Tapestry ... Many Threads*



## **COMMUNITY PARTNERS** may include:

Advocates  
Bilingual Services  
Child Care Providers  
Childcare Resource and Referral  
County Agencies  
County Birth to 3 Programs  
Domestic Abuse Services  
Faith Based Organizations  
Families  
Family Resource Centers  
Grandparents

Head Start/Early Head Start  
Health Care Providers  
Health/Social Service Departments  
Higher Education  
Homeless Liaisons  
Home Visiting Programs  
Law Enforcement  
Local School Districts  
Migrant Services  
Parents  
Physicians/Doctors

Preschool Providers  
Public, Private, and Home Schools  
Public Libraries  
Recreation Service Providers  
Service Clubs  
Shelters  
State Agencies  
Tribal Head Start  
Tribal Service Providers  
Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)  
Other

# Public Awareness



Child Find brochures placed in your community: clinics, laundromats, libraries, school offices, gas stations, etc

District/Community Websites/Billboards

Public Service Announcements: social media, direct mailings/emails, local or regional news media

Must be disseminated, at least annually, in a manner that will reach all parents and individuals required to make referrals throughout the school district's region



# Identify & Locate: Screening



Screening is a methodical, systematic process that is used to explore & help discern next steps

- Newborn
- Physical: Height, weight, head circumference
- Blood: bilirubin, lead, HIV, anemia
- Sensory: Vision & Hearing
- Oral health
- Developmental/Social/Behavioral

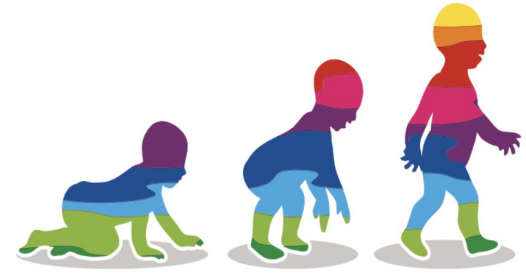


[Bright Futures/AAP  
Periodicity Schedule](#)

# Screening for IDEA Child Find



- Focus on Developmental/Social/Behavioral
  - Cognition
  - Social/Emotional
  - Physical
  - Adaptive
  - Communication
- Acquiring skills: happens progressively over time
- Determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation,
- Provide non-special education recommendations



# Screening for IDEA Child Find



- Identifies children who require further evaluation
- Brief & General
- Not intended to use for program placement or diagnosis
- Educate families about typical development
- Develop/Expand awareness of community resources for young children & their families



# Child Find Screening Best Practices



## A screening tool is used:

- Valid: measures what it is intended to measure
- Reliable: produces the same results, regardless of the administrator and the population
- Age-appropriate
- Covers all developmental domains
- Easy to administer

## Screening activities should include:

- *Parent and/or caregiver engagement*
- Sensitivity to the child's cultural background and primary language
- Results that are reviewed by trained personnel and shared with parents quickly



# Child Find Screening Best Practices



## When

- Anytime there is a request
- Monthly, quarterly
- In combination with other school or program events (4K registration)
- In combination with other community events



# Child Find Screening Best Practices



## Where

- Schools
- Medical settings
- Child care settings
- Head Start Programs
- Homes
- Libraries
- Family Resource Centers



# How To Access Child Find Screening



Ages Birth to 3



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT  
*of* HEALTH SERVICES

Department of Health Services

Part C – Ages 0- through 3

County Administrative Agency:  
**Birth to 3 Program**



**Find your local Birth to 3  
Program**

**Birth to 3 Program contacts**



Contact your County B-3 Program

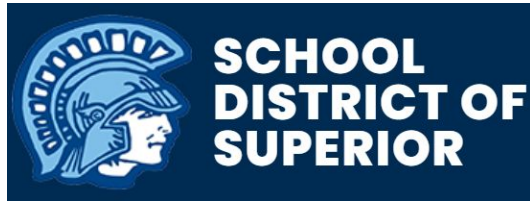
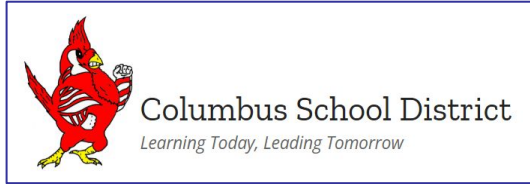


**LOOK FOR: 'Program Coordinator' or  
'Primary Point of Referral'**

# How To Access Child Find Screening



Ages 3 to 6 through 21



## LOOK FOR:

- *Department*
  - *Pupil Services*
  - *Student Services*
  - *Special Education*
  - *Academics*
  - *Specialized Services*
  - *Early Childhood*
- *(About) District*



## LOOK FOR:

- *Pupil Services Director*
- *Special Education Director*
- *School Psychologist*
- *Child Find*
- *Special Education Program Assistant*




What can we help you find?

# How To Access Child Find



Ages 3 to 6 through 21



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF  
**Public Instruction**

Department of Public Instruction

Wisconsin School Directory



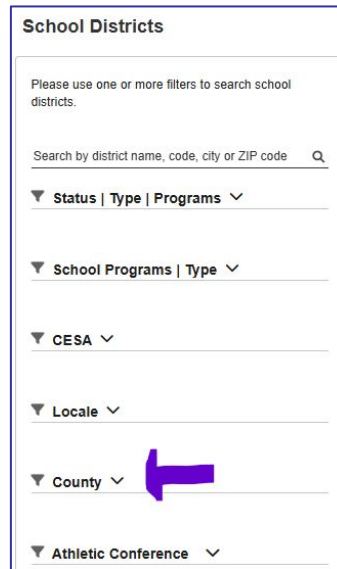
Wisconsin School Directory

Search by school or district name, street address, place or building name, city or ZIP

The online Wisconsin School Directory is a searchable collection of public and private schools in Wisconsin. Using this directory, you can search by school or district name, street address, city, or ZIP code to find important information about schools and school districts. This directory also includes map data about schools and districts, as well as a searchable directory of contact information for school and district personnel.

The online Wisconsin School Directory is currently displaying data for the 2025-2026 school year.

**School Districts** Public Schools Private Schools Contacts



**School Districts**

Please use one or more filters to search school districts.

Search by district name, code, city or ZIP code

▼ Status | Type | Programs ▼

▼ School Programs | Type ▼

▼ CESA ▼

▼ Locale ▼

▼ County ▼

▼ Athletic Conference ▼



 **Dodgeville (1428)**



 **More Contacts**



**Director: Special Education / Pupil**

# Family Involvement

## Wisconsin Early Learning Guiding Principles

You know the most about your child; what your child does and does not yet do, and you know when your child does or does not do those skills.



### **All children are capable and competent.**

Development and learning begins at birth for all children in all settings. The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards support practices that promote development and protect young children from the harm that results from inappropriate expectations. In this they are aligned with ethical principles of the early childhood profession.

### **Early relationships matter.**

Beginning at birth, a child forms relationships with adults who will guide their learning and development. Especially during the earliest years of a child's life from birth to age 3, a child's growth and development is shaped within the context of those relationships. Positive relationships are essential for the development of personal responsibility, capacity for self-regulation, for constructive interactions with others, and for fostering academic functioning and mastery. Warm, sensitive, and responsive interactions help children develop a secure, positive sense of self and encourage them to respect and cooperate with others.

### **A child's early learning and development is multidimensional.**

Developmental domains are highly interrelated. The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards reflect the interconnectedness of the domains of children's development: social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development and communication, health and physical development, and cognition and general knowledge.

### **Expectations for children must be guided by knowledge of child growth and development.**

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards are based on research about the processes and sequences of young children's learning and development and the conditions under which children develop to their fullest potential.

### **Children are individuals who develop at various rates.**

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards recognize that there are individual rates of development and learning across any age range.

### **Children are members of cultural groups that share developmental patterns.**

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards acknowledge that children's development and learning opportunities reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of children, families, and environments.

### **Children exhibit a range of skills and competencies within any domain of development.**

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards support the development of optimal learning experiences that can be adapted for individual developmental patterns.

### **Children learn through play and the active exploration of their environment.**

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards reflect the belief that children should be provided with opportunities to explore, and apply new skills through child-initiated and teacher-initiated activities, and through interactions with peers, adults, and materials. Teachers and families can best guide learning by providing these opportunities in natural, authentic contexts. Positive relationships help children gain the benefits of instructional experiences and resources.

### **Parents are children's primary and most important caregivers and educators.**

Families, communities, and schools all have significant roles to play in terms of what opportunities are available to children, and how well a child is able to take advantage of those learning opportunities. Children who see themselves as highly valued are more likely to feel secure, thrive physically, get along with others, learn well, and feel part of a community.

# Family Involvement in Child Find



1. Learn about and monitor your child's development:  
[CDC Act Early Checklists](#)
2. Contact child's doctor
  - a. Ask for: vision & hearing screen
  - b. Ask for: developmental screen
3. Contact County Birth to 3 Program or Local School District
  - a. Ask for: developmental screen
  - b. If concerned: Ask for a 'Referral for a special education evaluation'
4. Answer & ask questions during the screening process

**Concerned about Development?**  
**How to Get Help for Your Child**

Talking to the doctor is the first step toward getting help for your child if you are concerned about his or her development (how your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, or moves). **Don't wait.** Acting early can make a real difference!

- 1 Make an appointment with your child's doctor**
  - When you schedule the appointment, tell the doctor's staff you have concerns about your child's development that you would like to discuss with the doctor.
- 2 Complete a milestone checklist**
  - Before the appointment, complete a milestone checklist by downloading CDC's free [Milestone Tracker mobile app](#) from the App Store or Google Play or printing a paper checklist from [www.cdc.gov/Milestones](#).
  - Write down your questions and concerns; take these with you to the doctor's appointment.
- 3 During the doctor's appointment**
  - **Show the completed milestone checklist to the doctor**
    - If your child **is** missing milestones, point them out, and share any other concerns that you have.
    - If your child **is not** missing milestones but you still have concerns, tell the doctor about them.
  - **Ask the doctor for developmental screening for your child**
    - Developmental screening is recommended whenever there is a concern. It gives the doctor more information to figure out how best to help your child.
    - For more information about developmental screening, go to [www.cdc.gov/DevScreening](#).
  - **Ask the doctor if your child needs further developmental evaluation**
    - If your child does, ask for a referral and call right away. If you have difficulty getting an appointment, let the doctor know.
- 4 Make sure you understand what the doctor tells you, and what to do next**
  - Before you leave the appointment, check the notes you have written and make sure all of your questions have been answered.
  - If you do not understand something, ask the doctor to explain it again or in a different way.
  - When you get home, review your notes and follow the steps the doctor has given you. Remember, you can always contact the doctor's office if you have any questions.

**You Know Your Child Best**

If your child's doctor has told you to "wait and see," but you feel uneasy about that advice:

Talk with another doctor to get a second opinion

**AND**

Call for a free evaluation to find out if your child can get free or low-cost services that can help.

- **If your child is under age 3:** Call your state's early intervention program. Find the phone number at [www.cdc.gov/FindEI](#).
- **If your child is age 3 or older:** Call the local public elementary school.

**You do not need a doctor's referral to have your child evaluated for services.**

Find more information, including what to say when you make these important calls, visit [www.cdc.gov/Concerned](#)

**Don't wait.**  
Acting early can make a real difference!

[www.cdc.gov/ActEarly](#)  
1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

Download CDC's free Milestone Tracker app

[Learn the Signs. Act Early.](#)

# Resources



[Wrights Law: Child Find](#)

DPI Child Find: [Local School Districts & Family Engagement](#)

Birth to 3 Program: [County Administrative Agency](#)

[Wisconsin Wayfinder: Tracking Development](#)

[CDC's Developmental Milestones](#)

[Milestone Tracker App](#)

[Pathways: Milestones](#)

[How to Get Help for Your Child \(pdf\)](#)

WSPEI Family  
Information and Support  
Specialist Team  
833-879-7734 or  
833(USWSPEI) | E-mail  
wspei@cesa12.org





# Reflection



# Early Learning-Technical Assistance & Implementation Grant: Here to Support You



## State EL-TAI Professional Learning

- Learning Cohorts
- Learning Series
- Community of Practices
- Book Study

## **State ECSE Technical Assistance**

- [Early Learning Technical Assistance Request](#)
- [Early Learning Menu of Supports and Services](#)

## Subscribe: ECSE Email List

- Enter email, respond to security prompt, & submit
- Scroll to 'Special Education'
- Check 'Early Childhood Special Education'
- Scroll down to 'Submit'





*Thank You*



# EL-TAI

## Early Learning Technical Assistance & Implementation

*The Early Learning Technical Assistance & Implementation grant CFDA# 84.173A acknowledges the support of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WDPI) in the development of this resource and for the continued support of this federally-funded grant project.*



Early Learning Technical Assistance & Implementation