

III. CHILD FIND

It is the policy of the State of Iowa that all children with disabilities in the age range from birth to 21 years of age residing in this state who are in need of special education and related services are identified, located, and evaluated. A comprehensive child identification system exists in the state that makes it possible to ascertain the number of children with disabilities who are receiving special education and related services. These provisions apply to all Iowa children, including children attending private schools and children who are homeless or wards of the state.

The AEAs and LEAs shall be responsible for ensuring:

1. requesting parental consent for a comprehensive initial evaluation for all children suspected of being eligible individuals under the IDEA.
2. testing and evaluation materials and procedures utilized for the purposes of evaluation and placement of children with disabilities for services will be selected and administered so as not to be racially or culturally discriminatory.
3. materials or procedures shall be provided and administered in the child's native language or mode of communication, unless it clearly is not feasible to do so.
4. no single procedure shall be the sole criterion for determining an appropriate educational program for a child.

For purposes of this policy, a child is suspected of having a disability when the public agency is aware of facts and circumstances that, when considered as a whole, would cause a reasonably prudent public agency to believe that the child's performance might be explained because the child is an eligible individual.

Existing state legislation governing the provision of, and financial support for, special education instructional and support service programs requires the State Education Agency (SEA) in Iowa to assume responsibility for coordinating the planning and implementation of child find policies and procedures.

The delivery of special education instructional and support services to children with disabilities in Iowa is a cooperative endeavor involving state, area education agencies (AEAs), local education agencies (LEAs) and local public and private agencies. The primary responsibility for providing such educational services is assigned to the public educational agencies of Iowa through statutes mandating the education of children with disabilities. Specific statutory requirements relating to the delivery of special education services make it imperative that the Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Student and Family Support Services, be the principal agency administering the child find system. Responsibilities of AEAs and LEAs are set forth in the Iowa Administrative Code.

AEAs and LEAs may identify students with disabilities using either a categorical or noncategorical model. In such circumstances where a student with a disability is identified as an

“eligible individual,” each AEA shall develop their own procedures for such identification. The critical passage of Iowa’s administrative rules reads:

Each AEA shall develop written policies pertinent to the provision of special education and related services, and shall make such policies available to the Department upon request. While AEAs may identify students as eligible for special education without designating a specific disability category, it is recognized that in certain circumstances the educational diagnosis of a specific disability, such as autism or sensory impairment, may enhance the development and ongoing provision of an appropriate educational program.

The present system for monitoring the number of children with disabilities within each category is a computerized system used to determine which children are receiving special education and related services. The Department annually reviews information from Iowa’s information management system to determine the effectiveness of policies and procedures related to child find. If anomalies or disproportionality issues appear in the data or if other information suggests needed corrections or modifications to child find or eligibility determinations, the Department initiates corrective action. The Iowa Department of Education acknowledges that the collection of data to meet child find requirements is subject to the confidentiality requirements of IDEA and other state and federal law.

The Iowa Code requires AEAs to be accredited by the state. The accreditation process outlined in Code requires AEAs to be monitored on a cycle. AEAs are required to have a plan in place that outlines the agency’s actions to meet the child find standards identified by the State. The plan and the monitoring activities enable the Department of Education to evaluate the effectiveness of the identification process.

In addition, the State of Iowa and AEAs will monitor annually the local school district child find activities through the state’s monitoring process.

Iowa’s child find system is an ongoing program involving LEAs, AEAs, and the SEA. Initial identification/referral activities are conducted with the Iowa Department of Human Services, the Iowa Department of Public Health, public and private preschool facilities, local hospitals, public and private family and pediatric physicians, and a variety of parent support groups that function within the geographic boundaries of each AEA. These agencies receive periodic updates that describe referral procedures to assist in the child find process. According to the Iowa Code, upon request the Iowa Department of Public Health shall furnish information obtained in from birth certificates relative to the name, address, and address in of any case of developmental disability and the child specialty clinics will provide the same type of information. The Department of Human Services provides for the evaluation and identification of students with disabilities in each of their facilities. In addition, the Department of Human Services refers students who are suspected of being students with disabilities to the area education agencies. These activities go on throughout the entire year.

The Iowa Department of Education is the lead agency in Iowa for Part C of IDEA. The Department works with a contractor to provide a comprehensive statewide informal referral service.