



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of Teaching and Learning

Central IEP Team

Special Education Services for Parentally- Placed Private School Students: Family Guide

Updated January 2026

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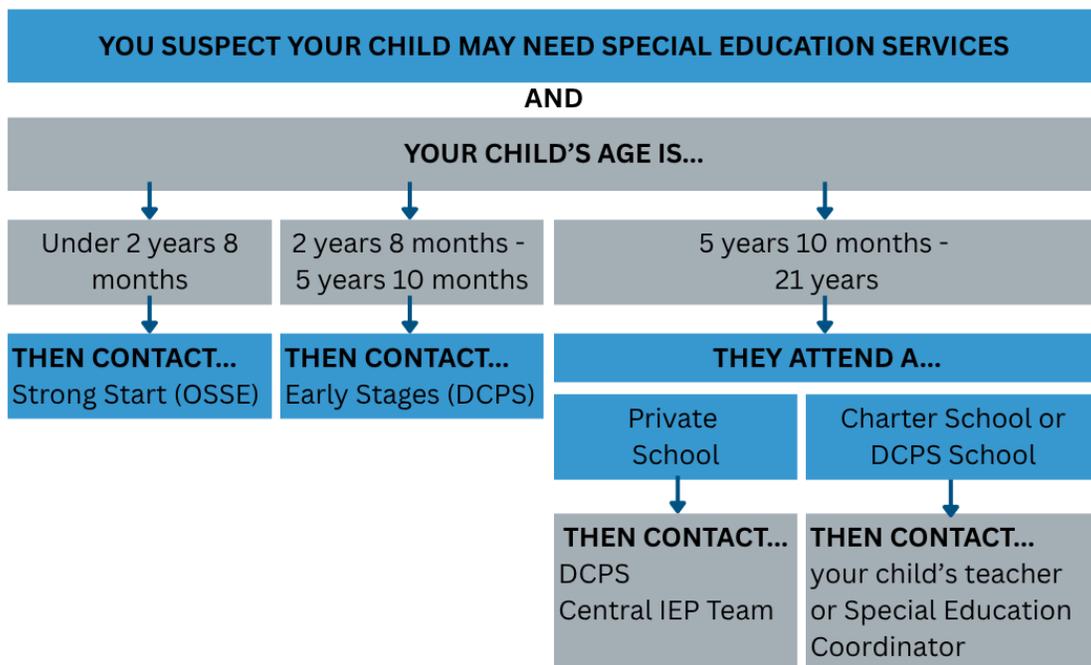
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Child Find

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a nationwide law that makes a free appropriate public education (FAPE) available to eligible children with disabilities. This is done by making special education services available to these students. Under the IDEA and local DC law, DCPS must identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities from ages three through twenty-one years who are residents of the District of Columbia. This applies to:

1. Children who are not D.C. residents and attend private schools located in D.C.
2. Children who are D.C. residents and attend a DCPS school, private school, or homeschool

The right point of contact for engaging with the Child Find process depends on the age of your child and where they attend school or childcare.



CONTACT INFORMATION:

Strong Start at OSSE

- Phone: (202) 727-3665
- Submit a referral: eip.osse.dc.gov

Early Stages at DCPS

- Phone: (202) 698-8037
- Email: info@earlystages.org.
- Submit a referral: earlystagesdc.org

DCPS Central IEP Team

- Email: dcps.childfind@k12.dc.gov

- <https://dcchildfind.wixsite.com/privateschool>

At DCPS, Child Find is conducted by Early Stages, the Central IEP Team, and local DCPS schools. Once students are identified, evaluated, and found eligible for Special Education services, they may receive an IEP and/or Services Plan. Equitable Services will be coordinated by the Central IEP Team staff for students at a private school in DC with a Services Plan. IEP services will be provided by the student’s DCPS school if the student is enrolled in their local DCPS school.

Who Conducts Child Find at DCPS?

	Ages	Location of Students Served	Identifies, Evaluates, and Recommends Services to DC residents	Identifies, Evaluates, and Recommends Services to non-DC residents attending school in DC	Coordinates services through Services Plan	Provides services through IEP
Early Stages	2 years 8 months - 5 years 10 months	Homeschools and private schools in DC				
Central IEP Team	5 years 10 months - 21 years	Private schools or Homeschool in DC				
Local DCPS Schools	3 years - 21 years	DCPS schools				

Eligibility Process

If you suspect your child of having a disability, then you may submit a referral. Referrals may also be submitted by the school. The referral is to see if your child qualifies for special education. Once the referral is submitted, DCPS will reach out to schedule an Analyzing Existing Data (AED) meeting. The AED Meeting’s purpose is to review current concerns and the child’s academic progress. If evaluations are proposed, DCPS will ask for consent to evaluate, and if consent is provided then evaluations will take place. Once assessments are completed, an eligibility meeting will be held to discuss the results of the assessments. The team will then determine if a student is eligible or is not eligible for special education services. If your child is eligible for special education services DCPS will request consent for initial provision for special education. If consent is provided, then an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting will be held to propose an IEP. This is called the initial eligibility process for special education. More about this process can be found below.

Qualifying for Special Education and/or Related Services

To qualify for special education and/or related services, two things must be true:

1. Your child must have a disability as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
AND
2. The disability must “adversely affect a child’s educational performance” [\(IDEA 300.8\(c\)\)](#)
 - a. Having an adverse effect refers to when a child's disability is interfering with their learning. This includes academic grades, how the child interacts with teachers and peers, how the child learns, and more.

The IDEA-defined disabilities are:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Specific learning disability (SLD) | 6. Visual impairment, including blindness | 13. Multiple disabilities |
| 2. Other health impairment | 7. Deafness | 14. Developmental delay* (this disability can only be diagnosed to children ages 6 and under) |
| 3. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) | 8. Deaf-blindness | |
| 4. Emotional disturbance | 9. Hearing impairment | |
| 5. Speech or language impairment | 10. Orthopedic impairment | |
| | 11. Intellectual disability | |
| | 12. Traumatic brain injury | |

The Steps of the Process

DC Public Schools (DCPS) must finish the eligibility process within 60 days after the parent/guardian provides informed written consent for the evaluation. The goal of this process is to see if your child requires special education services. If your child is eligible and the initial consent for services is provided, then an IEP and/or Services Plan will be proposed within 30 days of the initial eligibility. Services will begin within a reasonable timeframe.



1. Parent/Guardian & School Discuss Concerns

This is encouraged as the first step to make sure everyone is on the same page before the process begins. The school and parent should communicate about any concerns that the student may have a disability.

2. Referral is Made

The parent/guardian, or someone else familiar with the child, makes a referral for special education services by submitting a referral form to dcps.childfind@k12.dc.gov.

The following people may submit a referral:

- The parent/guardian
- An employee of the school the child is enrolled in who has knowledge of the child

- An employee of a public agency who has knowledge of the child, such as a social worker or a case manager from DC's Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)

For child under the age of 6, the additional people may submit a referral:

- Pediatricians or other medical professionals
- Day care centers
- Community organizations

A copy of the [parent procedural safeguards](#) is provided to the parent.

If the student attends a Private School or Homeschool in DC, the following documents will be needed in addition to the referral form:

- Proof of Enrollment from the school or [OSSE Homeschool Authorization Letter](#)
- Proof of Residency

Other recommended documents include:

- Hearing and vision test from within the last year
- Attendance records
- Report cards
- Standardized test scores
- Work samples

Once the referral is received, the Central IEP Team will work with the parent and school to gather all preliminary data, including observing the child in their educational environment. Once the Central IEP Team is done gathering all preliminary data, the case will be handed off to the case manager.

3. Analyzing Existing Data (AED) Meeting / Screening

DCPS will reach out to schedule the AED meeting. During this meeting, the IEP team reviews existing data and decides whether additional assessments are needed. This meeting is attended by the parent/guardian and IEP team. The private school is invited but not required to attend.

If the IEP team decides evaluation is not warranted, then a copy of the [parent procedural safeguards](#) is provided to the parent. The parent's rights to appeal are noted within this document. The parent will also be issued a Prior Written Notice (PWN) with the decision and reasoning. The process would end here

If the IEP team determines initial evaluation is warranted, then DCPS will issue a PWN and the parent will be asked to provide informed written consent. Once the informed written consent is received from the parent, the initial evaluation can proceed.

4. Additional Assessments

DCPS conducts the needed assessments for specific areas of educational need. Assessments may occur at the DCPS neighborhood school. The Prior Written Notice (PWN) will provide the parent

with a list of what assessments are being proposed by DCPS. This will include the reasoning for the decision.

5. **Eligibility**

If the IEP team determines that the child does not qualify for special education, then the parent will be issued a PWN providing the basis for why DCPS is not proceeding. The process ends here.

If the IEP team determines that the child does qualify for special education eligibility, the parent will be asked to provide initial consent for services.

6. **Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Meeting**

If initial consent for services is provided, then the IEP meeting will be held to propose an IEP. The IEP provides special education and related services for the child. The IEP team reviews the proposed IEP during this meeting. The school is invited but not required to attend. The IEP will indicate special education services and placement.

The IEP team includes:

- The parent/guardian
- The child (if appropriate)
- Special education teachers
- General education teachers
- Related service providers
- Other key members of the school staff
- Other individuals, at the discretion of the parent or DCPS, who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel, if appropriate

After the meeting, the parent will be asked to provide signed consent. Once the signed IEP is received, the DCPS school begins implementing the IEP.

The Family's Role in the IEP Process

As your child's parent/guardian, you are an important member of the IEP team. DCPS will provide you with a copy of the completed IEP no later than five (5) business days after the meeting,

[IEP's From Other Local Education Agencies \(LEAs\)](#)

If a student has an IEP from another LEA that is not DCPS and the family would like to receive Equitable Services, they should share the existing IEP and any evaluation reports with DCPS when submitting a referral. If the student's existing IEP includes Speech, then DCPS will be able to write a Services Plan based on the current IEP and offer Speech through Equitable Services once the referral and IEP are received. Once the Eligibility process is complete, if the student is still found to qualify for Speech, an updated Services Plan will be written.

Reevaluation

Continued eligibility for special education must be decided at least once every three (3) years. This is called “reevaluation” or a “triennial evaluation.” All students identified as qualifying for special education services are offered triennial evaluation, regardless of if they attend a public or private school in D.C. Reevaluation requires parental informed written consent. If a parent declines reevaluation and the student currently receives services through an IEP or Services Plan, services will end.

If the parent/guardian wishes to receive an updated offer of FAPE outside of the triennial evaluation timeline, the parent/guardian must make the request in writing to DCPS.ChildFind@k12.dc.gov to receive an updated IEP. If parents would like an updated offer of FAPE before the upcoming school year, they are encouraged to make this request by January.

Equitable Services

Equitable Services are services provided to students who are parentally-placed at a nonprofit private school located in D.C. If students are a D.C. resident, and the parent requests a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) then an IEP will be proposed. A student may access their IEP services at any time by enrolling in their local DCPS school.

If the family declines the IEP and the FAPE offer, and the student qualifies for Speech Language Pathology and/or Occupational Therapy, then a Services Plan for Equitable Services will be written and offered during the IEP Meeting. If the student is not a D.C. resident and qualifies for Speech Language Pathology and/or Occupational Therapy, then only a Services Plan will be written and offered.

Speech Language Pathology (Speech Therapy) and Occupational Therapy are currently offered as part of Equitable Services. This includes time for direct services, when the therapist is working with the student, as well as time for consultation, when the therapist is checking in with the teacher or parent. Only Speech Therapy and Occupational Therapy are offered as part of Equitable Services.

Annual Meeting

An Annual Services Plan Meeting is held once per year to update a student's Services Plan. Information on Services Plans is available in the section below. A parent/guardian is required to attend along with a DCPS representative and the student's Speech Therapist. The private school is invited to attend but not required.

Services Plan

A Services Plan is created by the same people who create the IEP, if the student is D.C. resident. A Services Plan describes the Equitable Services provided by DCPS to be implemented at the private school. Currently, these services include Speech Therapy and Occupational Therapy. The Services Plan will include information about the student's present levels of performance and annual goals.

Receiving Equitable Services

The Services Plan goes into effect, starting the implementation of services, once the parent/guardian

returns the signed Services Plan to DCPS. Once the signed Services Plan is received, the private school will be contacted to finalize a therapy schedule. Once a schedule is set, the parent will receive a welcome letter via email from the therapist and services will begin. The parent and school will be contacted by DCPS for the Services Plan Annual Meeting and Triennial re-evaluation.

Please note that parents must consent to Equitable Services continuing each school year. DCPS will reach out each Spring to the parents of students currently receiving Equitable Services asking parents to share the students school for the upcoming school year and confirm if they would like to continue services if the student remains in a private school in DC. Failure to complete this will result in services discontinuing.

Elisabeth Staal, Coordinator of the CIEP Team, is the case manager for students receiving Equitable Services. If you have any questions or concerns, you can reach out to her at elisabeth.staal@k12.dc.gov.