**Early Childhood Special Education for ages 3-5**

Early Childhood Special Education addresses individual needs within the context of developmentally appropriate early learning experiences including early literacy, math, play and social areas. Preschool special education is a state and federally mandated program for children ages three through five who are experiencing challenges in their learning and development and meet eligibility criteria for special education and related services.

Every school district provides special education services to young children. Over 13,000 children in Tennessee receive individualized special education services each year as a part of IDEA 619 Preschool.

-Eligibility for children is determined by criteria that have been established by federal and state rules and regulations.

-Eligible children are entitled to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

-Each child with a disability has an Individualized Education Program, or IEP. Parents, teachers, therapists, and school administrators make up the IEP team and collaborate to write the IEP. The IEP lists the individual goals for the child and the services the child receives.

-A young child who is determined eligible for special education receives services in the least restrictive environment; children should be educated with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. This may include a public school, Head Start, a community based childcare setting, or the home as determined by the child’s IEP team.

-Special Education is not a place but a system of services and supports for children with disabilities.

**What is Child Find?**

Child Find is a component of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that requires states to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities ages 3 to 21. It is. Continuous process of public awareness activities, screening, and evaluation to locate, identify and refer children as early as possible.

To participate in an Early Intervention Program or Special Education, a child must meet eligibility guidelines according to the IDEA and Tennessee state regulation.

**Who Can Refer Children to Child Find Services?**

-Parents of preschool children who are not enrolled in a public-school program and who have concerns about their child’s development.

-Other care providers such as healthcare providers, community agencies, childcare programs, and social workers with parental consent.

-Parents of preschool and/or school-age children (ages 3-21) and not enrolled in a public-school program who suspect an educational disability.

-Parents of preschool and/or school age children (ages 3-21) enrolled in a public-school program who suspect an educational disability.

**How Do I Access Child Find Services?**

Child Find activities are conducted at certain times during the school year and/or a Child Find screening appointment can be set up by contacting the Special Education Department at Central Office (423-299-0471). Here are the options for setting up a Child Find screening:

**Children from birth to age 2 ½:**Contact Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS) at 1-800-852-7157 to make a referral or visit the Tennessee Department of Education’s website at [www.tn.gov/content/tn/education.html](http://www.tn.gov/content/tn/education.html).

**Children age 2 ½ to 21 NOT enrolled in public school:** Contact the Polk County Special Education Department at 423-299-0471.

**School-aged students age 3 to 21 currently enrolled in public school:** Contact the principal at your school or you may contact the Polk County Special Education Department at 423-299-0471.

**What is the Process?**

-A review or screening of available information about the child is conducted.

-If the screening indicated the possibility of an educational disability, the child is evaluated in relevant areas with parental permission.

-If determined that the child has a disability and is in need of special education services, an individualized education plan and/or Service Pan is developed depending on the child’s age, disability, and educational needs.

**What is the Cost?**

Screening, assessments, evaluations, and all special education services which are determined to be necessary are provided free of charge.

**What Services are Available?**

The Polk County School System provides a full range of special education services for students with disabilities whose educational needs cannot be met through the general education program. Students who have disabilities which meet the criteria established by the Tennessee State Department of Education and the federal government are afforded due process rights under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reauthorized December 2004.

A student may be eligible for special education services if the following conditions significantly impact their educational performance:

**-Specific Learning Disability**

**-Intellectual Disability**

**-Autism**

**-Speech and Language Impairments**

**-Vision or Hearing Impairments**

**-Emotional Disturbance**

**-Intellectually Gifted**

**-Functionally Delayed**

**-Developmentally Delayed**

Students suspected of having any of these conditions have the right to a comprehensive evaluation by a multidisciplinary team, a free appropriate public education with typically developing peers to maximum extent appropriate, and due process rights. All records and information regarding the assessment and the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) of the student are kept confidential and can only be released with parental consent. Parents have the right to review the records upon request. Anyone who has or knows of a child who is suspected of having any of these disabilities may contact the school where the child would attend to make a referral. If you are the parent of a student with a disability receiving home school services, you may be entitled to receive a portion of the federal dollars granted to the school system to assist in providing an appropriate education for your child.

For more information, questions, or to make a referral, please contact:

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