

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION: PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Preschool special education services are designed to provide children between the ages of three and five years of age with disabilities with services to enhance their developmental functioning. Services are provided in the least restrictive environment. This can include home and community settings as well as in school-based settings.

SCREENING, EVALUATION AND DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR SERVICES

Preschool children may access services in one of two ways. The first process is designed for children who have been served through the Infants and Toddlers Program (ITP). A Child Find team housed at ITP works with the ITP staff to determine if children who have received early intervention services are eligible for special education services. If they determine that they are eligible, then this team designs an Individual Education Program (IEP) in concert with the ITP staff that has worked with the child and the child receives appropriate special education services by his third birthday.

The second process is for children whose delays or disorders are suspected after the age of 2 years 10 months - 5th birthday. Parents may call the Child Find main offices to set up a screening appointment. A special education teacher or speech pathologist affiliated with Child Find will conduct a screening of the child's development. If the child passes the screening, then the Child Find diagnostician will talk with the parent about developmental expectations and recommend other services and resources to address the parent's concerns. If the child demonstrates a delay in a domain of development [cognition, expressive and receptive language, fine motor, adaptive, gross motor, social-emotional], then a formal evaluation is conducted at Child Find office. Depending on the results of the evaluation, a disability may be determined and the child may be eligible for special education and related services. If that occurs, then an Individual Education Program is developed with the parent.

Referrals should be made by calling the main Child Find office at 410-677-5250.

OVERVIEW & PROCESS

Eligibility:

Children with disabilities from birth to age 21 may be eligible for special education. Federal law defines "children with disabilities" as having any of the following types of disabilities.

- Autism
- Deaf-blindness
- Deafness
- Developmental Delay
- Emotional Disturbance
- Hearing Impairment
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment (including blindness)

Definition:

Special Education means specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. Special Education can include:

- Instruction
- Instruction in physical education
- Vocational Education
- Speech/Language Services

Additionally, once Special Education is determined, related services may also be implemented based on student profile/need (eligibility) e.g.

- Speech/Language Services
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Counseling

NOTE: WCBOE assures educational opportunities by providing "free and appropriate" educational programs and related services for students with disabilities. "At no cost" means that all specially designed instruction is provided without charge, but does not preclude incidental fees which are normally charged to non-disabled students or their parents as part of the regular education program.

IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Children Birth to Age 3

WCBOE Infants and Toddlers Program is a countywide system of coordinated, interagency and multidisciplinary early intervention services. Parents, medical personnel, or other concerned individuals may make a referral. Evaluations are completed to determine if the child is eligible for early intervention services.

Children Ages 3-5

The Preschool Child Find Team is an interdisciplinary team that provides identification services to children from three to five years of age who may have a disability. Parents, medical personnel, or other concerned individuals may make a referral. If the IEP team suspects that the child has a disability after reviewing all screening information, assessments in all areas related to the suspected disability are recommended. Upon written parental approval, the recommended assessments are conducted by the school-based staff and reviewed by the IEP team at an IEP team meeting. For those children determined eligible for services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed. The IEP team reviews the IEP, identifies services needed to implement the IEP, and considers options for the provision of services in the least restrictive environment.

School-Age Students (Grades K-12)

A student who is suspected of having a disability is referred to the IEP team. The IEP team meets to review the referral and existing data, information from the parent, previously implemented instructional interventions and strategies, current classroom-based assessments/curriculum measures and observations. Based on this information, the IEP team shall determine the need for assessment. If assessments are recommended, the school staff obtains written parental permission and the recommended assessments are conducted by the school-based staff and reviewed by the IEP team at an IEP team meeting. For those children eligible for services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed. The IEP team reviews the IEP, identifies services needed to implement the IEP, and considers options for the provision of services in the least restrictive environment. Note: If a parent has an educational concern and/or believes their child may have a disability, please contact your schools administrator. **Private/Parochial:** If there is a concern or belief that a school-age child who attends a private or religiously affiliated school in Wicomico County may have a disability, contact the administration of your neighborhood school. **Service Continuum:** The Wicomico County School System provides a continuum of services ranging from consultation and general education programming to self-contained classes, regional programs and separate private (approved nonpublic) school placements. Each elementary, middle, and high school in Wicomico County provides special education and related services for students who are identified as eligible for services.

Indirect/Consultation

- Provide the general educator with guidance from the special education teacher and related service providers on appropriate strategies for instruction, behavior management, data collection, observation, and feedback in the general education setting.
- Facilitate service delivery through ongoing communication between general and special educators and related service providers.
- Assistance in completing functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and developing a behavioral intervention plan (BIP) to address areas of concern.

Direct Service Delivery (within the general education setting)

- Direct special education instruction within the least restrictive environment of the general education classroom.
- Direct support for individual students by the general education teacher, the special education teacher, or instructional assistant by making adaptations or modifications to the general education curriculum and assessments.
- Individualized or small group instruction to meet the academic and behavior needs of the student, either within the general education classroom or with pull-aside instruction services for specific skill development.

Direct Service Delivery (outside the general education setting)

- Direct intensive or multi-sensory instruction utilizing specialized strategies and techniques in a small group, self-contained environment with an alternative curriculum when necessary.
- More specific skill training in remediation of academic skill deficits or in the social, emotional, and behavioral areas.
- Supports that address behavioral difficulties that interfere with the students learning or the learning of other students.

Direct Service Delivery (combined)

Students may receive direct service in both the general education and special education classrooms. This is an IEP team decision based on individual student need. Direct Service Delivery (Approved Nonpublic School) For those students whose educational needs require services beyond those of the districts capacity, WCBOE utilizes Maryland State Department of Education approved nonpublic schools. The nature and severity of the students disability which significantly impact educational performance may necessitate more intensive resources and may require a more therapeutic segregated setting in order for a student to receive an appropriate educational program.

Service Providers:

Wicomico County strongly believes in a shared accountability with both general education and special education teachers collaboratively supporting ALL students. Service may be provided by the following personnel:

- General Education Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- Speech-Language Pathologist
- Physical Therapist
- Occupational Therapist

- School Psychologist
- Behavior Specialist
- Guidance Counselor
- Administrator
- Teacher of Students Who Are Blind and Visually Impaired
- Teacher of Students Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing