

**Charter School Institute**

**Early Childhood Special Education**

*During their early years, most children achieve many developmental milestones such as walking, running, climbing, talking, and acquiring pre-academic and social skills. However, approximately 8% of all children are identified as having disabilities that prevent them from achieving these skills as expected. With these statistics in mind, Congress created the Part C Infant/Toddler Program (birth to 3 years) and the Preschool Special Education Program (3 years to 5 years) as part of the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1986.*

*Some children diagnosed with significant conditions receive services through the Part C Infant/Toddler Program. Other children with less significant issues may not be identified as needing additional services until age three through the Child Find process (see below) and will receive these services through the Preschool Special Education Program (Part B).*

*Currently approximately 12,000 children receive Special Education and Related Services in preschools throughout Colorado.*

**Preschools Authorized by the Charter Institute**

As per each charter school’s contract with the Charter School Institute, the school agrees to comply with the Board’s policies and regulations as well as the requirements of federal and state law concerning preschool children with disabilities. The Charter School Institute operates as the administrative unit (AU) with the authority for delivering Special Education and Related Services to and legal compliance for preschool students with disabilities in its individual charter schools.

CSI has member schools whose individual charter has or potentially could have preschool children who receive Special Education and Related Services. The following information pertains to these schools and CSI functions as the administrative unit for these schools.

For private preschools currently located with CSI schools that are not authorized by the Charter Institute, the following information is the responsibility of the district in which the child resides. Child Find and Special Education and Related services are provided by the home school district.

**Charter School Institute Special Education Preschool Procedures**

**Early Childhood Child Find (ages 3-5)**

The child find (child identification) requirement encompasses measures to locate children who may have disabilities as well as the initial referral, evaluation and eligibility stages of the special education process.

To locate children who may have disabilities, CSI schools with preschool programs must collaborate with the local school district of residence that conduct outreach activities each spring to inform parents, teachers, health care providers, daycare and other appropriate agencies about the evaluation and education services available both in the school district of residence and CSI school. Notices can be posted at the CSI school, information included in newsletters, etc. indicating the date and time of the child find evaluations in the district in which the school is located.

CSI schools are obligated to evaluate children currently enrolled in their school and to work with the local school district of residence to determine appropriate referrals.

If the student is not currently enrolled in school, child find is the responsibility of the administrative unit in which the students resides.

The child find team usually consists of a nurse, speech language pathologist, an occupational therapist, an early childhood and special education teacher, and a school psychologist. The child find screening consists of a series of short tests and professional observations in various developmental areas. If the child’s performance falls within the normal range for his/her age, there is no need for concern in those areas. However, children who are unable to pass all areas assessed may have a developmental delay in those areas. Further investigation will be needed to determine if a delay does exist.

* A re-screening may be conducted in a few months to be sure that delays continue to exist.
* A comprehensive evaluation may be conducted by the child find team to determine if the student would qualify for Special Education and Related Services under IDEA Part B.

**Early Childhood Special Education and Related Services**

Part B of IDEA defines the preschool program which mandates a free appropriate public education to children with disabilities who are 3-5 years old. Under this program, preschool children who have disabilities are entitled to Special Education and Related Services in the Least Restrictive Environment.

Children who have already been identified through Part C as having a disability may enter the preschool setting with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

* If possible, convene a Transfer Conference with the sending agency 90 days prior to the child beginning preschool.
* Identify the child’s needs with input from the referring agency or current placement and parents.
* The child’s eligibility for Part B services can be determined ahead of time and an IEP can be developed for that child, which can then be implemented when the child turns 3.
* If a Transfer Conference does not take place, follow the CSI Special Education Transfer process when the child applies for entrance into preschool.
* Children who have already been identified through Part C as having a disability may enter the preschool setting with an IEP.
* ***Follow the school process for reviewing IEPs to be sure the school can meet the child’s needs within existing programming and resources***.
* Follow the CSI Special Education Transfer Process.

Children already attending preschool who are suspected of having a disability may be in

need of Special Education and Related Services.

* Follow the CSI Early Intervening Services guidelines.
* Implement a Problem Solving model such as Response to Intervention (RtI) - An integrated system that provides high quality, standards-based instruction matched to a child’s academic, social/emotional and/or behavioral needs.
* Implement an intervention process such as Positive Behavior Support (PBS) – A broad range of systematic and individualized strategies for achieving critical social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behaviors.
* Both RtI and PBS consist of a continuum of intervention tiers with increasing levels of support.
* A documented RtI process is now required as part of the eligibility criteria for a learning disability under IDEA.

For a child that is attending preschool and does not respond to either RtI or PBS tiers of

intervention, a special referral may be warranted. Follow CSI and the

school’s referral process including:

* A comprehensive evaluation
* An IEP Initial Eligibility Meeting
* Development of an IEP if the child is found eligible under IDEA
* Application of all state and federal compliance rules and regulations as apply to school-age students

**Reporting/Funding for Preschool Children**

Preschool Special Education and Related Services are funded through a combination of federal special education funding (under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), state special education funding (under the Exceptional Children's Education Act), and through the School Finance Act.

All preschool students with a disabling condition and who have reached the age of three during the semester of the official October Count have a right to receive services and if those services meet the guidelines outlined in the School Finance Rules and Regulations they are eligible to be counted for the .5 PPR school finance funding.

These students can also receive State Categorical Funds for Special Education Programs under the Exceptional Children’s Education Act (ECEA).

In addition, these children are eligible for funding under the Individuals with disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B, Section 619.

A child may be counted if the child:

* Has an IEP
* Is receiving Special Education and/or Related Services
* The services began on or before October 1
* The child is receiving a minimum of 90 hours of service each semester

Required documentation for the October Count:

* The school calendar for the early childhood program
* Attendance records for the eleven day count window
* The Service Deliver page of the IEP. This document must be dated on or before the official count day.

Special Education preschool students are also reported and counted on December 1. Data from both counts determine the distribution of special education funding.

**Results Matter**

Results Matter, sponsored and supported by the Colorado Department of Education, is an early childhood initiative designed to provide outcome-based data that drives programming and policy decisions. In addition it provides the means to demonstrate efficacy of services available to young children and their families in Colorado. The data obtained through Results Matter will be used to describe child progress across specific developmental and educational domains as well as progress measured against global outcomes developed by the national Early Childhood Outcome Center and the U.S. Department of Education.

The Results Matter System includes:

* Developmentally Appropriate Assessment

Providers who participate in the Results Matter program use assessment systems such as Teaching Strategies GOLD™ and the HighScope COR to assess learning and development in Social-Emotional, Language and Literacy, Math, Science, Creative Arts, Physical Development and Approaches to Learning. Through authentic assessment strategies such as ongoing observation, portfolio documentation and completion of developmental checklists, they identify and plan for the instructional needs of young children in their care.

* Online Data Systems

Child assessment results are recorded using online systems which allow immediate access to a variety of progress reports, Colorado standards reports and data exports at the child, classroom, site, program and state level. Plans are in place to link Results Matter child outcomes data with the State’s K-12 data system in order to study longitudinal results for children served through Colorado’s early childhood system.

* Professional Development

Results Matter offers workshops on observation and assessment skills as well as specific assessment systems. A downloadable video series is now available to further support providers in the field. And, to encourage the use of ePortfolios, hands-on training is now offered for those wishing to improve their use of digital media.

* Family Outcomes

Annual survey data provides information about how well Colorado’s early childhood programs and communities are meeting the needs of families. This information is now linked to specific schools and programs in order to support continuous quality improvement efforts and community systems work.

The Colorado Department of Education has developed a series of videos to help providers better understand ways to use observation, documentation, and assessment to inform practice. You can watch the clips online or download QuickTime versions of the videos for use in educational and professional development activities.

For more information on Results Matter, go to the CDE link below:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/resultsmatter/index.htm>