



## Tip Sheet 11 Understanding Child Find

### What is Child Find?

Child Find is a continuous process of public awareness activities and screening designed to “find” children who may have a delay in development or a disability.



The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires all states to have a comprehensive Child Find System that ensures that all children (Birth to 21) who are in need of early intervention or special education services are **identified**, **located** and **evaluated**. The critical nature of timely intervention services cannot be overstated. It ensures that children with disabilities have access to free, appropriate public education, including special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living.

### Agencies Responsible for Child Find:

#### IDEA Part C: Children Birth to 3

Department of Health Services  
County Administrative Agency

#### IDEA Part B: Children 3 through 21

Department of Public Instruction  
Local School Districts

### Why is developmental screening important?

Routine universal screening of young children with a validated tool promotes a better understanding of each child. Early identification of potential delays allows for timely access to appropriate supports and services promoting optimal development for every child.

### Child Find includes ALL:

- Infants, toddlers and preschoolers
- Children in private, public or tribal schools
- Highly mobile children
- Homeless children
- Home schooled children
- Migrant children
- Wards of the state

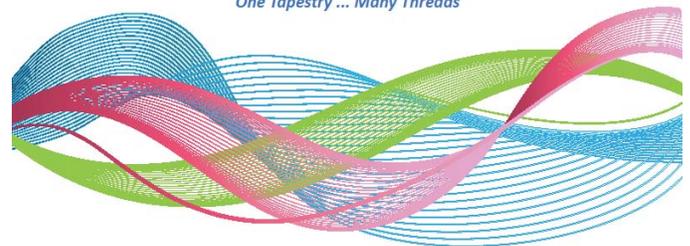
### What is an Informed Referral Network?

An Informed Referral Network is comprised of community partners working together to serve young children and their families. Relationships with community partners have proven to be the most effective practice in identifying children with special needs.

These partnerships provide an opportunity to learn more about screening young children and providing information about community resources.

## INFORMED REFERRAL NETWORK

*One Tapestry ... Many Threads*



### Community Partners May Include:

- |                                   |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Advocates                         | Home Visiting Programs             |
| Bilingual Services                | Law Enforcement                    |
| Child Care Providers              | Local School Districts             |
| Child Care Resource and Referral  | Migrant Services                   |
| County Agencies                   | Physicians/Doctors                 |
| County Birth to 3 Programs        | Preschool Providers                |
| Domestic Abuse Services           | Public, Private and Home Schools   |
| Faith Based Organizations         | Public Libraries                   |
| Families/Guardians/Parents        | Service Clubs                      |
| Family Resource Centers           | Shelters                           |
| Head Start/Early Head Start       | State Agencies                     |
| Health Care Providers             | Tribal Head Start                  |
| Health/Social Service Departments | Tribal/Schools & Service Providers |
| Higher Education                  | Women, Infants & Children (WIC)    |
| Homeless Liaisons                 | Other                              |



## Tip Sheet 11 *(continued)* Understanding Child Find

### Child Find Activities:

**Educate** families about typical child development and the purpose of screening. Provide parents and professionals with information on whether a child's development is similar to children of the same age.

**Develop/Expand** awareness of available community resources for young children and their families through an Informed Referral Network.

**Identify** young children who may have a delay in development or a disability, and guide decisions about "next steps" to address individual children's needs. Children must meet eligibility guidelines for placement according to IDEA.

### Referral Procedures:

A physician, nurse, psychologist, social worker, administrator of a social agency, licensed school personnel and anyone else who reasonably believes a child brought to him or her for services is a child with a disability, has a legal duty to refer the child.

- Children from Birth to 3 years old should be referred to local county Birth to 3 Programs.
- Children from 3 to 21 years old should be referred to local school districts.

### Implementing a Public Awareness Campaign:

Public Awareness Campaigns are opportunities for interagency collaboration to describe available services and activities. The campaigns should identify contacts from both Birth to 3 and local school districts, along with other community agencies, to assist parents and families.

Campaigns include:

- dissemination of print materials in multiple locations
- radio announcements
- newspapers/newsletters
- websites
- developmental screenings

### What is Next for your Team?

Who are the partners in your Informed Referral Network?

How will you build relationships with community partners?

How will you reach parents and families?

### For More Information:

Act Early Wisconsin  
[www.actearly.wisc.edu](http://www.actearly.wisc.edu)

Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs  
[www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/children](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/children)

Wisconsin CESA Early Childhood Contacts  
[http://ec.dpi.wi.gov/ec\\_ecbycesa](http://ec.dpi.wi.gov/ec_ecbycesa)

Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners  
[www.collaboratingpartners.com](http://www.collaboratingpartners.com)

Wisconsin Department of Health Services  
[www.B3wisconsin.org](http://www.B3wisconsin.org)  
[www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/children/birthto3/contacts/familycountycontacts.asp](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/children/birthto3/contacts/familycountycontacts.asp)

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI)  
Early Childhood: Child Find  
[http://ec.dpi.wi.gov/ec\\_eccfpage](http://ec.dpi.wi.gov/ec_eccfpage)

Wisconsin First Step  
[www.mch-hotlines.org](http://www.mch-hotlines.org)  
1-800-642-7837

Zero to Three  
[www.zerotothree.org/child-development/early-development/your-babys-development.html](http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/early-development/your-babys-development.html)

*These Tip Sheets were developed by members of the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners (WECCP) Healthy Children's Committee. Members represent a cross section of agencies, programs and organizations engaged in developmental screening.*

*For more information about WECCP, please visit <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/about.php>.*

**"Parents," throughout, refers to parents, family members who are primary caregivers, guardians and/or foster parents.**

Developmental screening is most effective when integrated into the context of families and local communities. Engaging families in the process of development screening in a way that honors their cultural and linguistic practices will result in more accurate identification of potential delays and increased follow through with referrals. After all, parents are the most important people in a child's life.