



Bureau of Special Education

Connecticut State Department of Education | May 20, 2020

Guidance for Early Childhood Child Find during the COVID-19 Pandemic

This is a working document, which may be updated frequently due to the rapidly changing response to this pandemic emergency and ongoing federal guidance updates.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, school districts continue to have Child Find responsibilities. The following guidance for Child Find applies to children identified as having developmental concerns but who are not yet enrolled in the school district, and is likely to be most applicable to children ages 3 to 5.¹

School districts should develop Child Find procedures and recommended practices for staff to use during the COVID-19 pandemic. These should include an assigned school district contact for Child Find, as well as recommended screening tools. When contacted with a concern about a child's development, the school district should implement its usual Child Find procedures to the greatest extent possible. The assigned school district representative should discuss the concern and inform the parent of the options to pursue (1) a developmental screening or (2) a special education referral.²

Developmental screenings should be completed to the greatest extent possible while maintaining adherence to public health orders. Screenings may include, but are not limited to, the use of the following:

- a formal measure (e.g., The Early Screening Inventory, The Speed Dial);
- school district or teacher developed tools;
- observations, including parent/caregiver provided video;
- parent/caregiver questionnaire (e.g., Ages and Stages Questionnaire);
- interview with parent/caregiver; and
- other screening instruments determined by the school district.

The school district, with input from the parent, should determine which screening tools are the most appropriate given the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Should the screening raise a concern in any developmental area, a special education referral must be made and a planning and placement team (PPT) must convene to review the

¹ This guidance does not address a school district's responsibilities to locate, identify and evaluate all children with disabilities from birth through age 21, including children who attend private schools and public schools, highly mobile children, migrant children, homeless children, and children who are wards of the State. Additionally, this guidance does not address a school district's obligation to inform and educate the public about the need to locate and identify all children with disabilities by employing means such as surveys, brochure mailings, public meetings and contacts with childcare providers.

² While anyone can make a referral, parental consent is required for both screenings and special education initial evaluations.

referral/screening data and discuss the development of a comprehensive evaluation in all areas of concern/suspected disability.³

In some cases, the screener may conclude that performance on the screening measures was not an accurate indication of the child's abilities and may recommend scheduling a re-screening. The school district should work with the parent to schedule additional date(s) and time(s).

If, as a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is not possible to conduct a screening, the school district should maintain documentation of regular contact with the parent during school classroom closures. The school district is responsible for conducting the screening as soon as it is safe to do so.

Please contact Andrea Brinnel, Bureau of Special Education Consultant (Andrea.Brinnel@ct.gov) with any questions regarding this guidance.

³ Please refer to the April 24, 2020, guidance memorandum for information related to PPTs and Initial Evaluations: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2019-20/2020424-Special-Education-Guidance.pdf?la=en>