

Identifying Children with Special Needs

“Child Find” is a part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 that requires districts to identify, locate and screen children who may be in need of special education services. This birth – age 21 identification system focuses on children who are suspected of having a disability in the boundaries of the district which includes public and nonpublic schools, birth and school age children, and children who are homeless or wards of the state.

A child with a disability refers to a child with cognitive delays, hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, visual impairments, emotional impairments, physical impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities.

Although Worthington District 518 is responsible for identifying and locating children in need, Worthington schools combine efforts with numerous agencies in their child finding responsibilities, partnering to identify those children that may have any of the disabilities listed above. Referrals often come from parents, doctors, day care providers, private and public programs such as health and human service agencies, Early Childhood Screenings and anyone concerned about a child’s development. Parents of small children can also call Worthington School District’s central point of intake at Prairie Elementary School at 727-1250 and ask for the Early Childhood Special Education Department.

In addition, if anyone has a concern about a child’s development, Minnesota has created a website known as PARENTS KNOW/HELP ME GROW. This on-line resource is designed as a comprehensive site for parents, offering answers to parent questions, a video library, and child development and milestone charts which are spoken and written in Spanish, Hmong and Somalia in addition to English. This website also has a tab for making a confidential referral for a child to the site, which is quickly referred to the local education agency in Worthington. Here is the site and phone number if you are interested. <http://parentsknow.state.mn> or call 1-866-693 GROW (4769)

Once a child is referred (from birth to 3) due to developmental concerns, a screening and/or evaluation may be conducted at no charge to the family. If a child is identified as having a developmental delay early intervention or school-based services are recommended for older children to focus on the child’s individual needs.

After a referral is made for students Kindergarten-21, teachers and parents discuss the educational and/or behavioral concerns, gather information about the student’s performance and begin to implement interventions so the student has the opportunity to have research-based practices that are known to help student make progress academically and behaviorally. The Problem Solving Teams in the district work with the general education teachers to provide guidance and assistance to general education teachers in hopes that the interventions will make a difference in the progress of the students. After interventions have been tried for a reasonable time, the problem solving teams than make a determination if a special education evaluation is needed. Parents at any time during the intervention stages of referral may request in writing to have a special education comprehensive evaluation.

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Serving Worthington District 518