



# Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.

The Parent Training and Information Center for the District of Columbia

## How CHILD FIND Benefits Your Child

**Child Find** is a requirement of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and requires states to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities and those suspected of having a disability between the ages of birth to 21, who are in need of early intervention or special education services. In the District of Columbia, there are several agencies responsible for Child Find.

**The District of Columbia's Early Intervention Program (DC EIP)**, located within the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is the single point of entry for infants and toddlers (birth – age 2) whose families or others have concerns about their development. Through its "Strong Start" campaign, the DC EIP conducts child find activities for infants and toddlers. The program offers a range of services to address specific developmental challenges and develops a written Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) to meet the needs of the child and the family. But first, a referral must be submitted to the D.C. Early Intervention Program (DC EIP). Anyone can refer a child to the DC EIP. The program accepts referrals from parents, caregivers, family members, friends, physicians, hospitals, Medicaid, child care staff, and social workers. If you have concerns about your child's development, you should speak with your child's health care provider and call the DC EIP at (202) 727-3665 to schedule a free screening.

Children receiving services through the DC Early Intervention Program (DC EIP) will transition to **Early Stages** after turning two years old. Early Stages is the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) Child Find program for children 2 years 8 months through 5 years 10 months. Early Stages is there to help families identify any delays children may have and provide appropriate services to help address those delays. Early Stages serve any child within the specific age range who attends a DC public school, is home-schooled or has not yet entered the school system. If a child is in a DC private school or in a DC childcare center, they are also eligible to receive services through Early Stages. All children referred to Early Stages receive a developmental screening. Upon completion of initial evaluation and eligibility, Early Stages works with families of eligible children to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and assist families with locating an appropriate school placement. Some of the services that Early Stages can recommend include specialized instruction, speech/language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, psychological services, and behavioral support services.

**District of Columbia Public School System** which includes the traditional public and public charter schools, provide special education and related services to eligible

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**V:** (202) 678-8060  
**F:** (202) 678-8062  
**TF:** (888) 327-8060  
**W:** [www.aje-dc.org](http://www.aje-dc.org)  
**E:** [information@aje-dc.org](mailto:information@aje-dc.org)

1012 Pennsylvania Ave SE  
Washington, DC 20003

3912 Georgia Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20011  
Tues & Thurs (9am – 3pm)

**Children with  
Special Needs,  
need Parents  
with Special  
Skills!**

school-aged children ages 3 – 21 years of age. Upon a parent providing a referral to the District of Columbia Public School (DCPS) or the independent charter school in which the child is enrolled, the local education agency must evaluate the child. DCPS or the independent public charter school is the local education agency, and therefore is responsible for all Child Find activities provided to students. The LEA will seek the parent's written consent to complete an initial evaluation, and schedule a meeting with the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) to review the evaluation reports and determine eligibility for special education services. Students who are found eligible for special education services will receive services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP), no later than 30-days after the eligibility decision. The IEP describes the specialized instruction and related services, measurable goals, frequency of services, location of services, accommodations and additional services or devices that will be provided to the child.

DCPS is also responsible for Child Find of parentally-placed students in private schools. These activities are conducted by the DCPS Private Religious Office.

The first five years of a child's life are the most important to their development. If you are concerned delays in your child motor skills, social skills, speech, learning, or hearing, don't wait to see if they will grow out of it. The earlier a child receives services, the more likely it is that their needs will be reduced or even be non-existent as they get older.

For more information or direct assistance, contact AJE at (202) 678-8060. You're also encouraged to review our parent handout on the Special Education Process, which can be found on our website at [www.aje-dc.org](http://www.aje-dc.org).

Important Contacts:

**DC Early Intervention Program**

Phone: (202) 727-3665

Email: [osse.dceip@dc.gov](mailto:osse.dceip@dc.gov)

**DCPS Early Stages**

(202)698-8037

Email: [referrals@earlystagesdc.org](mailto:referrals@earlystagesdc.org)

**DCPS Private Religious Office**

Phone: (202) 442-5475

Email: [pro@dc.gov](mailto:pro@dc.gov)