

CHILD FIND

(FORMERLY: CHILD IDENTIFICATION)

I. STATE POLICY

Arkansas Code Annotated (Ark. Code Ann.) 6-15-402, as amended by Act 999 of 1999, states in part, "(a) The purpose of the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program Act [ACTAAP] is to provide the statutory framework necessary to ensure that all students in the public schools of this state demonstrate grade-level academic proficiency through the application of knowledge and skills in the core academic subjects consistent with state curriculum frameworks, performance standards, and assessments. The State of Arkansas recognizes and declares that students who are not performing at grade-level standards of academic proficiency are especially harmed by social promotion because they are not equipped with the necessary academic skills to be successful and productive members of society. The Department of Education is committed to having all students perform at grade level and beyond. For this reason, the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment and Accountability Program will emphasize point-in-time intervention and remediation upon the discovery that any student is not performing at grade level." By affirming that all children are to be included in the State's education accountability system, the State has declared its intention to make efforts to locate and identify unserved children, and to ensure that the necessary educational services are provided. (See Attachment 2 - Statutes.)

II. STATE PROCEDURES

Attachment 1, *Special Education and Related Services: Procedural Requirements and Program Standards* (ADE, 2000), Sections 3.00, CHILD FIND, and 4.00, REFERRAL, describe child location and referral procedures. Evaluation procedures are described in Section 6.00. In addition, the Arkansas Department of Education and public education agencies share the responsibility of identifying and locating children needing special education. The Department, through its Special Education Unit, is responsible for statewide coordination of the child identification effort. Arkansas provides continuing child find operations through both local programs and a statewide program.

A. Local Child Find

Local public education agencies must carry out activities to identify, locate and evaluate children in need of special education within their districts. Each public education agency must have on file a plan describing the systematic and continuous efforts it will make to identify children in need of special education. Inspection of the file is included in regular monitoring visits by the Department. The public education agency must also maintain a record of all children with disabilities receiving special education.

School systems usually identify and locate children needing special education by early childhood/kindergarten entry or periodic screening or referral for evaluation. If the results of screening suggest a child may need special education or if someone refers a child for consideration for services, the school

district will initiate a Referral Conference and determine the need for an evaluation. If evaluation to determine student eligibility is appropriate, parental informed consent for evaluation is obtained and an assessment is conducted. Once eligibility has been determined, an individualized education program (IEP) is developed for the child. The IEP Team determines the services the child needs and determines the least restrictive setting(s) in which the services can be provided. The public education agency is responsible for seeing that the child receives FAPE in accordance with the IEP if the child needs special education and related services.

Public education agencies must evaluate whether children in special education are receiving needed services by periodic reviews and reevaluations.

The Special Education Unit checks on how well public education agencies carry out the required procedures for identifying, locating and evaluating children. First, staff of the Unit analyze the count of children receiving special education by prototype submitted by these agencies. These data provide the Unit with information on whether the ratio of children receiving special education to the total student population is significantly different from the norm. Second, the Unit reviews agency plans for identifying and evaluating children in need of special education. Third, program audit teams determine whether a local public education agency has met its objectives and samples individualized education programs and compares them with services furnished to children.

Additional information, adequate to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and procedures to ensure child find (identification, location and evaluation), is obtained through the compliance monitoring of local education agencies and educational service agencies (ESAs). Data are reviewed on children referred for consideration for special education services who were not found to be eligible under IDEA, the sources of referral (relative to local and state child find activities), and student dismissals from special education services as a result of a determination of ineligibility. LEAs/ESAs are required to provide to the SEA monitors information on the number of new referrals generated as a result of child find activities conducted both in and out of school.

B. Child Identification – Arkansas Special Education Resource Center (ASERC)

The following are policies and procedures to ensure identification, location and evaluation of all children with disabilities.

The Arkansas Department of Education has a sub-grant with the Cabot School District for coordinating the statewide child identification activities. The Department assigns selected responsibilities for statewide child identification and parent information services to the ASERC Project. Project staff help parents obtain suitable services for children who may need special education. The Project sponsors workshops for parents, community organizations, local public education agencies and state agencies. Radio and television interviews, talk show programs and newspaper interviews are used to inform the public of special education services under IDEA.

The ASERC Project is the agency responsible for statewide coordination of planning and implementing the child identification effort for children with

disabilities birth to 21 years of age. The ASERC Project disseminates materials developed by the ADE and Part C agency relative to child find activities and other information for children from birth to 21.

In addition to LEAs and the ASERC Project, other agencies participating in child identification, location and evaluation are -

1. Private Schools
2. Arkansas Department of Education
3. Arkansas Department of Human Services
4. Arkansas Department of Health
5. Head Start Program of Arkansas
6. Education Service Cooperatives (ESAs)

The nature and extent of participation of each of these agencies will vary with the responsibilities that they have under Arkansas statute and IDEA. For example, Interagency Agreements with the Department of Human Services and its various Divisions, such as Developmental Disabilities Services, establish procedures to be followed by the various agencies in dealing with child identification. Formal agreements with each of these agencies, which include procedures for their participation, will continue.

The State Department of Education has two staff members who are specifically assigned duties of monitoring and approving program plans for 1) state-operated programs and 2) private in-state and out-of-state placements. Before any agency can serve the child in such a placement, the local school district will be involved.

Participation with the ASERC Project will result in a cooperative system of public information and referral to ensure that all children with disabilities receive their right to a free appropriate public education.

III. STATEWIDE CHILD FIND ACTIVITIES

Coordination of statewide child find activities will continue at about the same level as in the past, except that efforts to locate and identify children with disabilities among highly mobile and homeless children, as well as those attending private school, will continue to be emphasized. The ASERC Project will coordinate this effort, working closely with local education agencies to provide public information and outreach efforts. The ASERC Project, in close cooperation with the Special Education Unit of the Arkansas Department of Education, has been given the responsibility to carry out the following activities that assure the identification, location and evaluation of all children with disabilities.

A. Toll Free Number

The Project will continue to maintain a toll free number to receive referrals of children with disabilities, ages birth to 21, who may need special education. Project staff refer to the appropriate school district and/or public institutions the names and addresses of persons referred.

The Project will continue to make the public aware of the toll free number through public education agency announcements on radio and television, in newspapers and magazines, and through the ADE Special Education internet Web site. In addition, brochures, posters and flyers are developed and distributed throughout public and private schools, public and private institutions working with individuals with disabilities, public and private agencies working with families, physicians, and community settings, emphasizing the toll free number. All correspondence distributed by the Project carries this toll free number.

B. Literature

The ASERC Project will continue to have the responsibility for the development and/or distribution of literature relative to children with disabilities birth to 21 years of age. This literature will reflect the children's and parents' rights under the IDEA. The following is a list of the types of literature that may be distributed directly and in cooperation with schools and agencies -

1. Posters
2. Brochures covering all disabilities
3. Brochures focusing on individual disabilities such as autism, speech or language impairment, hearing loss, etc.
4. Brochures designed for infant, toddler and early childhood (preschooler) identification
5. Booklets

C. Publicity of Child Find Activities

The ASERC Project will be responsible for coordination of statewide public information efforts during awareness campaigns targeted toward children with disabilities. This public information campaign will utilize the following -

1. Radio
2. Television
3. Newspapers
4. Trade and associated magazines
5. Internet web sites

D. Awareness Campaign

The ASERC Project will continue to plan and coordinate with local school districts a statewide campaign to raise the level of awareness of parents, professional people and the general public as to the availability of FAPE for children with disabilities as provided under the IDEA, as amended.

E. Program Assistance to Local Education Agencies

Selected ASERC Project staff will continue to provide consultation in identification and programming to local school districts, educational service agencies, and other agencies providing educational opportunities to children with disabilities. Educational consultants will provide the following -

1. Inservice training for local staff
2. Consultation with parents and teachers regarding individual students
3. Assistance in developing and maintaining a quality educational program related to students and their specific disabilities

The consultant staff may include, but not be limited to, a school psychology specialist, a consultant for children with emotional disturbance or behavior problems, a consultant for children with severe/profound disabilities, and consultants working primarily with general educators who have children with disabilities in their classrooms. Other specialists may be considered as needed.

F. Special Education Student Data

Selected Project staff will continue to develop, provide and train local education agency personnel in the use of Special Education Student Data Systems under the supervision of ADE staff. The ADE is in a period of transition away from the use of "stand alone" data systems, which were originally designed for use on microcomputers to assist local districts in the storage and retrieval of student data that enhance local school districts' capabilities to provide educational for students with disabilities. The data systems were compatible with previous federal data reporting requirements. However, with changes in the federal data reporting requirements as a result of the 1997 amendments to the IDEA, the "stand alone" data systems are being replaced by the Arkansas Public School Computer Network (APSCN) data systems. Beginning with the 2000-2001 school year, all data required for federal and state reporting will be collected through this statewide system. School districts and educational service agencies have received training in the APSCN data management systems, including the collection and maintenance of individual student data and reporting requirements. The federal December 1 child count is now taken through the APSCN system.

G. Emphasis and Expected Outcomes

The ASERC is funded as a technical assistance project which fulfills selected technical assistance needs of public agencies as identified by the ADE through, but not limited to, its CSPD needs assessment and SEA compliance monitoring. The ASERC Project will continue to place emphasis on raising the level of awareness of professionals, nonprofessionals and the general public of the availability of FAPE for all children with disabilities. Major emphasis will be placed on providing a support system to local education agencies to enhance their capabilities for providing quality programming in the least restrictive environment.

H. Child Identification

The following are the methods used to determine which children are and are not receiving special education and related services -

In discharging its responsibility to ensure that children with disabilities who are legal residents of the district are provided with a free appropriate public education, the local school district must make every effort to locate and identify all children who may have a disability. This effort will include all children served and unserved.

As a part of child location, districts are encouraged to establish routine screening procedures in order to identify children with physical, behavioral and educational problems which may interfere with their ability to achieve success in school. The screening results may indicate the need for referral for evaluation. Formal and/or informal screening is suggested upon entry in kindergarten and/or first grade and for children transferring into the district. Within the district's plan for routine screening, it is advisable to include periodic screening throughout the school career. Screening of preschool children and infants and toddlers for early detection of disabilities is done in conjunction with the effort to locate children with disabilities by the regionally-based early intervention and Section 619 preschool programs. Parental permission is not required for screening if the screening effort is directed toward a segment of the school population, i.e., the entire kindergarten as opposed to one child in kindergarten.

A public awareness campaign must be undertaken to inform the community about the right to and the availability of education services for children with disabilities. Schools and preschool programs will maintain records of all awareness activities.

All relevant records on children receiving special services will be reviewed annually to locate those children who are inappropriately and/or inadequately served by virtue of their present placement. Cooperation and coordination with other community agencies, service organizations, parents and other individuals should take place to assist district-wide screening and location efforts.

In the process of the child count calculation for IDEA for school districts and state-operated programs each year, a numerical and percentage breakdown printout is made for each disability category for each public agency included in the count. The printout for the individual agency also contains the percentage breakdown by disability on a statewide basis in order that public education agencies can compare their count by categories with the state percentages by categories.

The SEA uses the statewide percentages to determine "over" and "under" identification of disabilities as areas of emphasis in planning. The state supervisors receive printouts of the districts in their geographic areas in order to work with LEAs in situations where there appear to be issues of over- or under-identification. These profiles have proved to be very useful tools in monitoring school districts and in bringing about desired changes.

Also, for statewide planning, the SEA maintains a "State Percent of Total Enrollment of Disabled Sheet" showing the percentage of disabled by categories of past and present fiscal years in comparison to the latest national percentages.