



How to Make a Referral to the Exceptional Children Preschool Program

Local school systems have Exceptional Children Preschool Programs which are responsible for conducting screenings and evaluations for 3 and 4-year-old children and also 5-year-olds who are not age eligible for kindergarten in North Carolina. The purpose of screening and evaluation is to determine whether children should be referred to the Exceptional Children Preschool Program for special education services. This responsibility is mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and is called CHILD FIND. Screenings and evaluations are free to all families.

If you are concerned about your child’s development and want to request a screening and/or evaluation, you will need to:

- Call the Exceptional Children Preschool Coordinator in your local school district to set up an appointment for a developmental screening and, as needed, a referral for special education services. A complete list of all Coordinators and their contact information can be found at:
<http://nceln.fpg.unc.edu/leapreschoolcoordinators>

In most cases, you will need to supply proof that your child is at least three years of age (e.g., birth certificate).

A formal referral, which is typically completed with you during or after the screening process, is a written request for further evaluation.

The screening information allows the team to make informed decisions about appropriate further evaluation and information needed to determine eligibility for special education services. During the screening process, the preschool team will:

- Learn about your concerns and priorities as a family,
- Identify your child’s current strengths,
- Discuss areas in which your child needs support,
- Review important information such as:
 - Most recent Well Baby Check Ups (Health Screen)
 - Previous evaluations by other professionals
 - Previous interventions by other service providers
 - Documentation of the developmental and social history of your child.

If needed, further evaluation may be scheduled by the school system's Preschool Exceptional Children staff. Sometimes it is only necessary to have a limited follow-up assessment by one professional. At other times a more comprehensive assessment may be required by a team of professionals. There are specific procedures that are part of state policies that local programs must follow.

After the follow-up assessment, another meeting will be held in which the assessment information is reported to you and eligibility for services will be determined.

Any necessary follow-up services will be discussed with you and written on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) plan. Services listed and agreed upon on the IEP are also free of charge to families.

If your child has participated in Early Intervention services through the NC Infant-Toddler Program, then the referral to the Preschool Program will be facilitated by your Early Intervention Service Coordinator (EISC).

As the parent of a child who is suspected to need, or is identified as needing special education, you have certain rights which are guaranteed by state and federal laws. The Handbook on Parents Rights reviews this information and is located on this website for your convenience:

<http://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/parent-resources/parents-rights-handbook>

For more information on your procedural safeguards, please access this early childhood document on questions and answers on procedural safeguards for parents:

<http://nceln.fpg.unc.edu/sites/nceln.fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/Questions-AnswersRegardingProcRightsIDEAforParentsofStudentsDisabilities2014.pdf>