

Adventures In Head Start Disabilities Services Coordination

AN INTRODUCTION...

Disability Services Begins with Key Collaborations:

- Public Health/Nursing
- Social Services
- Area hospitals and clinics
- Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)
- Parents

During Head Start recruitment, referrals are collected from parents and various agencies, such as those listed previously.

Once a child is enrolled, the journey towards Disabilities Services can go one of two ways:

1. Child with a **DIAGNOSED DISABILITY**
2. Child with a **SUSPECTED DISABILITY**

Children with *Diagnosed* Disabilities

A child with a Diagnosed Disability is any child who has an **Individual Education Plan (IEP)**, or in some cases a **Individual Interagency Intervention Plan (III-P)**, an **Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)** or a medical diagnosis, which documents that child's need for special education or health services.

Children with *Diagnosed* Disabilities

Once a child with a diagnosed disability is enrolled in Head Start, the staff will complete a release to obtain a copy of the IEP as soon as possible. Before Head Start can obtain a copy of an IEP from Special Education, the parent must sign a **Release of Information**.

Children with *Diagnosed* Disabilities

Before a child with a disability enters Head Start, the family is offered a **Transition Meeting** with Head Start and ECSE staff to discuss the child's needs in the classroom.

Children with *Diagnosed* Disabilities

Throughout the year, Head Start FESs or staff attend the child's IEP meetings.

When an IEP is completed or updated, it is sent to the WCMCA Head Start main office, where it will be uploaded to ChildPlus.

Staff will then have access to the IEP electronically.

Children with *Suspected* Disabilities:

Referring A Child When You have Concerns

- Inform your supervisor of your concerns. If you are part of a collaborative classroom, also discuss with the ECSE staff.

- If it is deemed appropriate to continue, discuss your concerns with the parent. Make note if the parent has similar concerns, different ones, or none at all.

- Ask the parent's permission to refer to ECSE. Complete the **Disability Referral Form**. (You will need to mark "yes" on the parent permission space of the disabilities referral form.) Email the form to your supervisor even if you forward the referral to ECSE yourself.

Before a child can receive special education services, three things will happen.

1. There will be a meeting between ECSE, the parents, and other concerned parties, where the parents give ECSE permission to assess their child. ECSE then has 30 school days to complete the assessment.

The 30 day clock does not begin until the school district has the permission from the parents. Sometimes this process can be sped up if facilitated by Head Start staff.



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2. ECSE will assess the child. This may involve observation in the Head Start classroom, and one-on-one testing outside the classroom

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3. An Eligibility meeting is held to discuss the results of the assessment. If the child qualifies for services, then ECSE will write a formal IEP. Again, all IEPs are uploaded into ChildPlus so staff can access them.

**It is the staff's responsibility to know IEP goals and objectives for each child.*

In summary...

We believe that serving children with disabilities strengthens Head Start's ability to individualize for all children and benefits all enrolled children.

