

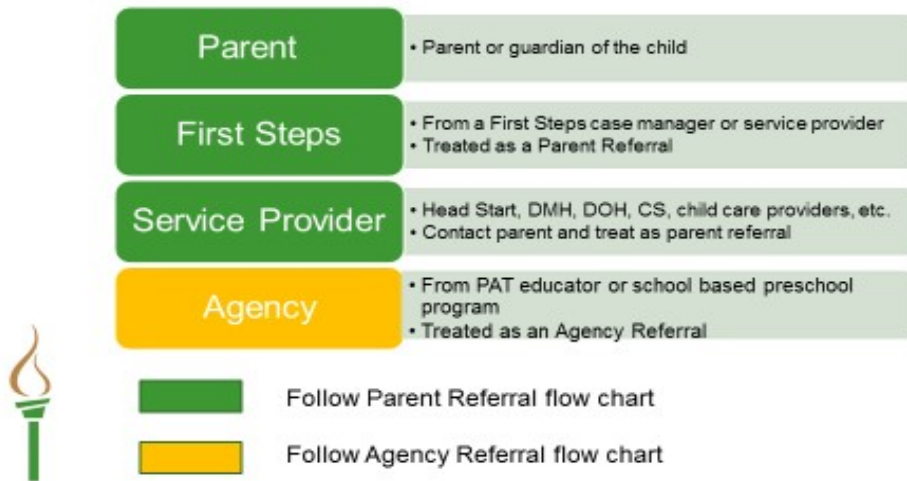
Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Frequently Asked Questions

Child Find

- 1. What is the Child Find requirement for ECSE?** The Child Find requirement falls under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Part B requires the district/local education agency (LEA) to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities age three to five who are in need of special education and related services. The Missouri State Plan for Special Education (Part B) requires each district/LEA to advertise and make the general public aware of the responsibility to provide special education and related services through a variety of media prior to November 1 each calendar year.
- 2. Who can make a referral to the district/LEA for ECSE services?** Either a parent of a child or a public agency may initiate a request for an initial evaluation to determine if the child has a disability. Parents of a child three to five year old or approaching age three, for example, two years nine months, who suspect their child may have a developmental delay or disabling condition that may affect the child educationally, are encouraged to contact the district/LEA to make a referral for an evaluation. More information on the evaluation process may be found at: <https://dese.mo.gov/special-education/compliance/special-education-forms>.

Types of Referrals

7



- 3. Can the district/LEA delay the special education evaluation timeline until the parent provides enrollment paperwork to the district/LEA (e.g., proof of immunizations, residency)?** The district/LEA cannot delay the processing of a referral for special education until the parent provides enrollment paperwork to the district/LEA.
- 4. If a preschool child is referred to the district/LEA for an evaluation before the child's third birthday, for example two years nine months, is it permissible for the district/LEA to delay the evaluation until closer to the child's third birthday?** Once a referral for a special education evaluation is received by a district/LEA, the required activities for the 30-60-30 timeline must be followed and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be developed with 30 calendar days of the date eligibility is determined. The district/LEA can explain the implications of conducting the evaluation early and parents can choose to wait to sign the Prior Written Notice (PWN) for consent to evaluate until closer to the child's third birthday, but the district/LEA cannot refuse to evaluate until a later date if there is reason to suspect a disability.
- 5. If a child who is not involved in First Steps is referenced for a special education evaluation prior to their third birthday, are we required to have an IEP in place by the time the child turns three?** The requirement to have an IEP in place by the third birthday only applies to those children who are involved in the First Steps early intervention program.

Evaluation/Eligibility

- 1. If the district/LEA uses an early childhood cooperative to provide ECSE services, who is responsible for ensuring required timelines are met?** The resident district is required to meet all timelines.

- 2. When is a Review of Existing Data (RED) completed?** If the child is suspected of having a disability, the district/LEA must conduct a review of existing data within 30 calendar days of the referral. If there is no reason to suspect a disability, the district/LEA must provide the parent with a PWN refused for an initial special education evaluation within 30 calendar days of the referral and the district/LEA does not conduct a review of existing data. A review of existing data is not completed to determine if there is a reason to suspect a disability.
- 3. What is the district/LEA's responsibility when a parent does not respond in to good faith attempts to acquire parent consent to evaluate?** The district/LEA is under no obligation to move forward with the initial evaluation if a parent has not provided consent to evaluate. The 60 calendar days to complete the evaluation does not begin until the date the district/LEA receives signed parental consent to do the evaluation. The district/LEA must maintain documentation of reasonable efforts to obtain parental consent for initial evaluations, to provide special education and related services for the first time, to reevaluate, and to locate parents of children who are wards of the state for initial evaluations. The documentation must include a record of attempts in the following ways:

 - Detailed records of telephone calls made or attempted and the results of those calls
 - Copies of correspondence sent to parents and any responses received
 - Detailed records of visits made to the parent's home or place of employment and the results of those visits
- 4. If eligible for ECSE, when is the IEP developed?** Once eligibility has been determined, an initial IEP must be developed within 30 calendar days from the date of eligibility with no exceptions. If a child has been receiving First Steps services, the IEP must be developed prior to the date of the child's third birthday (unless one of the three exceptions applies) or within 30 calendar days of the eligibility determination, whichever comes first.
- 5. When a child begins the evaluation process in one district/LEA and the family moves to another school district, does the receiving district have to follow the original timelines?** This timeline does not apply if the student moves to another public agency after the timeline has begun and prior to a determination by the student's previous public agency. The public agency must make a good faith effort to complete the evaluation within a timely manner. However, if the child is involved with First Steps, the requirement for the IEP to be in place by the third birthday is still in effect.
- 6. If fine motor is the only area of concern for a child, does gross motor also have to be tested?** When deciding what testing is needed for any evaluation, teams should consider the two purposes of special education evaluation: 1) to determine eligibility and 2) to determine educational needs, including the need for special education services. In order to determine eligibility in the area of physical development under the Young Child with a Developmental Delay (YCDD) eligibility category in Missouri, both fine and gross motor scores must be included in the overall physical development score. This is consistent with the language found in the federal regulations. If physical development is not the primary suspected area of disability then a team may decide it is not necessary to

do testing in both areas of motor development. However, the team should ensure that the evaluation is sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the student's needs. Even though a child may not qualify for YCDD in the motor (physical) area, occupational and physical therapy can be provided as a related service if the IEP team determines the child needs such intervention in order to access or benefit from specially designed instruction.

7. **If fine motor is the only area of concern for a child, does gross motor also have to be tested?** When deciding what testing is needed for any evaluation, teams should consider the two purposes of a special education evaluation: 1) to determine eligibility and, 2) to determine educational needs, including the need for special education services. In order to determine eligibility in the area of physical development under the Young Child with a Developmental Delay (YCDD) eligibility category in Missouri, both fine and gross motor scores must be included in the overall physical development score. This is consistent with the language found in the federal regulations. If physical development is not the primary suspected area of disability then a team may decide it is not necessary to do testing in both areas of motor development. However, the team should ensure that the evaluation is sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the student's needs. Even though a child may not qualify for YCDD in the motor (physical) area, occupational and physical therapy can be provided as a related service if the IEP team determines the child needs such intervention in order to access or benefit from specially designed instruction.

8. **If a child's development is at 1.5 standard deviations in fine motor and 1.5 standard deviations in expressive language, is the child eligible?** To be eligible under the Young Child with a Developmental Delay (YCDD) category, the child's overall gross and fine motor score must include both fine and gross motor scores and be 1.5 standard deviations below the mean. In this example, the student would not be eligible.

IEP Meeting

1. **Is a general education teacher required to participate the initial IEP meeting for children eligible for ECSE services even if the child is eligible for special education using Sound System Disorder, Speech, Fluency or Speech, or Voice categories?** A general education teacher must participate in the initial IEP meeting for all eligible children, including those eligible for ECSE regardless of the eligibility category.

2. **Who can serve as the regular education teacher for a child who is eligible for ECSE?** For preschool children, the general education teacher can be one of the following
 - a. A Title I preschool teacher
 - b. A public school preschool teacher
 - c. A community preschool teacher/childcare teacher
 - d. An integrated ECSE teacher
 - e. A Head Start teacher
 - f. A Title I/ECSE cooperative teacher

- g. An ECSE teacher who holds an EC (PK-3) certificate
- h. A general education kindergarten teacher

Placement/Location

1. **If a child is being served in a district/LEA other than the district/LEA of residence, which district/LEA serves as the responsible district/LEA?** The district/LEA of residence is responsible for evaluations and the provision of services, therefore that district/LEA is the responsible district/LEA. However, both districts should collaborate throughout the special education process and the serving district/LEA generally includes the child in MOSIS reporting.

2. **What are the placement options for ECSE?** Placement options for children receiving Early Childhood Special Education services include:
 - **Early Childhood Setting** - Children with disabilities who receive **all** of their special education and related services in educational programs designed primarily for children without disabilities. No education or related services are provided in separate special education settings. Some characteristics/examples of the above setting include the following
 - Designed for children **without** disabilities
 - The special education teacher and/or therapist travel to the child and provide the services in the integrated setting (The child is not pulled from the classroom for the special education and related services).
 - Daycare (Public or Private [not parochial])
 - Preschool (Public or Private [not parochial])
 - Head start
 - Home/early childhood combinations
 - May be a collaborative program that is designed for children without disabilities where the ratio of children without IEPs is equal to or higher than that of children with IEPs.

These classrooms could be team-taught or taught by one teacher who has a split position.

Examples of these combined programs include the following:

- Title I/ECSE classroom
- District Early Childhood/ECSE classroom
- Head Start/ECSE classroom

- **Early Childhood Special Education Setting** - Children with disabilities who receive **all** of their special education and related services in educational programs designed primarily for children **with** disabilities housed in regular school buildings or other community-based settings. No special education or related services as designated by an IEP are provided in an early childhood setting. Some characteristics/examples of this setting include the following:
 - Designed for children **with** disabilities
 - Center-based/self-contained

- Integrated ECSE classroom where no more than 50 percent of the children are children without an IEP
- **Home** - Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services in the principal residence of the child's family or caregivers. Some characteristics/examples of this setting include the following
 - Child's home
 - Foster home
 - Extended family's home (grandparent, aunt, etc.)
- **Part Time EC/Part Time ECSE Setting** - Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services in multiple settings, such that 1) general and/or special education and related services are provided at home or in educational programs designed primarily for children without disabilities and 2) special education and related services are provided in programs designed primarily for children with disabilities. Some characteristics/examples of this setting include the following
 - Services are provided in two different placements
 - Home plus Itinerant Service Outside the Home
 - Home plus ECSE
 - Early Childhood Setting plus Itinerant Service Outside the Home
 - Early Childhood Setting plus ECSE
- **Residential Facility** - Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services in publicly or privately operated residential schools or residential medical facilities on an inpatient basis.

Note: Only use this option when the IEP team has determined the child needs to be placed in a residential facility in order to receive free appropriate public education (FAPE) not because the child is already placed in a residential facility by another agency or because the location for the provision of services is located such a distance from the child's home that residing in the facility is necessary. In those cases, another placement option would be used such as home, EC, ECSE, or separate school.

- **Separate School** - Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services in educational programs in public or private day schools specifically for children with disabilities.
- **Itinerant Service Outside the Home** - Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services at a school, hospital facility on an outpatient basis, or other location for a short period of time (i.e., no more than three hours per week). These services may be provided individually or to a small group of children. This placement option would be used in the following instances
 - The service is being provided at a location other than the child's home.
 - The child comes to the teacher (the service is being provided in a resource or non-school location not in an integrated classroom setting).

- The teacher or service provider goes to the child’s preschool/daycare setting but provides services in a “pull-out” fashion - separating the child from children without disabilities.
- The service is being provided for a short period of time (three hours or less per week).
- The service is being provided to an individual child or a small group of children. Examples of this would include
 - The child is receiving speech only services for 120 minutes per week. The Speech/Language Pathologist (SLP) goes to the child’s preschool, but provides the services one-on-one in a separate room.
 - The child is receiving 60 minutes of speech and 120 minutes of Occupational Therapy (OT) per week. For the speech, the child comes to the public school building, but receives the services in a small group in the speech resource room. For the OT, the child goes to the local hospital’s rehabilitation clinic.
 - The child receives 30 minutes per week of specialized instruction in a small group pull-out setting and 15 minutes consultation is provided to the Early Childhood staff, at the child’s childcare center.
 - The child receives 60 minutes of ECSE teacher services weekly, pullout from Head Start, and 30 minutes consultative services from the SLP monthly with parent and Head Start staff.

3. **What happens if the IEP team has determined that the child’s special education and related services will be provided in a preschool/daycare setting the child currently attends and then the parent decides to remove the child from the preschool/daycare but remains in the same district?** The IEP team determines the services based upon the child’s need; therefore, the team would need to reconvene to make a decision on how the services will be delivered considering the child is no longer in preschool/daycare.
4. **Who is responsible for completing the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) on children in ECSE who receive services in a district other than the district of residence?** The district serving the child will likely complete this, but ultimately the district of residence must ensure it is completed and reported.

Caseloads

1. **What are the caseload requirements for ECSE?** The chart below indicates the **minimum** caseload number required to receive a full 1.0 FTE reimbursement for each position.

PERSONNEL	ECSE STUDENT COUNT	MIN CASELOAD
Special Education Administrator	Highest Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	180
Special Education Process Coordinator	Highest Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	180
Nurse	Highest Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	175
Self-Contained Classroom Teacher	Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	10
Integrated Classroom Teacher	Number of ECSE IEP Children Served (after 10 ECSE IEP Children, Nondisabled ECSE Students can be added to the classroom up to 50% of total number of students in classroom)	10
Itinerant Teacher	Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	12
Severe/Low Incidence Classroom Teacher	Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	4
Direct Service/Inst. Visually Impaired	Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	4
Direct Service/Inst. Hearing Impaired	Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	4
Direct Service/Inst. Severe Developmental Delay	Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	4
Paraprofessionals- Self-Contained Classroom	Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	10
Paraprofessionals- Integrated Classroom	Number of ECSE IEP Children Served (after 10 ECSE IEP Children, Nondisabled ECSE Students can be added to the classroom up to 50% of total number of students in classroom)	10
Paraprofessionals- Severe/Low Incidence Classroom	Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	4
Paraprofessionals- Personal	Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	1
Educational Diagnostician (Diagnostic)	Number of Children Evaluated	160
School Psychological Examiner (Diagnostic)	Number of Children Evaluated	160
Speech/Language Pathology (Diagnostic)	Number of Children Evaluated	160
Speech/Language Therapies (Direct Services)	Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	35
Speech/Language Assistant (Direct Services)	Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	35
Speech Implementer (Direct Services)	Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	35
Occupational Therapist (Direct Services)	Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	35
Occupational Therapist (Diagnostic)	Number of Children Evaluated	160
Physical Therapist (Direct Services)	Number of ECSE IEP Children Served	35

- 2. Can a district add a paraprofessional to an ECSE classroom?** ECSE classrooms are reimbursed for paraprofessionals according to caseload guidance in the Missouri State Plan. Additional paraprofessionals may be added if the need for one-on-one assistance is documented in the student's IEP.

- 3. If an ECSE self-contained classroom teacher has 11 students on her caseload, can the LEA hire another teacher and receive full funding for that teacher?** ECSE programs will be funded at 1.0 FTE for every position that carries the minimum caseload requirement as noted in the Finance Personnel Chart below. Note: That caseload requirement is for the **minimum** number of students to receive full funding. If a program would determine that it requires an additional teacher (or any other position) to serve any students over that minimum caseload number, the program would be funded at a pro-rated FTE up to the full 1.0. For example: if a program determined that at 13 students, they needed to add an additional teacher to ensure that the students' IEP's could be implemented appropriately for FAPE to be provided, they would receive ECSE funds at a .3 FTE for that teacher if the number in that classroom remained at three for the rest of that school year. Programs are funded based on the highest number of students on a caseload at any time within that school year.

There are only two exceptions to meeting caseload requirements:

- In the event a district/LEA has less than ten ECSE IEP students in the entire program, DESE Special Education Finance will allow for a full-time ECSE teacher and paraprofessional.
- If a student's IEP indicates a personal paraprofessional is needed, the personal paraprofessional does not need to meet caseload standards

Services

- 1. Can a child in ECSE be served in another district/LEA per parent request? Who is responsible for including the child in the child count?** The child can be served in another district/LEA assuming both the domicile/resident district/LEA and serving district/LEA are in agreement. ECSE child count should be reported by the serving district/LEA.
- 2. If a child is kindergarten age eligible for the coming year but the parent wants to delay kindergarten until the following year, can the child still receive ECSE services? Would those services be through ECSE or through the elementary program?** The IEP team must determine whether or not FAPE can be provided in a K-12 placement or the student must be served in an early childhood placement in order to be provided FAPE. If the IEP team does not think the child needs services in an early childhood placement, they write an IEP for kindergarten and the child would not receive special education services unless he/she went on to kindergarten. If the IEP team, on the other hand, believes the child is not ready for kindergarten and requires additional ECSE services instead, the child remains an early childhood special education student. State ECSE funds cannot be used to support this student. However, IDEA funds can be used for children who are kindergarten age eligible but do not go on to kindergarten. Check with the DESE Special Education Finance section for information on how this should be documented/coded.

3. **When serving a child under YCDD who needs pre-k skills as part of their IEP, can a paraprofessional be responsible for working on the goals if the paraprofessional is under the supervision of an ECSE or EC teacher?** A paraprofessional can provide instructional support and reinforce instruction provided initially by the teacher. The teacher is responsible for monitoring progress towards IEP goals.

4. **Is there a difference between ECSE and K-12 when considering transportation?** No. Ultimately, transportation is an IEP team decision. The team determines if transportation is necessary as a related service for the student to access his/her special education services, and if so, the IEP must reflect this.

Funding

1. **What is an integrated classroom?** An integrated classroom consists of an ECSE teacher instructing both IEP and non-IEP students for the purpose of peer modeling. In this setting, there is only one teacher. As long as the class consists of at least 50 percent of students with IEPs, the ECSE program will pay allowable costs associated with that classroom.

2. **Can a district/LEA charge tuition to students without disabilities integrated into the ECSE classroom?** The district/LEA can charge tuition for students without disabilities integrated into the ECSE classroom. However, since ECSE is paying for the teacher and supplies of the ECSE integrated classroom, the tuition amount would be deducted from the ECSE Final Expenditure Report reimbursement amount. It is not recommended that tuition be charged for typical peers in an integrated classroom. It is easy for districts to overlook the requirement to report that tuition amount on the FER which could lead to fiscal mismanagement.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, age, veteran status, mental or physical disability, or any other basis prohibited by statute in its programs and activities. Inquiries related to department programs and to the location of services, activities, and facilities that are accessible by persons with disabilities may be directed to the Jefferson State Office Building, Director of Civil Rights Compliance and MOA Coordinator (Title VI/Title VII/Title IX/504/ADA/ADAAA/Age Act/GINA/USDA Title VI), 5th Floor, 205 Jefferson Street, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; telephone number 573-526-4757 or TTY 800-735-2966; email civilrights@dese.mo.gov.