

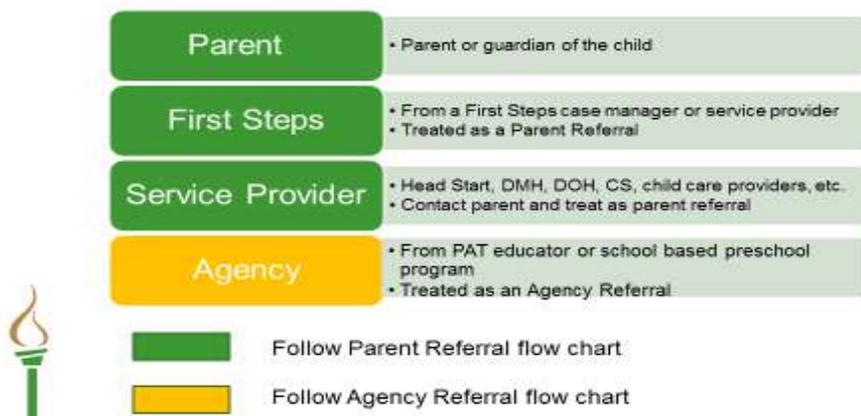
Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Frequently Asked Questions

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 ages 3-5 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 the 1st of November 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 is a child with a disability. Parents of a child who is 3-5 years old or approaching age 3, for example 2.9, 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

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- 3. What are the differences in the referral process/timelines for a parent referral and an agency referral?** If the parent refers the child, then the date the parent requested an evaluation is the date of referral and starts the 30-60-30 timeline. If the district/LEA refers the child, then the local district/LEA may use care teams or other mechanisms to collaborate and determine if all appropriate strategies have been used prior to deciding to initiate a request for a special education evaluation. The 30-60-30 timeline does not start until the district/LEA determines there is a reason to suspect a disability.

4. **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)?** No. The district/LEA cannot delay the processing of a referral for special education until the parent provides enrollment paperwork to the district/LEA.
5. **If the child is referred to the district/LEA for ECSE before the child's third birthday, for example 2.9, is it permissible for the district/LEA to delay the evaluation until closer to the child's third birthday?** No. The state and federal regulations implementing IDEA do not provide a means for delaying or denying an evaluation. Once the referral is received by the district/LEA for ECSE services, the required activities for the 30-60-30 timeline must be followed and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be developed within the 30-60-30 timeline. The district/LEA is responsible for fully informing the parents about the timelines, options, and implications of conducting the initial evaluation.

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 and is in need of special education, then the district/LEA must conduct a RED within 30 days of referral unless there is an acceptable reason to extend the first 30 days such as snow days or school district vacation days. If there is no reason to suspect a disability, then the district/LEA must provide the parent with a Notice of Action (NOA) (refused) for an initial special education evaluation within 30 days of the date of the referral and the district/LEA will not conduct a RED.
3. **What is the district's/LEA's responsibility if, after two attempts to acquire parent consent to evaluate, no response is received from the parents?** The district/LEA is under no obligation to move forward with the initial evaluation if parental consent has not been obtained. The district/LEA must take reasonable steps to adhere to timelines. 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 ECSE attempts in the following areas:
 - 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 days despite any scheduled breaks in the school year.
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?** Yes. The evaluation shall be completed and a decision regarding eligibility rendered within 60 calendar days following parent consent or notice as the case may be. However, it is expected that the evaluation proceed without undue delay to ensure a seamless transition in the process when a student transfers school.

6. **What eligibility category is used for a child that is eligible for ECSE?** Districts/LEAs have the option of identifying a child as eligible under the category of Young Child with a Developmental Delay (YCDD) or under one of the other 13 eligibility categories that are used for children ages 5 to 21. In order to be eligible under the YCDD category, the child's development must be at or below 1.5 standard deviations or equivalent levels of the mean in any two areas of development or at or below 2.0 standard deviations or equivalent levels in one area of development and the child must need special education and related services. For more information on YCDD, go to: <https://dese.mo.gov/special-education/compliance/standards-indicators>.
7. **Do Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled (MSSD) require a categorical eligibility to accept students?** Yes. Students must meet the cognitive deficit requirement to be eligible, and the district/LEA must justify that the public separate school placement proposal represents the least restrictive environment. A student who meets the significant cognitive deficit criteria and is accepted by MSSD must be 5 years old. MSSD cannot accept students who are classified under YCDD as there is no preschool program.
8. **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 the need to gather additional information: 1) to determine eligibility and 2) to determine educational needs. In order to determine eligibility in the area of physical development under the YCDD eligibility category in Missouri, both fine and gross motor scores must be included in the overall physical score. This is consistent with the language found in the federal regulations. If a team is looking to determine educational need and there is no reason to suspect need in one or the other area of motor skills, it would not be necessary to do testing in both areas. 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 benefit from other special education services.
9. **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?** No. The motor area must be 1.5 standard deviations overall in both fine and gross motor or must be 1.5 standard deviations in overall communication (expressive and receptive).
10. **What are the evaluation procedures when conducting an evaluation on a child suspected of having a disability?** The district/LEA must provide notice to the parents of a child that describes any evaluation procedures including, but not limited to, standardized and non-standardized tests, classroom observations, functional behavioral assessments (FBAs), and interviews that the district/LEA proposes to conduct. A variety of assessment tools and strategies are used to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child to be involved in the progress of the general curriculum. No single measure or assessment is used as the sole criterion for determining whether a child is a child with a disability and for determining an appropriate educational program for a child.

IEP Meeting

1. **Is a regular education teacher required at the initial IEP for children eligible for ECSE services (even if the child receives speech services only)?** Yes. A regular education teacher must participate in the initial IEP meeting for all eligible children, including those eligible for ECSE, even if the child is not already participating in an age appropriate program.

2. **Who can serve as the regular education teacher for a child who is eligible for ECSE?** For preschool children, the regular education teacher can be one of the following:
- A Title I preschool teacher
 - A public school preschool teacher
 - A community preschool teacher/childcare teacher
 - An integrated ECSE teacher
 - A Head Start teacher
 - A Title I/ECSE cooperative teacher
 - An ECSE teacher who holds an EC (PK-3) certificate 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 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 requirements for determining the LRE for preschool children with disabilities?** Placement is determined annually by the child's IEP team to meet the child's needs for specially designed instruction, accommodations, modifications, and supplementary aids and services. The LRE expectations set forth in IDEA clearly encompass preschool age children as well as children in grades K-12. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular education environment should occur only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in a setting designed primarily for nondisabled children with the use the supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.
3. **What are the placement options for ECSE?** State regulations list several placement options for preschool children.

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 this 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

- Headstart/ECSE classroom
- Missouri Preschool Project (MPP)/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
- Centerbased/self-contained
- Integrated ECSE (formerly reverse mainstream)
- Special education classrooms in trailers outside regular school building

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 + Itinerant Service Outside the Home
- Home + ECSE
- Early Childhood Setting + Itinerant Service Outside the Home
- Early Childhood Setting + 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 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/childcare 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 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 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 in a separate room at the Head Start, monthly with parent and Head Start staff present.

4. **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.
5. **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.

Caseloads

1. **Are there caseload requirements for ECSE?** Yes. These caseloads are listed in the Missouri State Plan at: <https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/RegulationIXCaseloads.pdf>.
2. **What are the caseload requirements for various settings?** Refer to the chart below to determine the correct caseload for the various settings.

3. **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.

Position/Full Time Equivalent	Caseload/Class Size
Teacher of Early Childhood Special Education Classroom	10-20*
Teacher of Integrated Classroom	10-20*
Itinerant Teacher (teachers who move from class to class within a facility or travel to other facilities)	12-22
Teacher of Severe/Low Incidence Classrooms	4-10*
Paraprofessional in ECSE Centerbased Self Contained Classroom or Integrated Classroom	10-20*
Paraprofessional in ECSE Severe/Low Incidence Classrooms	4-10*
Diagnostic Staff – for each position	160
Related Services Staff Employed by District (Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, Speech Therapist)	35-50
ECSE Dedicated Program or Process Coordinator (Administrator)	180
ECSE Secretary	180
Nurse (FTE can be increased if additional nursing needs are specifically addressed in IEPs)	175
Social Worker	
General	175
Diagnostic	160
Related Services	35-50

*Based on two half day sessions.

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?** Yes. 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?** If the child is kindergarten eligible and the parent is not interested in kindergarten yet and the IEP team does not think the child needs continued ECSE services, then the child would get no ECSE services and the child would not be enrolled. The parent can keep their child out of school until age seven, the mandatory age of compulsory school attendance. 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 in ECSE.
- 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 aide 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?** Ultimately, transportation is an IEP team decision. The team determines if transportation is necessary as a related service, and if so, the IEP must reflect this. If the student needs the same transportation as all other students would receive, then it is likely the IEP team will conclude it is not necessary as a related service. The team should consider whether the child will be able to get to school to access the services if transportation is not provided.

Funding

- 1. If a district has a co-teaching/class within a class structure, how is this reimbursed and/or coded?** In ECSE, a co-taught classroom is referred to as an integrated classroom. DESE reimburses the district/LEA for the ECSE portion if caseload standards are met. An integrated classroom must have at least half of the students with IEPs. While the salary and benefits of the teacher in the integrated classroom with ECSE certification would be reimbursable if caseload requirements are met, the other teacher would not be reimbursable through the ECSE program.
- 2. 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 students with IEPs, the ECSE program will pay allowable costs associated with that classroom.
- 3. 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. The district would indicate the amount of tuition collected in the comments section so DESE staff can deduct before approving the Final Expenditure Report
- 4. If a child attends a preschool or daycare and the IEP team determines that services will be provided there, does that obligate the district to pay for the preschool/daycare?** The school is obligated to pay tuition for the specific amount of the time designated in the IEP for special education, related services, and supplementary aids and services that are provided in the integrated setting by the preschool or daycare. If the district/LEA provides the services onsite at the preschool or daycare, there is no obligation to pay tuition.

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