**Questions and Answers from the March 10, 2022**

**Zoom Support Meeting: Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)**

**1) Would you consider a request for an evaluation from Children’s Mercy Hospital as a parent or agency referral?**

CMH is not part of the local education agency so the referral would have to come through the parents.

**2) If a parent opts out of the transition from First Steps but then wants to opt back in, does the team still need to have an evaluation completed and an IEP in place by the child’s third birthday if the parent opts back in with less than 90 days before the child’s third birthday?**

When the parent opts back in less than 90 days from the child’s third birthday, follow the initial evaluation process using the 30-60-30 day timeline. Document the dates/methods of parent contact and what they requested.

**3) In the event of the parents opting out and then opting back in, when would the referral date be?**

The day the parent opted back in becomes the referral date because opting out prevented directory information from being provided to the LEA by First Steps.

**4) What if a parent gives consent for evaluation, but then "disappears" and does not make the child available for testing during the evaluation process? What are our steps to document and end the evaluation process?**

Once you have parental consent to evaluate the process has started, and it must end with an eligibility determination. Document the district’s good faith efforts to set up times to evaluate the child and parent responses to those attempts. Schedule an eligibility determination meeting within the timeline and make an eligibility decision based on the information you have available.

**5) Looking forward, our district has more high-needs students than ever before and are quickly running out of places to put them. The district is adding an Intensive Teaching teacher, but will still be beginning the school year with only a handful of spots which will fill quickly. Even with adding an additional teacher comes the challenge of how do we fill those rooms with few, if any paraprofessional applicants. How should we handle this situation?**

Carefully consider least restrictive environment and the instructional needs of the student when determining what services are needed to meet the goals. Just because you have a four-day-a-week program doesn’t mean every ECSE student needs to be in the program four days a week.

Regarding paraprofessionals, consider using additional methods for advertising. When your district is associated with a secondary vocational technical school, you may offer to provide internship slots for students in childhood development programs, providing an opportunity for students to be assisted and showcasing your program to potential future employees. Build relationships with local colleges and universities to offer practicum and student teaching opportunities. Use A+ students who have an interest in working with young children and would appreciate the experience and do a good job to offer classroom support. This is more applicable to teachers, but you could develop a “grow your own” program with local colleges or universities to provide assistance and incentives to current students who are interested in careers in education, in return for their pledge to work at the district after they earn teaching certificates. Districts can also contact a retired teacher who is interested in working part-time, less than 550 hours a year.

**6) What do you do when the First Steps Referral to ECSE Documentation Form isn't always completely filled out?**

It is the LEA’s responsibility to gather the information needed to document the referral. So establish a process in your district for deciding who will contact either First Steps or the parents or both to get the missing information.

**7) How do you handle a situation with a student who turned five on July 5th and then received a SPED referral on July 6th?**

The child’s fifth birthday is on or before July fifth and the referral was received on July sixth (between school years), the school year in which the child was **not** considered kindergarten age eligible has ended. Because the student is kindergarten-age eligible for the next school year use any eligibility category other than Young Child with a Developmental Delay (YCDD).

**8) If a 5-year-old in ECSE with YCDD eligibility will be going into kindergarten in the fall, can a reevaluation team use Language Impaired if the child meets those eligibility criteria or would they have to leave the child YCDD (if still eligible) until the child goes to kindergarten and then reevaluate again? If so, this process seems to put more evaluations on the kindergarten special education team rather than allowing the ECSE staff who have established rapport with the student to conduct the reevaluation.**

The Language criteria indicator 1500.20.a (2) states, “Children ages three through five years, not kindergarten eligible, shall use YCDD criteria.” Kindergarten students identified using YCDD would have to be reevaluated before entering first grade, so the next evaluation could be started after the staff providing kindergarten services have had the opportunity to establish familiarity with the student.

**9) If a child is not enrolled because the parent chose not to participate in services right now, is ECSE required to complete ECOs on that student?**

ECO reporting is only required for students who are receiving early childhood special education services of any kind. More information can be found on Early Childhood Outcomes: <https://dese.mo.gov/early-learning/preschool/preschool-programs/early-childhood-special-education/early-childhood-outcomes-eco-training>

**10) Our district has two types of classes: one with 51% ECSE and the other is with 100% kids that scored concern on the DIAL and none of them have IEPs. Does the 100% class still count as a regular or 00A5 environmental code when reporting early childhood environments?**

First, keep in mind that you must consider where a child spends time during a typical week to determine the correct educational environment. If a child spends any amount of time in a regular early childhood environment, including the “100% classroom” described in the question or a 50% ECSE students and 50% typically developing students, then the educational environment would be one of the “In regular early childhood program…” categories. In other words, the educational environment is based on the child’s typical week, not on the setting where the special education services are delivered. If a child is not spending time in a regular early childhood program, and your ECSE class has 51% students with IEP’s most of the time, the educational environment would likely be 00B1-Separate Class. Please see the [March 2022 Myth of the Month: ECSE](https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/myth-month-march-2022) for more information.

**Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Resources:**

[Office of Childhood's ECSE webpage](https://dese.mo.gov/childhood/quality-programs/preschool-programs/early-childhood-special-education)

[Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Frequently Asked Questions](https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/ecse-faq-0)

[Transition from First Steps to Early Childhood Special Education](https://dese.mo.gov/childhood/early-intervention/first-steps/transition-first-steps-early-childhood)

[2021 Virtual Special Education Director Academy: ECSE Presentation](https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/ecse-presentation)

[ECSE Educational Environment Worksheet](https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/ecse-worksheet)

[Early Childhood Educational Environment Tree](https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/ecse-decision-tree)

[Special Education Finance - ESCE](https://dese.mo.gov/financial-admin-services/special-education-finance#ECSE)

[Special Education Data](https://dese.mo.gov/special-education/special-education-data)