



The Laboratory Charter School

of Communication and Languages

Child Find Policy

Resolution #0320202411
Revised March 2024

I. Introduction

Laboratory Charter School is fully committed to ensuring that every child with a disability is identified, located, and evaluated as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Pennsylvania Code §711.21. The Child Find process is a critical component of this commitment, ensuring that all children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disability, have access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that meets their unique needs. This policy outlines the procedures and responsibilities of Laboratory Charter School in implementing Child Find and ensuring that all eligible students receive the necessary special education services and supports.

II. Public Availability on School Website

In compliance with Pennsylvania Code §711.21, the Child Find Policy is made publicly available on the Laboratory Charter School website, ensuring that all stakeholders, including parents, guardians, and community members, have easy access to this important information. The policy is clearly listed by name on the school's website, with a direct link that does not require a password or any form of login. Additionally, this policy is prominently included in the school's Parent-Student Handbook, ensuring that families are informed of their rights and the school's obligations under the IDEA.

The Child Find Policy is designed to be an evergreen document, meaning that it is either dated with the correct review year or includes a stipulation that it applies to any review year. This ensures that the policy remains relevant and up-to-date, reflecting the most current legal requirements and best practices in special education.

III. Nondiscriminatory Statement

Laboratory Charter School is dedicated to providing an inclusive and equitable education for all students, including those with disabilities. The Child Find Policy ensures that the school identifies and evaluates all students with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their condition. This policy emphasizes the school's commitment to providing appropriate special education services and programs to support all students with disabilities, ensuring that they have the opportunity to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.

The school's special education services include, but are not limited to, individualized education programs (IEPs), related services such as speech and occupational therapy, and accommodations and modifications to the general education curriculum. These services are designed to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities, allowing them to access the general education curriculum and participate fully in school activities. Laboratory Charter School does not discriminate based on the type or severity of disability, and all students who are eligible for special education services are provided with the necessary support to achieve their educational goals.

IV. Parental Requests for Services

Parents and guardians play a vital role in the Child Find process. They are often the first to recognize potential signs of a disability in their child and can request an evaluation for special education services at any time. Laboratory Charter School is committed to responding to such requests in a timely and supportive manner.

Process for Requesting an Evaluation

Parents or guardians who suspect that their child may have a disability and require special education services are encouraged to make a formal request for a multidisciplinary evaluation. This request can be made at any time during the school year. To initiate the process, parents should submit a written request to the school's Director of Special Education. The request can be made via email at hillary.el@labcharter.com or by calling 267-817-4720. If a parent or guardian prefers to make the request orally, the school will provide a form to facilitate the written request.

Once a request for evaluation is received, Laboratory Charter School is obligated to respond within a specified timeframe. The school will provide parents with a Notice of Intent to Evaluate, which outlines the evaluation process and includes consent forms that must be signed and returned before the evaluation can proceed. The evaluation process is conducted at no cost to the parents, ensuring that all students have access to the assessments and services they need.

Parental Rights and Procedural Safeguards

Parents and guardians have the right to challenge the school's decisions regarding the evaluation or eligibility for special education services. If the school denies a request for an evaluation, parents have the right to challenge this decision through an impartial due process hearing or through voluntary alternative dispute resolution methods, such as mediation. The Procedural Safeguards, which outline these rights and the processes for resolving disputes, are available on the school's website and are provided to parents at the time of the evaluation request.

V. Student Screening Information

Laboratory Charter School is dedicated to proactively identifying students who may have disabilities and require special education services. To achieve this, the school has implemented systematic screening activities that are conducted regularly for all students. These activities are designed to identify students who may be struggling academically, socially, or behaviorally, and who may benefit from further evaluation for special education services.

Systematic Screening Activities

The following screening activities are conducted at Laboratory Charter School:

- **Benchmark Assessments:** These are administered at multiple points during the school year to assess students' progress in key academic areas, such as reading and mathematics. The results of these assessments help identify students who may be at risk of academic failure and who may need further evaluation.
- **Standardized Tests:** Standardized testing is conducted to provide a comprehensive overview of students' academic performance relative to state and national norms. These tests help identify students who are performing significantly below their peers and who may require special education services.
- **Vision and Hearing Screenings:** These screenings are conducted annually to identify students who may have sensory impairments that could affect their academic performance. Early identification of vision and hearing problems is crucial in providing appropriate interventions and supports.
- **Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS):** Laboratory Charter School utilizes the MTSS framework to provide targeted interventions to students who are struggling academically or behaviorally. The MTSS process involves multiple tiers of intervention, with increasing levels of support based on the student's needs. Students who do not respond to interventions in the general education setting may be referred for a special education evaluation.
- **Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Evaluations:** For students who are identified through screening activities as potentially having a disability, a comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a multidisciplinary team. This evaluation includes assessments in all areas related to the suspected disability, including cognitive, academic, social-emotional, and behavioral functioning.

VI. Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Laboratory Charter School is committed to providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all students with disabilities. FAPE is guaranteed under the IDEA and is designed to meet the individual educational needs of students with disabilities as adequately as the needs of students without disabilities. FAPE includes the provision of special education and related services at no cost to the parents, and it is tailored to the unique needs of each student through the development and implementation of an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Qualifying for Special Education and Related Services

To qualify for special education services under IDEA, a student must have one or more of the following disabilities that interfere with their educational performance:

1. Autism or Pervasive Developmental Disorder
2. Deaf-Blindness
3. Deafness
4. Emotional Disturbance
5. Hearing Impairment
6. Intellectual Disability
7. Multiple Disabilities
8. Orthopedic Impairment
9. Other Health Impairment (including ADD, ADHD, epilepsy, etc.)
10. Specific Learning Disability
11. Speech or Language Impairment
12. Traumatic Brain Injury
13. Visual Impairment including Blindness

The determination of eligibility is made by a multidisciplinary team (MDT) that includes educators, specialists, and the child's parents. This team conducts a thorough evaluation to determine whether the child has a disability that requires specially designed instruction. If the student is found eligible, the team works collaboratively to develop an IEP that outlines the goals, services, and accommodations needed to support the student's educational success.

VII. Annual Notice and Public Awareness

In compliance with state and federal regulations, Laboratory Charter School publishes an annual notice regarding Child Find in the school's Parent-Student Handbook and on the school's website. This notice is intended to inform parents, guardians, and the community about the availability of special education services and programs, how to request these services, and the systematic screening activities that the school conducts to identify students with disabilities.

The annual notice also includes information about the rights of parents under IDEA, including their right to request an evaluation at any time and their right to challenge the school's decisions through due process hearings or alternative dispute resolution methods. The notice is designed to be accessible and easy to understand, ensuring that all parents are informed of their rights and the services available to their children.

VIII. Section 504 Compliance

In addition to the requirements of IDEA, Laboratory Charter School complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities. Under Section 504, students with disabilities are entitled to receive accommodations and modifications that enable them to access the general education curriculum and participate fully in school activities.

Definition of Disability Under Section 504

Section 504 defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. This definition is broad and includes a wide range of conditions, from physical impairments to psychological disorders. Students who meet the definition of disability under Section 504 are entitled to receive appropriate accommodations and services that address their individual needs.

Laboratory Charter School is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all students, including those with disabilities. The school ensures that students with disabilities have equal access to education and are not discriminated against based on their disability. This includes providing accommodations in the classroom, ensuring accessibility to school facilities, and offering equal opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities and school events.

IX. Screening and Referral Processes

Laboratory Charter School's systematic screening and referral processes are designed to identify students who may need special education services as early as possible. These processes involve the regular assessment of students' academic performance, behavior, and overall development to identify those who may have a disability.

Screening Activities

The school conducts various screening activities, including:

- **Vision and Hearing Screenings:** These are essential for identifying students with sensory impairments that could impact their ability to learn and participate in school activities.
- **Academic Assessments:** Standardized tests and benchmark assessments help identify students who may be struggling academically and who may benefit from further evaluation.
- **Behavioral Screenings:** Observations and behavior assessments are conducted to identify students who may have emotional or behavioral disorders.

Referral Process

If a student is identified through screening activities as potentially having a disability, the school will initiate a referral for a comprehensive evaluation. The referral process involves:

1. **Parental Notification and Consent:** Parents are notified of the school's intent to evaluate their child and are provided with information about the evaluation process. Parental consent is required before the evaluation can proceed.

2. **Multidisciplinary Evaluation:** A team of professionals conducts a thorough evaluation that assesses all areas related to the suspected disability. This may include cognitive, academic, social-emotional, and behavioral assessments.
3. **Eligibility Determination:** The multidisciplinary team reviews the evaluation results and determines whether the student qualifies for special education services. If the student is found eligible, an IEP is developed.
4. **IEP Development and Implementation:** The IEP outlines the student's educational goals, the special education services and supports they will receive, and any necessary accommodations or modifications. The IEP is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that it continues to meet the student's needs.

Who Is Covered by Child Find?

Under the Child Find mandate, schools are obligated to locate, identify, and evaluate all children within the age range of 6 to 21, and up to age 22 for students identified under Chapter 14, who may require special education services. This responsibility extends to all children residing within the state, regardless of their schooling situation—whether they attend public or private schools. It also includes highly mobile children, migrant children, homeless children, and those who are wards of the state. The mandate applies even to children who are progressing from grade to grade with passing marks, as it includes all children suspected of having a disability.

Why Is Child Find Necessary?

The primary goal of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is to ensure that every child with a disability receives a free appropriate public education (FAPE). This education includes special education and related services that are tailored to meet each child's unique needs, preparing them for further education, employment, and independent living.

Another crucial aspect of IDEA is to support states in developing and implementing comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary systems of Early Intervention Services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. Early intervention is essential for young children with developmental delays or disabilities, as it prepares them for future education and life. Congress has emphasized the importance of providing Early Intervention Services so that children receive timely treatment, and it established the Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers to facilitate interagency coordination of services from birth to age two. States must ensure that children with disabilities are eligible for special education services by age three.

How Is Child Find Implemented?

The Child Find mandate requires each state to develop and implement effective methods to identify which children are receiving necessary special education services and which are not. Once children who may need services are identified, the state must conduct all necessary evaluations at no cost to the parents.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act also requires states to fulfill "general public notice obligations," meaning they must actively inform and educate the public about the importance of locating and identifying all children with disabilities.

What Methods Does Laboratory Charter School Utilize to Identify and Locate Children Who May Need Special Education Services?

To identify and locate children who may need special education services, schools may use a variety of methods, including:

- **Door-to-Door Surveys:** Engaging directly with families in their homes to identify children who may require services.
- **Brochure Mailings:** Sending information to homes to inform parents about special education services and how to access them.
- **Public Education Programs:** Hosting events or campaigns to raise awareness among the community about the Child Find mandate.
- **Public Meetings:** Organizing forums where parents and guardians can learn about and discuss special education services.
- **Physician Referrals:** Working with healthcare providers to identify children who may benefit from special education.
- **Day Care Provider Contacts:** Collaborating with early childhood care providers to identify young children who may need early intervention services.
- **Surveys of Private School Personnel:** Engaging with staff at private schools to identify students who may require special education services.

X. Conclusion

Laboratory Charter School is deeply committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Child Find mandate, IDEA, Section 504, and other relevant regulations to ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities, have access to a free appropriate public education. The school's comprehensive Child Find Policy, systematic screening processes, and commitment to providing equitable services are designed to support the educational success of all students with disabilities.

Parents, guardians, and community members are encouraged to contact the school's Director of Special Education at hillary.el@labcharter.com or 267-817-4720 for more information about the Child Find process, to request an evaluation, or to learn more about the special education services available at Laboratory Charter School.