

## Special Education and Child Find

By [Andrew M.I. Lee, JD](#)

At a glance

- Under federal law, public schools must look for, find, and evaluate kids who need special education.
- This is called Child Find, and it covers kids from birth through age 21.
- It applies to all kids, including those who are homeschooled or in private schools, plus kids who are migrants or without homes.
- Public schools have a big responsibility—they must *identify, locate, and evaluate* any kids who need special education. This is called “Child Find.” Looking for and finding these kids is an important first step toward getting them the help they need to thrive in school.
- When a school knows, or thinks a child could have a disability, it must evaluate the child. Child Find applies to kids from birth to age 21. It can cover kids with learning and thinking differences, developmental delays, and other conditions.

Child Find is part of the federal [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#). The purpose of the law is to serve the education needs of kids with disabilities. Each state and its public schools must have policies and procedures for finding these kids. They must also develop practical methods to identify which kids qualify for special education and related services.

At Redwood Coast Montessori:

A student may have a medical or psychological diagnosis of a learning disability or other health condition that may impede their ability to access their education. This may qualify them for either a 504 plan with classroom accommodations or an IEP with modification of the curriculum.

To start the evaluation process, parents may write a letter asking for evaluation. Another method of child find involves a team meeting. A student study team will meet to identify what has been tried or next steps, like reading or math intervention. Team members include parents or guardians, special education teacher, and others that have information or insight to contribute. Several of these meetings may be held. At the meeting the team may decide it is time to start the evaluation process. The evaluation is conducted by the school psychologist. Another meeting will be held to review the results.