

Early Childhood Special Education

Public schools in Indiana provide special education services for eligible children starting at age 3. Service plans are individualized and decided by a committee that includes a child's parents. All special education services are provided at no cost for eligible children.

Who is Eligible for Early Childhood Special Education Services?

A child (3 years old and older) with a suspected need for Early Childhood Special Education services can be referred to their local school system for eligibility determination. An assessment is done within 50 instructional days at no cost to the family to see if a child qualifies for special education services under any of the eligibility categories:

Autism Spectrum Disorder	Deaf – Blind	Other Health Impairment
Blind or Low Vision	Emotional Disability	Orthopedic Impairment
Cognitive Disability	Language or Speech Impairment	Specific Learning Disability
Deaf or Hard of Hearing	Multiple Disabilities	Traumatic Brain Injury
	Developmental Delay	

What Services are Available?

Early Childhood Special Education Services are individualized to meet the educational needs of the eligible child. Individual Education Plans (IEP) may include preschool instruction, related services, or other supports as needed. Plans are created by Case Conference Committees that include a child's parent.

Starting Early Childhood Special Education

Parents who have any concerns about their child's development, or know that their child has a disability, may request [an evaluation](#) by contacting their local public school and making a verbal or written request to "Licensed Personnel" (Principal, teacher, social worker, psychologist, or administrators) that their child be evaluated for Early Childhood Special Education. Families who are unsure of whom to contact in their community can view the [Indiana Special Education Directory](#) or call the Indiana Department of Education at 317-232-6610 to find their local information.

To learn more,
 call the Indiana
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 1-317-232-6610

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If a child is enrolled in Indiana's First Steps program prior to turning 3, the request for evaluation can be a part of the transition process.

Cost

Early Childhood Special Education Services are a part of a federally mandated "Free and Appropriate Public Education" for eligible children with disabilities and are provided at no cost.

What about Summer?

Early Childhood Special Education services are provided following the local community's school year calendar. It is important to note that the timeline for assessments use instructional days, which are days during which school is in session. Once a child is found eligible for Early Childhood Special Education Services the Case Conference Committee will consider if there is a need for services beyond the typical school calendar called, "Extended School Year Services."

Where to Learn More:

Indiana Department of Education (IDOE)

The Indiana Department of Education provides leadership and state-level support for public school programs for students with disabilities from ages 3-21.

Phone: 1-317-232-6610

IDOE Website: <https://www.in.gov/doe/students/special-education/>

IDOE Indiana Special Education Directory:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hRtp2zsG3WtdCf2ma69awNDkxTc65jLn/view>

Navigating the Course, Indiana's Parent Guide to Article 7:

<https://insource.org/get-help/resources/>

IN*SOURCE

IN*SOURCE, the Indiana Resource Center for Families with Special Needs, provides parents, families, and service providers in Indiana with the information and training necessary to help assure effective educational programs and appropriate services for children and young adults with disabilities. Phone: (800) 332-4433

IN*SOURCE Website: <https://insource.org/>

Programs and systems change often. It is important to ensure that you are using the most current information. This fact sheet was updated January 2025. Please check <https://www.inf2f.org/fact-sheets.html> for the most recent edition.

La versión en español de esta información está disponible [aquí](#).

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