

CHOCTAW TRIBAL SCHOOLS CHILD FIND

Choctaw Tribal Schools Child Find is a public awareness campaign/ screening program designed to locate and assist in the identification of unserved/ underserved children suspected of having developmental delays or exceptionalities that may need special education or related services who have not graduated from high school. Such children, regardless of the severity of their disability, may be eligible for services from birth through twenty-one years of age.



Child Find activities such as developmental screenings of children are conducted jointly among primary referral sources. These referral resources may include community partners such as Choctaw Health Services, hospitals (including prenatal and postnatal care facilities), physicians, parents, day care programs, local educational agencies, public health facilities, and other social service agencies. Annually, the Choctaw Tribal Schools Exceptional Education Program conducts developmental screening of all preschool and K-3 children. Each child's motor, communication, and social skills are observed at various play areas. Each child is also screened for hearing and vision. The information is used to provide the parent with a profile of their child's current development and to provide suggestions for follow-up activities. These activities may lead to a formal process designed to further explore ways to assist children. This process may ultimately result in a recommendation for a child to receive special education services.

Other Child Find activities, when conducted in the school setting, may include teacher observations, parent observation, and conferences to discuss children's strengths and concerns. Before referring the child, the person making the referral must inform the child's parent that the referral will be made. The referral must be in writing and include the reason why the person believes the child has an exceptionality. Upon request, the school will refer the child to the local Teacher Support Team, (TST). The TST may recommend interventions to be used with the child. If interventions are successful, no referral for a special education evaluation would be recommended. If the interventions are not successful, the TST might refer the child for a special education evaluation. Parents must give permission before an evaluation can be conducted. The purpose of the evaluation is primarily instructional. Information gathered during the assessment process is used to determine the student's educational needs and to guide decision making about his

or her eligibility for special education services. It helps the child, the family, and the provider to plan appropriate services and link families to services for students meeting eligibility requirements in the following disability areas:

- Autism
- Developmental Delay
- Hearing Impairment (including deafness)
- Emotional Disturbance
- Learning Disability
- Mental Retardation
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment (including blindness)

Each of these areas has a specific definition and criteria that the student must meet in order to be classified as having that disability. Eligibility for special education and re- lated services is determined by documenting the existence of one or more of the disabilities listed above, its adverse effect on educational performance, and the consequent need for special education services. When a decision is made through the evaluation process that a student has a disability and requires special education services, the next steps are to review the students' present levels of performance, establish the goals for the student, and design a set of services calculated to meet those goals. It is assumed that the goals for each student will address the disability-related educational needs that impact the student's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum as well as the other educational needs (e.g. need for a set of alternative curricular expectations) that result from the student's disability. Regardless of the setting in which the student receives services, the Individual Education Plan (IEP) development process must document the ways in which the services identified will accomplish a number of objectives.

At the elementary schools, computerized programs River Deep, Plato, EdMark Series and LeapFrog are utilized to develop individualized programs for each child who receives services. Direct instruction, as well as inclusion and tutorial services, are available based on the unique needs of the students.

Choctaw Tribal Schools offer students with disabilities many opportunities to ensure that they gain the skills and competencies needed to achieve their desired measurable postsecondary goals. As students approach high school age, they participate in activities that assist in exploring their goals for the future. The opportunities and resources available to keep students engaged in meaningful

educational experiences so that they will be well prepared for further training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills. The transition services provided (including courses of study) focus on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student that relate to the student goals, their strengths, their preferences and interests. They also promote movement from school to post-school settings and activities. Exiting options for students with disabilities include a regular high school diploma or a Life Skills Certificate which focuses on vocational education training and adult living skills. Services are provided on the Choctaw Central High School campus as well as at the Occupational Training Center. Services include tutorial assistance, inclusion services, and accommodations and modifications within the regular classroom. Direct instruction in special education classrooms is provided based on the needs of the students through specially designed Plato labs at Choctaw Central Middle School, High School and at the Occupational Training Center. The Occupational Training Center provides vocational training in various areas, job training in the community, and instruction in adult living skills. As the graduation rates for students with disabilities continue to climb, providing effective transition services to promote successful post-school employment is an important measure of accountability for children with disabilities. Our goal for Choctaw Tribal Schools is to increase the chance that all students with disabilities are successful once they exit school.

The Early Education Intervention Program has made a commitment to identify and serve disabled, developmentally delayed, and at-risk Choctaw children. Preschool services and family services are also provided. If other services are needed, plans are made to provide each child an educational setting in which he or she may reach his or her full potential. For more information about the services provided by Choctaw Exceptional Education or to help a child or family determine eligibility for services, call the Choctaw Early Education Intervention Program Coordinator, Angie Gordon at 601- 663-7655 or send an email to angie.gordon@choctawtribalschools.com.

The Choctaw Tribal Schools and the Exceptional Education Program are dedicated to excellence in education services. Anyone who knows of a student who may be in need of special education services and who is not currently receiving an appropriate education should contact Trina Cheatham at the contact information provided below.

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