

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Enrolling children/youth in school:

A kinship caregiver with custody may enroll the child/youth in school. When the county department has custody, ask the caseworker for assistance with contacting the school to arrange for enrollment. If the parent maintains custody, caregivers need the parent to assist in enrolling the child/youth in school. This may be necessary when a voluntary placement agreement is used.

When a student meets the definition of out-of-home placement, which is synonymous with foster care, the student is eligible for educational provisions on both the federal and state levels. To determine if your student meets the definition of out-of-home placement, please contact the Child Welfare Education Liaison (CWEL) in your district. The CWEL directory can be found [here](#).

If the student meets the definition of out-of-home placement and there is a school change being considered due to a placement change the county is required to arrange and facilitate a best interest determination meeting (BID). The following people could be invited to participate in the BID meeting: the child (when developmentally appropriate), the parent, and guardian ad litem, and educational surrogate parent (when appropriate).

The other educational provisions that a student who meets the definition of out-of-home placement are eligible for are the right to remain in school of origin, immediate enrollment, the previous school is required to send school records immediately, and school fees waived. For more information about any of the educational provisions for students in out-of-home placement please reach out to your district's CWEL. The CWEL directory can be found [here](#).

Concerns about academic or behavioral progress of the child/youth:

- Notify the teacher, or school counselor and ask for a meeting,
- Gather and provide information about the specific strengths, homework samples, attitude about school, test scores, previous school experiences, peer relationships and challenges for the child/youth,

- Participate in discussions with the school staff about the student's specific strengths and needs, and
- Develop interventions with school staff and monitor the progress towards meeting specific, measurable goals.

National School Lunch Program:

Foster students are categorically eligible for free meals. Other students may be eligible for free or reduced meals if the family meets income eligibility. Check with the school to determine if the child/youth in your care is eligible to participate in these Programs. Schools and community organizations may also offer free summer meals. Visit [KidsFoodFinder.org](https://www.kidsfoodfinder.org) to locate summer meal sites.

Special Education Services:

Caregivers who have legal custody of the child/youth and are concerned that the child/youth may have a disability and need special education should contact the principal or special education director and request a special educational evaluation. If the child/youth is in the legal custody of the county department, then the kinship foster parent needs to collaborate with the caseworker to request a special education evaluation. Any request for a special education evaluation should be made in writing to best protect the child's educational rights. Within a reasonable time after receiving a request for a special education evaluation, the school must either request parental/guardian consent to conduct the evaluation or explain, in writing, that they do not agree an evaluation is necessary and why. The school must provide information about the process for requesting a special education evaluation.

Response to Intervention (RTI) or RTI is an approach that promotes an integrated system for general, compensatory, gifted and special education to provide quality, standards-based instruction and intervention that is matched to student's academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. The purpose of Response to Intervention is to improve educational outcomes for students. The problem-solving process of Response to Intervention is:

- Define the problem, directly measure behavior,
- Analyze the problem, validate the problem, identify variables,
- Develop a plan, implement a plan as intended, monitor progress, modify as necessary, and
- Evaluate response to intervention.

For more information, please review the parents' handbook that can be found [here](#):

Other educational supports:

Some schools maintain lists of individual tutors. Many school districts have charter schools that caregivers may explore as alternative resources to public school if they have custody of the child/youth. If the department has legal custody, the child/youth must attend public school. For information about the home-schooling statute, guidelines, and curriculum caregivers may call the Colorado Department of Education or refer to their website.

Early Intervention Colorado: Part C of the “Individuals with Disabilities Education Act” (IDEA) requires that children who are at risk of or have disabilities, birth through age two (2) years, are entitled to the following services at no cost to the family:

- Screening or multi-disciplinary evaluation,
- An Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), which is a detailed summary of the support a child will receive and how those services will be provided to the family.
- Service coordination, and
- Procedural safeguards to ensure basic legal rights. Parents must provide their consent via written permission in every step of the process, with the exception of the initial referral.

The Early Intervention Colorado (EI Colorado) program for Infants, Toddlers, and Families, which administers Part C of IDEA, is a voluntary program for families that provides developmental supports and services to children with developmental concerns from birth through two years of age. EI Colorado services include coaching and support to give parents the information and skills needed to turn everyday interactions and activities into opportunities to help children learn and grow.

The term “early” in early intervention is important because research shows that the first three years of a child’s life are the most important for developing and learning.

Children learn new skills best when they are with familiar people in a familiar place. EI services are provided in the family’s home or wherever the child and family spend time, such as at the park, childcare, a grandparent’s home, or a library. The early intervention services provided vary depending on the needs of the child and family. Services can be provided by a variety of specialists, including speech-language pathologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and developmental interventionists.

The Early Intervention model contends that:

Family members are experts in understanding their child and family circumstances and interests, and Family members must be respected and valued members in decision-making about what their child needs.

The goal of the early intervention program is to “open a window of opportunity” for families to help their child develop to their full potential. It can help improve a child’s ability to develop and learn. It can also help families learn ways to support their child’s development.

Developmental Screening: 0-3-year-olds with sustained cases of abuse/neglect are required to be referred to Part C/EI for screening; this is a federal requirement. 3- and 4-year-olds must be referred to screening based on state law, but there is no specific entity responsible for conducting the screening. The referral could be made to Child-Find in a school district IF there is a concern about the child’s learning and a need for special education. Other community entities may be more appropriate for referral to initial screening, including the child’s primary care provider. A part of the screening process is to review results with the child’s family and to identify and refer to other helpful services and resources.

Child Find for children ages 3 through 5 years old is part of the public school system in Colorado to identify children suspected of having a delay in development as early as possible. If a young child is not meeting typical developmental milestones, or someone is concerned about the child’s growth or learning, a referral can be made to

Child Find. Starting at age three, school districts and/or Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) are responsible for the Child Find process and will work with families about their concerns, with a focus on meeting the child's educational needs. Steps may include collecting information from families and from previous developmental screenings, conducting a screening, and/or completing an evaluation. The purpose is to determine if there is an educational disability that requires special education and related services for the child to make progress in preschool. Child Find is provided at no cost to families. Referral to child find should be made to the district contact where the child resides.

Head Start programs support children's development from birth to age 5 by providing services that enhance early learning and development, health, and family well-being. These services are offered at no cost to children in eligible families. Families can qualify for Head Start if their household income is at or below the poverty level, if they receive public assistance (such as TANF, SSI, or SNAP), or if they have children in foster care or are experiencing homelessness, regardless of income. Head Start programs align their age eligibility with their local education agency's kindergarten age eligibility. School districts decide the date by which a child must be five years old to enter kindergarten. These dates may range from June to October in communities throughout Colorado.

Head Start Preschool services cater to families with children ages 3 to 5, while Early Head Start services focus on families with children from birth to age 3 and often serve expectant parents as well. Programs provide child development services in various settings, including center-based, home-based, or family childcare. All Head Start programs are committed to ensuring that eligible children and families receive high-quality services in safe and healthy environments, preparing children for school and life.