

Maine DOE Guidance for Pre-Kindergarten/Kindergarten Child Find Screening

Maine Department of Education Rule Chapter 101 includes federally mandated Child Find requirements, including timely screening procedures for incoming Pre-K and Kindergarten students. While some Maine schools engage in screening for Child Find in late August or early September, many typically screen in the spring of the year. With the current precautions in place to address the transmission of COVID-19, schools that typically screen in the spring have likely postponed in-person screening. In addition to the supports that you would typically provide to families based on their needs (eg. language, cultural, transportation), the following screening guidance is provided for school administrative units (SAUs) and their Collaborative Planning Teams to inform local procedures.

Prior to In-person Screening

Maine schools are encouraged to use the time prior to scheduling in-person screening to build relationships with guardians of incoming students through an over-abundance of communication.

The use of online registration for Pre-K and K students would enable schools to identify the students who will be enrolling in programs in the fall of 2020. As children are registering, schools could send welcome letters that include guardian surveys to begin the screening process. Guardian surveys can be obtained or developed by:

- Accessing one that is already part of the school's Pre-K/K screening tool (e.g. DIAL, ASQ, Brigance, etc.).
- Purchasing from available guardian screening tools (see [Screening Compendium](#) for examples).
- Designing one using available tools, such as the [CDC's Milestones](#).

Guardian surveys could be mailed or could utilize technology-based applications. Phone calls to guardians are recommended to answer questions guardians may have, to provide reminders about returning the surveys, and to obtain information about student behavior(s) that would be helpful in planning for any additional supports necessary to assist the child during screening or in-person instruction. Schools may also consider hosting virtual open-houses/meetings to help guardians learn about the school, the staff the guardian survey, and the screening process. As necessary, provide translation and interpreter services throughout the entire screening process.

Once surveys are collected, schools could use available information to prioritize screenings so that students with greater risk can be scheduled for in-person screening first. The following guidelines should be considered:

- If students were served in a public PreK and guardians /teachers had no concerns, screening does not need to be repeated for Kindergarten entry.
- If students were served by Head Start, schools should connect with the sending Head Start program to gather information from their screenings. It is likely those students will not need to be rescreened.

- If students already have IEPs, screening is not needed. Transition planning should be occurring, and students will most likely be re-evaluated in the fall and/or can complete other screening requirements (e.g. health screens) later.
- Schools may consider seeking guardian releases for screening information that has been conducted by health care providers and/or other private services.
- Of the remaining students who need to be screened, use the information from the guardian survey to prioritize students, scheduling students at greater risk first.

To assist in providing a smooth, safe and effective in-person screening process, provide guardians with an explanation of how the screening process will work prior to arriving, utilizing short videos which introduce the process, people, and materials. This will help them know what to expect and will assist them in explaining the experience to their children. Also, provide guardians with any additional forms that could be completed ahead of time to reduce the time onsite during screening.

In-Person Screening

When developing a plan for in-person screening, please consider the following guidance for developing a safe screening environment.

- Implement components of the Emergency Operations Plan and CDC guidance that address the safety needs and tasks of students, guardians, staff, and volunteers, including the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or face masks as able. Students may remove face coverings during the screening as appropriate to the task, but screeners should keep a safe distance between themselves and the student and keep their face covering on as much possible.
- Work with and include your school nurse and school health advisor in the design of your screening process. Consider, if feasible, seeking support from community medical providers.
- Organize screenings to minimize exposures by having one screener completing all aspects of the screening with one student, rather than rotating children through stations with a different screener at each station. If you want to accommodate more than one student at a time, have multiple screeners spread out, each in their own station, but do not have children rotating between stations. Screening stations should be big enough to allow for the spacing needed to complete the screening while maintaining appropriate distance between stations. Consider, in good weather, setting up screening stations outdoors.
- Limit screening to one guardian (when possible) per child with no other family members (such as siblings).
- Stagger the arrival times so that there is time between guardians and students entering the school and moving to their assigned screening locations. Make sure the entrance point for screening is clearly identified.
- Upon arrival, complete a quick survey to ensure that the child and guardian are healthy.
- Have hand sanitizer available at entry points. The screener, student and guardian should use prior to beginning each session.
- Guardians should remain outside of the screening area. If children are uncomfortable about or

unwilling to be separated from their guardian for the screening, it may be necessary to wait to complete the screening until after the school year begins and children have grown more comfortable.

- Have supplies available to disinfect screening stations between appointments. Have custodial staff available to disinfect common areas when guardians and students may be traveling to reach screening stations. Follow appropriate guidelines for [disinfecting facilities](#).
- Clearly mark the traffic flow for entering and exiting screening stations and for leaving the school. Consider having a limited number of additional staff on hand to help with traffic flow.
- Screening of medically fragile students may need to be postponed until conditions improve, and in consultation with their health care provider.
- If your school collaborates with a Head Start or CDS program, consider enlisting assistance from their trained screening staff.

Other considerations:

- Some schools incorporate additional components in screening beyond what is required for Child Find. Consider reducing screening to only what is essential.
- If screening during the summer proves to be too challenging, consider using the first couple days of the school year as a time to complete this process.
- ESSR funds through the CARES Act may be used to pay for additional expenses incurred by schools to complete screening (e.g. technology-based surveys, staff time in the summer to complete screening, etc.).

If you have additional questions, please reach out to Nicole Madore, Early Childhood Specialist, Nicole.madore@maine.gov or Emily Poland, School Nurse Consultant and Coordinated School Health Team Leader, Emily.Poland@maine.gov.