

# STATE OF COLORADO



**Colorado Department of Human Services**  
*people who help people*



Bill Owens  
Governor

Marva Livingston Hammons  
CDHS Executive Director

William J. Maloney  
Commissioner of Education



*Improving Academic Achievement*

**To:** Superintendents  
Child Find Coordinators  
BOCES Executive Directors  
State Special Education Directors  
Directors of Community Centered Boards

**From:** Ed Steinberg, Department of Education  
Fred L. DeCrescentis, Department of Human Services  
Becky Karlin, Governor's Office of Policy and Initiatives

**Subject:** Child Find Responsibilities for FY 2006-07

**Date:** August 8, 2006

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As you know, there has been a great deal of activity in recent months regarding child find responsibilities and funding. This memo will provide you with a joint status update from the Departments of Human Services (CDHS) and Education (CDE), and the Governor's Office.

CDHS, CDE and the Governor's Office have met and formally agreed that while the initial transition of lead agency responsibilities in Colorado for Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has not been without its difficulties, it is time for the state and local systems to move forward and maintain focus on better meeting the needs of children and families. It is our hope that the information in this memo will demonstrate how cooperation and collaboration at the state and local level is an opportunity for Colorado to continue to utilize Child Find for infants, toddlers and families.

## Recent Developments

On June 20, 2006, the JBC appropriated one-time emergency supplemental funding of \$500,000 in State General Fund (GF) for child find activities for the first six months of FY 2006-07. We recognize that the \$500,000 is insufficient to meet the full need but it does provide some amount of bridge funding that has not previously been available. We also recognize that there is systemwide agreement that a transition period during FY 2006-07 is necessary in order to have time to develop a long-term solution for Child Find.

Following the June 20<sup>th</sup> supplemental appropriation, the JBC sent a letter to CDHS, CDE and the Governor's Office expressing its concern for the current circumstances, as well as an interest in a long-term solution. The letter states in part;

“We are writing to request the assistance of the Department of Education, and the cooperation of the Department of Human Services and the Governor's Office, in maintaining the current Department of

Education rule that school districts provide child find services through fiscal year 2006-07. To the extent that the Department of Education feels that this is not legally feasible, we would request that the Department of Education nonetheless works in collaboration with the Department of Human Services to *coordinate* child find activities and funding. This will help to retain stability in the Child Find system until the General Assembly has the opportunity to make state statutory modifications that will clarify what state agency should be responsible for the Child Find system for children under age 3.”

We now have an opportunity to demonstrate to the JBC the system’s willingness to consider the needs of children and families first, while a long-term solution is developed and efforts are underway in that regard. We believe that Colorado’s system of child identification and evaluation can and should continue to include the participation and expertise of all School Districts. This is an existing system that is known to families, professionals and communities.

We are requesting that everyone (CCBs, School Districts, and other community partners) participate jointly in an effort during FY 2006-07 to ensure that, as we work through the development process for a long-term solution, children and families continue to have the excellent child find service that has been available in Colorado.

#### How Child Find Can Work in the Interim

CDHS has allocated through the Community Centered Board (CCB) system the \$500,000 for Child Find. CDHS also provided a directive that CCBs should first negotiate with their School Districts to continue to provide Child Find. Attached is the cover memo and the proportional distribution of the \$500,000.

Additionally, there are a few considerations that we would like to bring to your attention that will help to share the responsibilities for child find activities while mitigating the overall financial burden of providing child find services. While some areas of the state may already have incorporated some of these considerations, other areas may not have.

- Not all families necessarily want a full evaluation or have concerns in more than one area of development. Although the federal law provides for a full evaluation, if requested, often families only want to be informed and to know if their concerns are valid. This can be accomplished without the time and expense of a full evaluation.
- Children who have a diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay can be determined eligible for Early Intervention (Part C) services without a child find evaluation. They can be referred directly for Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) development. In the December 2005 count, 39.2 % of all eligible children had a diagnosed physical or mental condition. Technical assistance from the State is available, if needed.  
(note: if a parent requests a full evaluation, they are entitled to have a full evaluation)
- Historically, approximately 33% of children involved in Early Intervention services are Medicaid eligible. Evaluations for Medicaid eligible children can be covered by Medicaid. While direct billing for school staff is not always practical, School Districts can seek Medicaid reimbursement under the School Based Health Services initiative.
- Streamlining the flow of information can reduce the amount of time spent on child find activities. Wherever the family makes first contact, the agency should explain how Child Find works within your community, including the purpose of having a signed release of information in order to share information between the School District and the CCB. Attached is a sample release of information form that meets both Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements.

- In light of the School District responsibilities for transition to preschool services at age three; it makes economic and programmatic sense for proactive coordination with the Community Centered Boards. Given the time and resources involved, children should not be evaluated any more frequently than necessary. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, transition from Part C to Part B can begin as early as 2 years 3 months. By coordinating the timing of evaluations, this may help to reduce the overall costs.
- Service Coordination is an entitlement under Part C and a service coordinator must be assigned within three working days of the referral. The Community Centered Board Service Coordinator can help coordinate with the School District the scheduling of the child find evaluation for families, as well as being responsible for the IFSP development for eligible children, thus reducing the impact on the School Districts.

We believe that if all parties work collaboratively together and share in the responsibility for child find activities during this coming fiscal year, Child Find can continue as it has been without undue burden on any one entity.

### Next Steps

There is currently insufficient information about the number of children and the costs associated with Child Find for birth through age two. In an effort to collect accurate information, school districts have been asked to participate in a survey regarding last year's Child Find activities. This information will be utilized to help define some common functions, determine who should participate in which child find activities, and how much funding is needed. CDHS, CDE and the Governor's Office will also use the information to work jointly with other key stakeholders, including the Joint Budget Committee, to develop a strategy for how Colorado can and will move forward.

CDHS, CDE and the Governor's Office will be meeting on a regular basis to ensure that lines of communication and collaboration continue to improve. School Districts and Community Centered Boards can collaborate to ensure child find activities continue to be provided pending a long-term solution.

In summary, the change in lead agency has brought to the forefront the challenge that Colorado has been facing in providing adequate resources to cover all of the child find activities and functions. The crossover between Part C and Part B responsibilities requires that there be a coordinated effort between the School Districts and the Community Centered Boards, as well as between CDE and CDHS.

Often times, periods of transition present both challenges and opportunities. Although the initial period of this transition has had its share of challenges, we believe that it is time for everyone at the state and local level to come together and move forward in the best interest of children and families, and the overall early childhood system in the State of Colorado. Now is the time to seize the opportunities where communities can jointly bring to the table their expertise and resources so that Child Find remains a vital community service for all families while long-term solutions are developed.

We thank you for your patience during this transition, and we look forward to jointly developing an even better system of child identification and evaluation.

c: Representative Bernie Buescher, Chairman JBC  
Marva Livingston Hammons, Executive Director CDHS  
Dr. William J. Moloney, Commissioner of Education  
John Daurio, Director CDHS/OADRS