

parent guide for early childhood special education (ECSE)

What is ECSE?

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) is a preschool program for children ages 3 to 5 who have disabilities. The program is provided for free by school districts. It helps children learn early skills like numbers, colors, letters, counting, and shapes. The program is made to fit each child's needs.

How can ECSE help my child?

Your child will receive an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This plan is made just for your child's learning needs. Based on the plan, your child may be placed in one of these four programs:

Program	What It Means
Dual Enrollment	Your child can stay at home or go to a private preschool and still get free services like speech or occupational therapy from the public school.
Head Start	A program for families who meet income limits. Children with disabilities can join and learn with other children.
Pre-kindergarten	A preschool program that includes children with and without disabilities.
Self-Contained	A program only for children with disabilities. It is offered at different schools in the district.

How do I ask for ECSE services?

If your child is 3 or turning 3 and has a disability (medical, behavior, or vision-related), you can:

1. Work with your Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) provider to ask for services. You can do this up to 90 days before your child turns 3.
2. Contact your local school or the school district's Child Find office if you think your child needs support.
3. Fill out the required paperwork.
4. The school will decide if your child needs an evaluation (test).
5. You must sign a consent form to allow testing.

Timeline After You Ask for Services

- **Within 45 school days after you agree:** The school must complete the evaluation.
- **Within 30 calendar days after evaluation:** The school must share results.

Does a medical condition automatically qualify my child?

No. To qualify, your child must have learning or school participation challenges caused by the medical condition.

What if my child doesn't qualify and I don't agree?

The school will send you a letter explaining why your child didn't qualify. The letter will also tell you what to do if you don't agree with the decision.

More Resources

- **Texas Project First – Family Support**
texasprojectfirst.org/
- **Texas Education Agency – Special Education**
tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education
- **Navigate Life Texas**
navigatelifetexas.org

Call your local school district office for help with ECSE and Child Find.

Need help from Children's Health school services?

If your child is a patient at Children's Health and you need help with ECSE, contact the School Services Department:

- **Dallas Campus:** 214-456-7733
- **Plano Campus:** 469-303-4418

SCHOOL SERVICES

For more information, visit childrens.com/school-services

