

## **Breakthrough Montessori PCS Child Find Policy**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Breakthrough Montessori PCS has a foundational commitment to serving all children, and to giving all children access to high-quality Montessori education. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Breakthrough Montessori PCS is responsible for conducting continuous efforts intended to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities between the ages of three (3) and twenty-two (22) years of age enrolled in Breakthrough Montessori PCS, including children with disabilities who are homeless, children who are in the custody of the District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) or committed to the District of Columbia Youth Rehabilitation Services Agency (DYRS), children who are making progress grade to grade, and highly mobile children, who are in need of special education and related services. These duties are called Child Find responsibilities. This policy establishes procedures for fulfilling Child Find responsibilities at Breakthrough Montessori PCS, and applies to all children enrolled in Breakthrough Montessori PCS and all staff employed by Breakthrough Montessori PCS. Breakthrough Montessori PCS staff is expected to know and act in accordance with the requirements and procedures established by this policy. Breakthrough Montessori PCS trains staff on an annual basis to ensure staff understand and execute Child Find responsibilities, and provides ongoing support and training to staff to make sure that these obligations are being met.

### **POINTS OF CONTACT**

Parents are encouraged to speak with any Breakthrough Montessori PCS staff if they have concerns about their child. Parents and other stakeholders should contact one of the following Breakthrough Montessori PCS staff to discuss Child Find, the referral process, and the availability of special education programming at Breakthrough Montessori PCS:

Ashley Anderson  
Director of Student Support  
[ashley@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:ashley@breakthroughmontessori.org)  
(202) 864-1979

Genevieve D'Cruz  
Principal  
[genevieve@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:genevieve@breakthroughmontessori.org)  
(202) 864-1979

### **TARGET POPULATIONS**

This policy and Breakthrough Montessori PCS Child Find efforts apply to children

between the ages of three (3) and twenty-two (22) years of age enrolled in Breakthrough Montessori PCS, including children who are:

- Homeless;
- In the custody of the District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency;
- Committed to the District of Columbia Youth Rehabilitation Services Agency;
- Making progress grade to grade; and
- Highly mobile children.

## **OUTREACH EFFORTS**

To ensure the local and school communities are aware of the availability of special education and related services for eligible children with disabilities and the methods for requesting such services, Breakthrough Montessori PCS provides public notice through a variety of methods:

- Breakthrough Montessori PCS provides information to parents and the school community at school events such as family education seminars, back-to-school events, summer enrollment events, etc.
- Breakthrough Montessori PCS publishes information and relevant dates in school manuals, calendars, and on its website.
- Breakthrough Montessori PCS staff provides information to parents during family/guide conferences;
- Information regarding special education services are available for parents and the public in the Breakthrough Montessori lobby

## **COORDINATION WITH NON-EDUCATIONAL DISTRICT AGENCIES**

To ensure coordination with appropriate District agencies to facilitate the identification, location, and evaluation of children with disabilities enrolled in Breakthrough Montessori PCS, Breakthrough Montessori PCS maintains contacts with the following District agencies:

- District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) Early Stages program;
- The Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA);

Breakthrough Montessori PCS conducts annual meetings with representatives of the above agencies to ensure open and cooperative lines of communication regarding Breakthrough Montessori PCS's Child Find, referral, and initial evaluation processes and procedures, as well as continuously updating agencies of changes in appropriate points of contact. Breakthrough Montessori PCS may establish agreements with other entities responsible for administering various education, health, and social service programs to children from birth through age 22. Those agencies include, but are not limited to: District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), Department of Human Services (DHS), Department of Healthcare Finance (DHCF), Department of Health (DOH), Department of

Behavioral Health (DBH), Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), and the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS).

## **PARENT ENGAGEMENT**

Parents may obtain information about the availability of special education and related services through this policy, information posted on our website, or by contacting Ashley Anderson at [ashley@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:ashley@breakthroughmontessori.org). Breakthrough Montessori PCS also maintains written materials for parents, which can be found at the front desk. Breakthrough Montessori PCS staff is required to provide information to parents upon request and at family/guide conferences.

## **REFERRAL PROCESSES**

A referral is documentation provided by the child's parent, or other referral source, which clearly states why it is thought that the child may have a disability. Breakthrough Montessori PCS is required to complete an initial evaluation and determine if a child is a child with a disability eligible for special education and related services under IDEA. Specifically, Breakthrough Montessori PCS is required to complete an Analysis of Existing Data (AED) meeting within thirty (30) days of the referral date. If the AED meeting results in a determination that the team will proceed with evaluation, Breakthrough Montessori has forty-five (45) to conduct the necessary evaluations. These timeline requirements do not apply if

- The parent fails or refuses to respond to a request for consent for the evaluation;
- The parent of the child repeatedly fails or refuses to produce the child for the evaluation; or
- The child enrolls in another LEA prior to the determination of eligibility.

If a parent or community member would like to request an initial evaluation to determine if a child is in need of special education and related services, please contact Ashley Anderson ([ashley@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:ashley@breakthroughmontessori.org)) or contact the child's guide. All Breakthrough Montessori PCS staff must accept an oral or written referral for initial evaluation. Upon receiving an oral referral, Breakthrough Montessori PCS staff must assist any outside referral source in documenting the referral in writing, and must document the date of the referral within two (2) business days of receipt. Breakthrough Montessori PCS provides a referral form to assist parents and other parties in documenting a referral. To obtain this form, please contact Ashley Anderson ([ashley@breakthroughmontessori.org](mailto:ashley@breakthroughmontessori.org)).

Breakthrough Montessori PCS accepts referrals for initial evaluation from the following persons:

- A student's parent;
- The student, provided that educational rights have transferred to the student; and
- Employees of Breakthrough Montessori PCS who have knowledge of the

student.

For children under the age of 6, **Breakthrough Montessori PCS** also accepts referrals from:

- Pediatricians or other medical professionals, including physicians, hospitals, and other health providers;
- Child development facilities, including day care centers, child care centers, and early childhood programs;
- District agencies and programs, including IDEA Part C programs ;
- Community and civic organizations; and
- Advocacy organizations.

Breakthrough Montessori PCS maintains regular contact with relevant community-based referral sources, and works to collaborate with community-based service providers to provide information on the availability of special education and related services and the means through which parents or organizations may submit a referral.

After Breakthrough Montessori PCS has received a referral, Breakthrough Montessori PCS must make reasonable efforts to obtain parental consent for an initial evaluation, which includes attempting to contact the parent at least three (3) times on three (3) different dates using at least two (2) modalities. Breakthrough Montessori PCS shall conduct an analysis of existing data on the student to determine if additional assessments are necessary. Existing data that may be considered may include but is not limited to: teacher observations, classroom assessments, schoolwide screenings and assessments, state assessments, student grades and records, parent reports, health records, or data from other interventions. Breakthrough Montessori PCS will provide the parent of a child suspected of having a disability with information about the nature of any additionally required assessment.

## **SCREENINGS**

Breakthrough Montessori PCS implements a comprehensive screening process to determine if a child should be referred for an evaluation, the result of which is provided to the child's parent. Screenings utilize assessments and tools that are generally applied across the entire student population. Breakthrough Montessori PCS uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaire as one of its universal screeners. Parent consent is not required for Breakthrough Montessori PCS to conduct a uniform, schoolwide screening. A screening conducted by a Breakthrough Montessori PCS teacher or specialist to determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation does not constitute an evaluation for eligibility for special education and related services and does not require parental consent. Breakthrough Montessori PCS screenings must not delay the initial evaluation of a student who may be a child with a disability in need of special education and related services.

## **RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION**

Breakthrough Montessori PCS uses a process called Child Study to provide support to all children who need social, emotional, behavioral, or academic support in order to be happy and successful in the classroom. This process comprises a three-tiered system of interventions, plus a tier zero which is the individualized, differentiated curriculum implementation that all students receive. Response to Intervention (RtI) efforts must not delay the initial evaluation of a student who may be a child with a disability in need of special education and related services.

## **TRANSITION FROM PART C**

Under IDEA, Breakthrough Montessori PCS must ensure a smooth and effective transition for children transitioning from Part C early intervention services to Part B special education and related services. In furtherance of this responsibility, Breakthrough Montessori PCS:

- Identifies incoming children that were served by Strong Start DC Early Intervention Program (DC EIP) prior to enrollment at Breakthrough Montessori PCS, and participates in transition activities as appropriate at the request of DC EIP; and
- As applicable, regularly coordinates with DCPS Early Stages to ensure a smooth transition for students served by DCPS Early Stages prior to enrollment in the Breakthrough Montessori PCS. When a child is transitioning from Part C to Part B services, Breakthrough Montessori PCS participates in transition planning conferences as appropriate, and ensures each child with a disability has an IEP developed and implemented by the child's third birthday.

## **PARENT PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS AND RIGHTS**

Parents' legal rights during the Child Find process are defined by IDEA and District of Columbia law. In the event of a disagreement, parents may pursue dispute resolution and due process rights, including mediation, due process complaints, or state complaints. Parents can learn more about their rights under IDEA by referring to the Part B Procedural Safeguards located on OSSE's website

<https://osse.dc.gov/publication/rights-parents-students-disabilities-idea-part-b-noti-ce-procedural-safeguards> or by contacting Ashley Anderson (ashley@breakthroughmontessori.org) to obtain a copy of their procedural safeguards.

## **DATA REPORTING**

In accordance with District of Columbia law, Breakthrough Montessori PCS

counts and reports the number of children with disabilities receiving special education and related services count annually on October 5 or the date set for the annual pupil count required by D.C. Official Code § 38-2906.