Detroit Head Start agencies welcome children of all abilities—whether your child has a disability or developmental, social and/or emotional delays. We make an extra effort to ensure that special needs are met and that children with special needs are fully included into the classroom.

As your child’s first and best teacher, your insights about your child’s behavior and development at school and at home are vital to determining how to support their optimal learning and development. Additionally, a parent or guardian’s permission is required to evaluate your child’s needs and to provide services and support. It is extremely important that a parent or guardian is involved at every step.

If you have questions, please contact your Head Start agency’s disabilities services staff.

Detroit Head Start is supported by the Head Start Innovation Fund of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan.

Connecting with us:

- www.DetroitHeadStart.com
- @DetroitHeadStartNetwork
- detroitheadstart.com/specialneeds

Nine agencies provide Early Head Start and Head Start in Detroit:

- American Indian Health and Family Service
  313-846-6030
- Development Centers
  313-246-6060
- Focus: HOPE
  313-494-4400
- Matrix Human Services
  313-265-1905
- New St. Paul Head Start
  313-835-4400
- Renaissance Head Start
  313-667-0500
- Starfish Family Services
  844-849-KIDS (5437)
- The Order of the Fisherman Ministries
  313-933-0300
- United Children and Family Head Start
  313-432-1000
How does Head Start help children with special needs?

Parents or guardians and staff work together to better understand the concerns about a child’s communication, adaptive, cognitive, physical and/or social-emotional development. This team will determine if there are adjustments to your child’s learning plan that might be helpful, or if your child is eligible for special needs programming and/or services based on the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE) and a federal law called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Detroit Head Start agencies partner with Detroit Public Schools Community District’s Office of Specialized Student Services in most cases to evaluate and support children’s special needs. Through the partnership, Detroit Head Start agencies support a variety of needs and exceptionalities, including, but not limited to:

- Hearing/Visual Loss
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Other Health Conditions
- Speech and Language Challenges
- Developmental Delay

My child is so young. Could he/she just grow out of it? Why is early intervention important?

Early intervention is always best. Young children vary in their skills, knowledge, backgrounds and abilities. The more support we can provide a child during this critical time of development, the better the long-term outcomes for school and life.

An August 2016 study by Michigan State University found that “young children with multiple disabilities who are enrolled in Head Start have better literacy, reading and math scores than children who aren’t” in the program.

detroitheadstart.com/specialneeds

How does Head Start protect my child’s privacy regarding special needs?

Every child’s needs are different, from in-class accommodations to one-on-one help. Head Start agencies strive to include children with special needs in all regular classroom activities, alongside their peers. If children leave the classroom for necessary therapeutic services, this is done in the least disruptive way to their scheduled day. Additionally, the federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) law protects the privacy of student education records and sharing of student information.

What is the RCT meeting?

The Resource Coordinating Team (RCT) meeting is an early step in considering additional supports your child may need. The RCT meeting brings together you, your child’s teacher, members of your child’s Head Start educational team and members of the Detroit Public Schools Community District’s Specialized Student Services to discuss issues that may be affecting your child’s learning.

Things to know:

- This meeting cannot take place without you.
- The team must have a parent or guardian’s permission to move the evaluation forward.
- Be aware that a copy of a birth certificate or birth verification will be needed for Detroit Public Schools Community District to initiate services.

What is an IFSP? What is an IEP?

The primary differences between an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is the age of the child receiving services, the location of services and the delivery of service. An IFSP provides early intervention services to children and their families from birth to age 3 with special needs. An IEP provides special education services to preschool children with special needs. Visit www.DetroitHeadStart.com/specialneeds for more information on the IFSP and IEP.