

Funded by the California Department of Education (CDE),
Special Education Division

Spotlight on Child Find: Best Practices in Action
September 19, 2025

About the California Early Childhood Special Education (CalECSE) Network

Funded by the CDE



<https://www.calecse.org>

CalECSE is a technical assistance project funded under the CCDE that supports Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs), County Offices of Educations (COEs), and other Agency Partners in the areas of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C to B Transitions, Preschool Assessment Practices, and Preschool Child Find by providing technical assistance, professional learning, and demonstration of tangible practices that have been proven successful.

CalECSE leverages collaboration amongst agencies, disseminates resources, highlights existing exemplar practices, and provides direct technical assistance to improve the capacity, knowledge, collaboration, and implementation of evidence-based practices across agencies throughout California.

The CalECSE Network is committed to improving outcomes for children and their families by eliminating and addressing barriers to successful transition for California's youngest children with disabilities.

The CalECSE Network Leadership Team



Co-Executive Director, Dr. Scott Turner, East San Gabriel Valley SELPA
Co-Executive Director, Melanie Hertig, Irvine USD
Program Specialist (Exemplars), Carrie Rodrigues
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Today's Presenters

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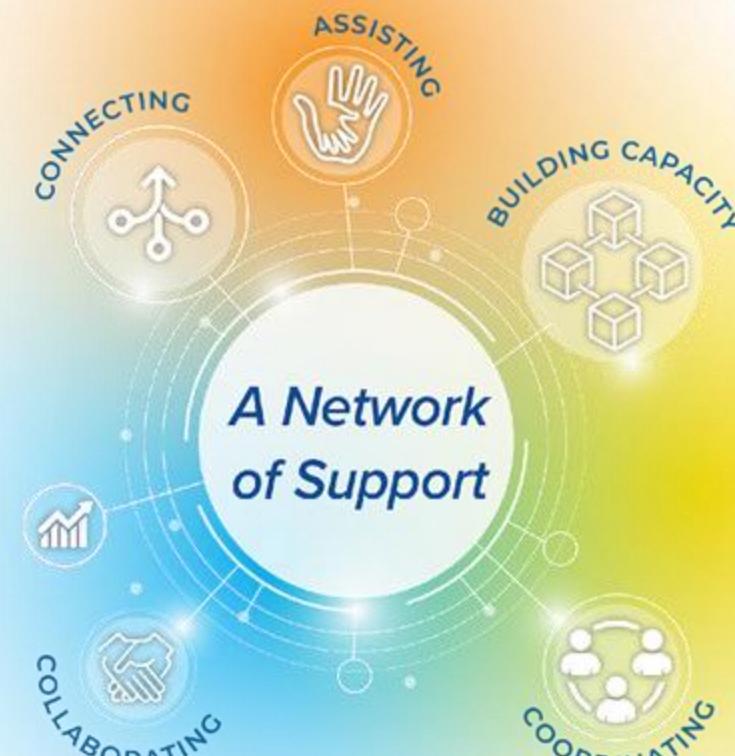
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What We Will Be Covering Today



- Welcome & Grounding Activity
- Presentations:
 - Santa Clara Office of Education
 - Palm Springs Unified School District
- Reflection and Takeaways
- Closing

Welcome and Grounding

Objective



By the end of this session, participants will:

- Learn real-world strategies to strengthen referral pathways and early identification systems.
- Explore ways to deepen partnerships with community providers to better support families.
- Identify inclusive, equity-driven practices that can be adapted in their own districts and communities.

Grounding Activity

- One Word
 - In One Word share what comes to mind when you think about supporting families in navigating early identification and referral systems.
 - You can drop your word in the chat, or come off mute to share.



Spotlight Presentations

1. Improving Referral Pathways
2. Deepening Partnerships with
Community Providers
3. Building Inclusive Systems of Early
Identification and Support



What is SCCOE Early Start?



The Santa Clara County Office of Education Early Start Program is a collaborative effort between San Andreas Regional Center and the Santa Clara County Office of Education, as well as a consortium of other community agencies.



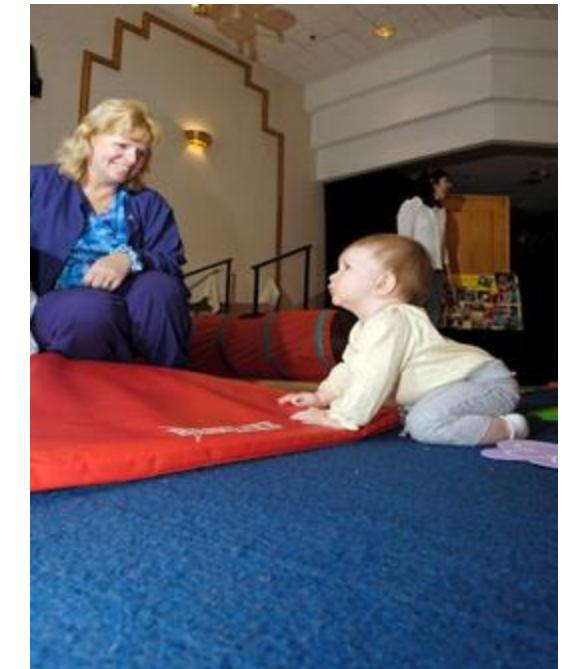
How many families are in our Early Start Program?

174–180 families



What is Child Find?

Child Find is a process used to “find” children who may have a delay in one or more areas of their development or a disability.



Child Find Includes All Children

- Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers
- Birth to 21 years of age
- Public, private, and tribal children
- Highly mobile children
- Homeless children
- Migrant Children
- Foster Children



Child Find is a Continuous Process



Critical Connections

- Part C and Part B 619 state agencies, local programs, and Local Education Agencies
- Parent centers and family-serving organizations
- Community agencies and programs serving underserved and at-risk populations such as homeless families
- Medical professionals (e.g., pediatricians, Neonatal Intensive Care Units, health departments)
- Childcare, Early Head Start, Head Start, Pre-Kindergarten Programs, Private or Charter Schools
- Tribal agencies
- Home visiting
- Child protection and child welfare programs, including foster care



Who makes a referral into the Early Start program?

- Parents/Guardians
- Pediatricians/Medical providers
- Daycare providers
- LEAD-K newborn hearing screening



A Transdisciplinary Approach at the SCCOE



- Credentialed Teachers of the Deaf, Visually impaired and Orthopedically Impaired, as well as Early Childhood Special Education Teachers
- Audiologist
- Speech-language Pathologist
- Occupational & Physical Therapists
- Nurse
- Paraeducators
- Licenced Clinical Social Worker trained in Infant Mental Health

Program Opportunities at the SCCOE

While each child's early intervention is designed according to individualized need, the Home Visit is the foundation of our service provision. Depending on individual needs, program options may include:

- Home and/or daycare visits
- Baby group
- Parent participation class
- Parent education workshops
- Family fun and community activities



What happens after Early Start?

- Transition planning begins around 2.3 years of age
- Parent has the ability to control what information is shared
- Meeting with District
- District assessment
- Individualized Education Plan (IEP) by age 3



- Improving Referral Pathways
- Deepening Partnerships with Community Providers
- Building Inclusive Systems of Early Identification and Support



PSUSD: Early Childhood Education and Special Education Inclusion Practices

- Goal to create a supportive and inclusive environment that ensures every child receives the specialized attention they need.
 - A transitional binder is created for Early Childhood Education (ECE) students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) /Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). The transitional binder is intended to support the students IEP/IFSP documents throughout the educational journey.
- Partnerships with community providers, including:
 - Inland Regional Center
 - West Ed (Pyramid Model-Coaching)
 - Desert Aids Project-Health
 - Quality Start Block Grant
 - Loma Linda University
 - Special Education Department.



PSUSD: Early Childhood Education and Special Education Inclusion Practices, continued

- Research consistently shows that early intervention can lead to significant positive outcomes in the future.
- Early intervention not only addresses developmental challenges promptly but also sets the stage for lifelong learning and achievement.
- By investing time and resources in early childhood education, we are paving the way for brighter futures for our students, helping them reach their full potential and achieve greater success as they grow.

PSUSD: Steps of Child Find Process

1. Families might share concerns. Begin documentation.
2. Concerns shared to strategize for add additional classroom support.
3. “Ages and Stages Questionnaire” within 45 days of enrollment.
4. “Individualized Development Plan” for goal setting.
 - a. Teachers individualize lesson planning.
5. Student Success Team (SST) referral (with minimum of four strategies and intervention).
6. If parent requests an evaluation during this process, then we refer for an assessment.
7. SST specialist completes a Classroom Observation.

PSUSD: Steps of Child Find Process

8. SST specialist meets with the family. Completes an “All About Me”.
9. With parent consent, evaluation is complete
 - a. 60 days to complete the assessment and IEP or IFSP.
10. If two years old, all information sent to the Inland Regional Center to evaluate. If three or four, Preschool Assessment Team starts the evaluation process for an IEP.
12. Preschool Assessment Team is complete and the IEP meeting is held.
13. Special Education Coordinator and ECE Disability Coordinator meet with the teaching teams to discuss strategies.
14. “Support Plan” completed within two weeks of receiving the IEP or IFSP.
15. Finally, teacher discuss IEP or IFSP goals with families.

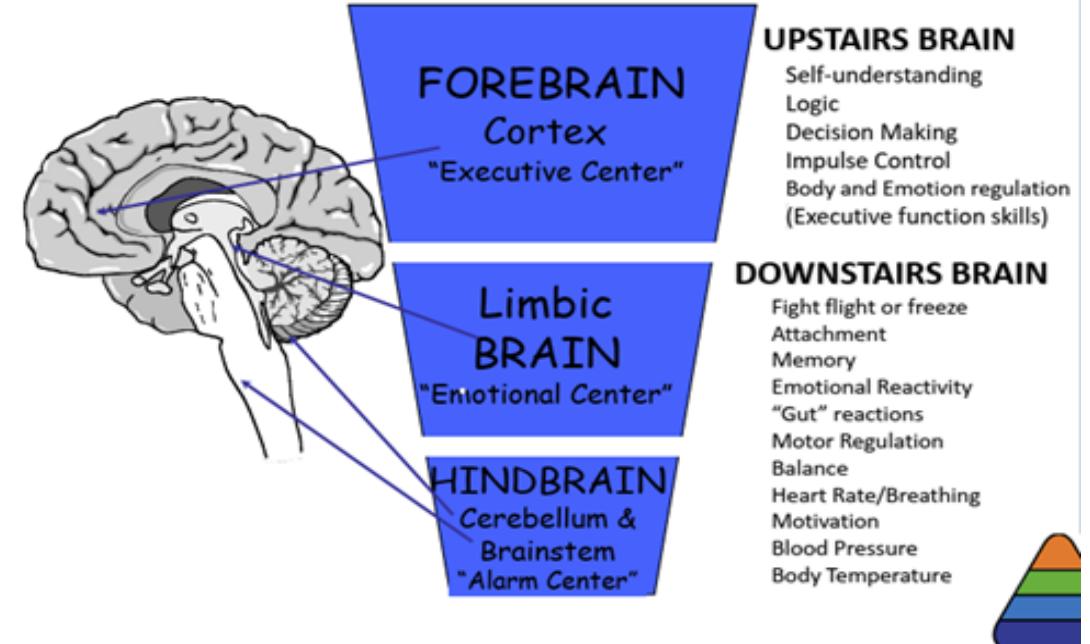
ECE and Special Education Case Management Meetings

- Palm Springs Unified School District: Case Management team
- PSUSD: Preschool Assessment Team
- Agenda for Case Management:

Goal: How can we support the student, families, and teaching staff with all resources:

- Attendance: (Identify any type of chronic absenteeism)
- Identifying an issue with absences: the team can try to identify the families' challenges and support them to the best of our ability.
- Educational Concerns
- Behavioral Concerns
- Mental Health Concerns—Student and / or family
- Health concerns
- Community Liaisons—Family Support

Hierarchy of Brain Development



PSUSD Special Education and ECE Inclusion Teaching Model: Co-Teaching

PSUSD is dedicated to building inclusive systems of early identification and support. By developing proactive measures and innovative strategies, we aim to ensure that every child's unique needs are recognized and addressed from the outset. These systems are designed to identify potential challenges at an early stage and provide timely interventions, fostering a nurturing and responsive learning environment. Through this initiative, we strive to break down barriers and create pathways for success for all students, ensuring they receive the support necessary to thrive both academically and personally. We work together to build a future where every child has the opportunity to excel!

- Co-Teaching
- Diverse Expertise
- Improved Student Outcomes



PSUSD Special Education and ECE Inclusion Teaching Model: Co-Teaching, continued

- Shared Responsibility
- Increased Differentiation
- Stronger Classroom Management
- Professional Development

Overall, co-teaching in inclusive classrooms supports a learning environment where all students can thrive, contributing to a more equitable and high-quality education system.

The tool utilized to set up classroom environments includes Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP) and resource book Inclusion in Action.

PSUSD Staff and Family Resources

- PSUSD Behavior Team: Palm Springs Unified School District's Behavior Support Team is comprised of:
 - Board Certified Behavior Analyst, Behavior Interventionist
 - School Social Worker
 - Teacher on Special Assignment
 - 3 Paraprofessionals
- PSUSD Special Education and Early Childhood Education Family Resource Book
- PSUSD Family, and Community, Engagement workshops focus on supporting families during transitions, particularly the transition to kindergarten and to strengthen family engagement, foster partnerships with schools, and ensure a smooth and positive transition experience for children



PSUSD Staff and Family Resources

- PSUSD Family Partnership Agreements
- PSUSD Family Center Resources
- PSUSD Health
- PSUSD Dietician
- PSUSD Mental Health



Reflection and Takeaways

Reflection



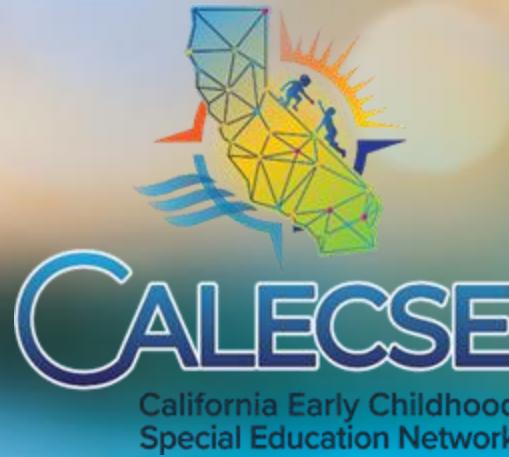
As we wrap up, take a moment to reflect:

- What strategy shared today could you apply to strengthen referral pathways in your own work?
- Which partnership opportunity could you explore or deepen in your community?
- How will you bring inclusive, equity-driven practices into your early identification efforts?
 - What is one concrete next step you will take after today's session?

Questions?



Share Your Feedback for a Chance to Win CalECSE 2026 Symposium Registration



Please help us improve our practice and complete the zoom survey following this session.

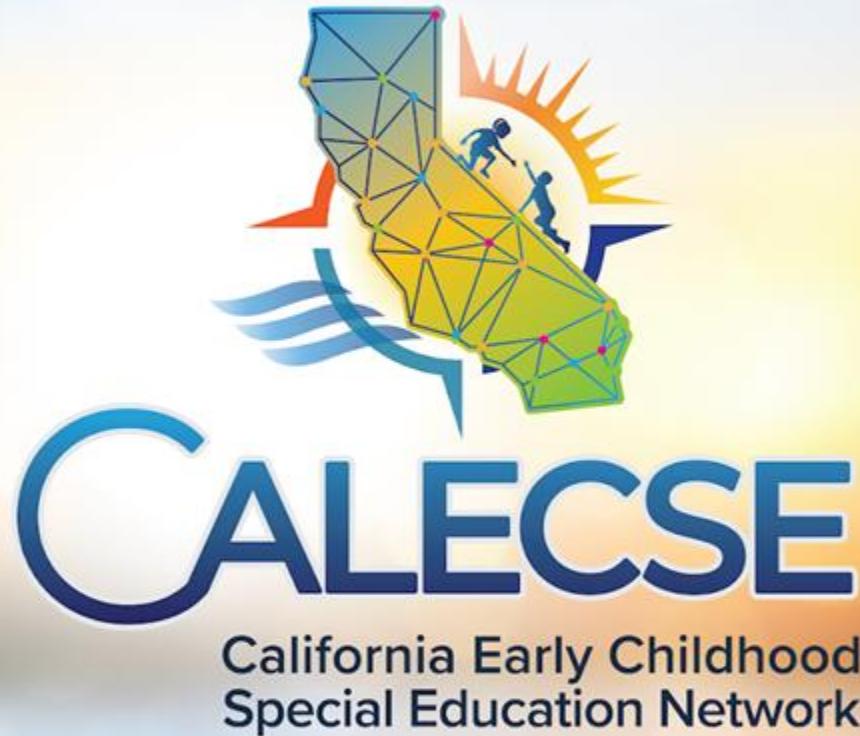
After doing so, you will be entered into a raffle to win a free registration to **CalECSE's 4th Annual Symposium** to be held in Northern California, October 20–21, 2026. Valued at over \$500.



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Find our full line-up of no-cost trainings at:

<https://www.calecse.org/news-resources/intentional-practices-meaningful-impact>



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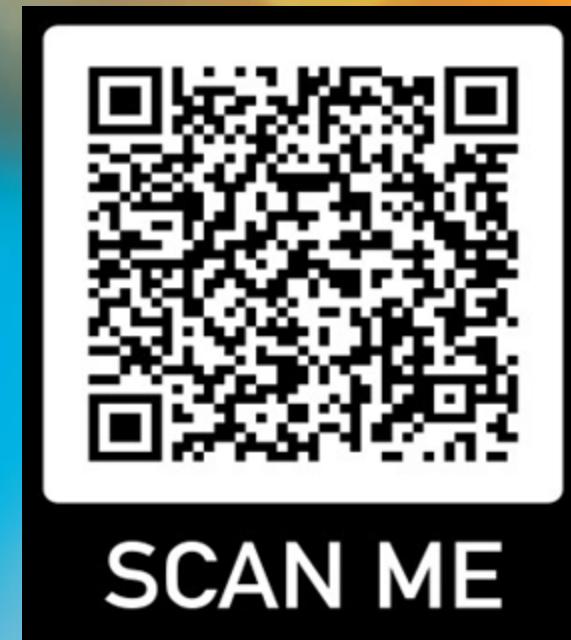
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Interested in joining a local
Community of Practice (CoP) for
practitioners who support children ages
zero to five ?

Find our full schedule of
regional CoPs at:
<https://www.calecse.org/news-resources/communities-of-practice>



**Communities
of Practice**

California Early Childhood
Special Education Network