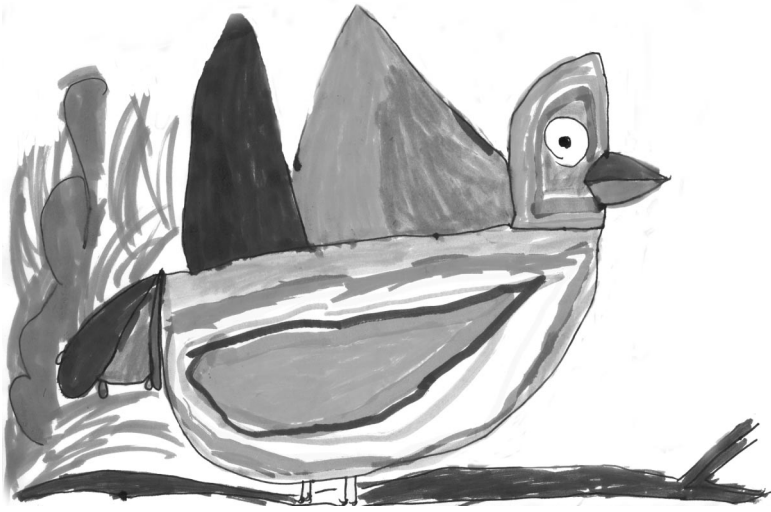


4. IDENTIFYING CHILDREN WITH EDUCATIONAL NEEDS



Our laws state that schools and other public agencies have an obligation to seek out children who may have special educational or developmental needs. Unfortunately it is unrealistic that all children with needs will be identified this way. Often it is up to advocates—foster parents, care providers, doctors, social workers and others to identify children

who may have special needs. Advocates must then take the necessary steps to insure these children receive the services they need to develop to their full potential.

Identifying a child with needs as soon as possible has many advantages. Often early intervention and services can keep problems from getting worse and may help reduce the need for services later. Special services can also encourage academic/social competence, which builds confidence and a foundation for future success.

Signs that a child may need services:

While some children obviously need services, others can be harder to identify. Often the primary caregiver knows the child best and is the first to realize that the child is experiencing difficulty. The advocate should talk to the primary caregiver, social worker, pediatrician, CASA and teacher about any concerns they may have, and any concerns that the advocate has about the child's health and development.

Consider all developmental areas including:

- Cognitive—How child thinks and learns
- Social—How child relates to others
- Physical—How child uses his or her body
- Emotional—How child understands and expresses feelings
- Health—Physical and mental well-being and development

Signs of potential problems:

The following is only a partial list of developmental “red flags”. If the advocate has any concerns about a child’s development, please see the section: “Doing Something”.

Birth to age 3—Please see separate section

Pre-school (age 3-5)

- Physical Development:
 - Cannot run, hop or skip
 - Cannot throw or catch a ball
 - Difficulty stacking blocks, using scissors, crayons, etc.
- Cognitive Development:
 - Cannot group objects
 - Difficulty understanding sizes, colors and shapes
- Expressive and receptive language:
 - Cannot count to 3 (3 year olds) or to 10 (4 year olds)
 - Sentence length is less than 5 words
 - Child is hard to understand
 - Child often confused, doesn’t understand others
- Social Behaviors:
 - Disruptive, aggressive
 - Child appears confused, depressed, or withdrawn
 - Child is easily frustrated
- Health:
 - Medical conditions
 - Vision or hearing problems
 - Tired, low energy



School-age (ages 5 and up)

- General Development:
 - Has difficulty paying attention with back ground noise
 - Has trouble following directions
 - Has difficulty expressing thoughts
- Academic/cognitive—trouble with school subjects/mental process:
 - Does well in some subjects, poorly in others
 - Learns slower than classmates

- Little progress in one or more basic skill areas i.e. reading/math skills, social interaction, stress coping
 - Unable to answer comprehension questions, i.e., a story
 - Refuses or has difficulty learning new tasks
- Language/speech/hearing/vision
- Immature language/speech
 - Guesses constantly when reading
 - Squints, closes or covers eye during reading
 - Omits some sounds or words when speaking
 - Speaks in incomplete sentences
 - Reverses/confuses similar words, sounds, letters or numbers
 - Physical development/health
 - Difficulty with pen/paper, scissors, fine motor activities
 - Cannot copy well
 - Appears awkward physically
 - Consistent runny nose, puffy eyes, coughs, may wheeze
 - Seems sleepy, listless, with little energy
- Behavior/social development
- Easily frustrated
 - Unable to sit still for reasonable period of time/loses focus
 - Unusual posture when reading/writing
 - Very tactile, wants to touch everything
 - Behavior is erratic or inconsistent
- Mental health
- Overreacts with out of control behavior
 - Seems unhappy, irritable, cries easily
 - Reacts inappropriately with anger/aggression
 - Overly quiet or withdrawn

16 years and older

Additional considerations apply to children approaching the age of majority (when children turn 18 and child is released from foster care and the support of social services). Indications that an older child may need help include:

- Life Skills:
- Transportation—Does not yet travel independently (use bus system or have driver's license and vehicle)
 - Financial matters—Unfamiliar with banking concepts, has difficulty managing money
 - Communication—Child is withdrawn, has difficulty initiating contact, phone calls for appointments, etc.
 - Time—Child forgets appointments, doesn't establish or follow a schedule, or calendar

One should make no assumptions about a child in dependency. If something feels "off," investigate.

- Self-advocating—Child hesitant to request services, ask questions or seek community support
- Social/emotional:
 - Self-isolates
 - Inappropriate or antisocial
 - Fearful of new people or situations
 - Reacts with anger/aggression in uncomfortable/unfamiliar situations
- Post-school:
 - Has no or limited concept of post-graduation plan (college or job)
 - No or limited vocational training
 - No or limited independent living skills (money management, self-care, etc.)

For more information:

Humboldt County Office of Education

901 Myrtle Ave.
Eureka, CA 95501
707-445-7043

Redwood Coast Regional Center

808 E Street
Eureka, CA 95501
707-444-3409

Humboldt County Public Health

Department
712 4th Street
Eureka, CA 95501
707-445-6212

Special Needs Connection

Humboldt Child Care Council
707-445-1195