

Assessment in Special Education

Part 4 - Understand the Requirements of an Evaluation for a Suspected Disability

Introduction

A variety of assessment tools and strategies are used to gather relevant functional, academic and developmental information about the child, including information provided by the parent. This information will be used to determine whether the child has a disability, the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, and if eligible for special education and related services, the content of the child's IEP. This part of the **Assessment Series** will assist you in understanding these requirements.

Under IDEA 2004, all evaluations must abide by the following requirements:

- 1.) A child must be evaluated in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, if appropriate, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional functioning, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities. In addition, the evaluation must be sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the child's special education and related services needs, whether or not they are commonly linked to the disability category in which the child is classified.
- 2.) No single assessment procedure may be used as the sole criterion for determining whether a child has a disability and for determining an appropriate educational program for the child.
- 3.) Evaluation materials must be technically sound and may assess the relative contribution of cognitive and behavioral factors, in addition to physical and developmental factors.
- 4.) Evaluation materials and procedures must be appropriate to determine the nature and extent of a learning impairment and directly assist in identifying areas of educational need.
- 5.) Evaluation materials and procedures must be validated for the specific purpose for which they are to be used
- 6.) Evaluation of a child who may have limited English proficiency should assess the child's proficiency in English as well as the child's native language to distinguish language proficiency from disability needs.

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- 7.) Evaluation materials and procedures used to assess a child with limited English proficiency must be selected and administered in accordance with #9 of this sub-section to ensure they measure a potential disability and need for special education, rather than English language skills.
- 8.) Evaluation materials and procedures must be provided in the language that most likely will yield accurate information on what the child knows and can do academically and functionally.
- A. The native language of the child is that language normally used by the child in the home/learning environment.
 - B. For individuals with deafness/blindness/no written language, it is the mode of communication normally used, e.g., sign language, Braille, or oral communication.
 - C. A determination of "not feasible" is made when an individual after reasonable effort cannot be located who is capable and willing at a reasonable cost to: (1) Communicate in the child's primary language; or (2) Communicate in the child's most frequent mode of communication
 - D. If a district determines that it is "not feasible" to conduct the evaluation in the child's primary language or other mode of communication, the District must document its reasons and describe the alternatives used. Even in situations where it is not feasible to assess the child in his or her native language or mode of communication, the group of qualified professionals and a parent of the child must still obtain and consider accurate and reliable information that will enable them to make an informed decision as to whether the child has a disability and the effects of the disability on the child's educational achievement.
- 9.) Evaluation materials and procedures must be administered in adherence with the developer's instructions and by appropriately trained personnel. If an assessment is not conducted under standard conditions (e.g., qualifications of test administrator or method of test administration), this must be noted in the evaluation report.
- 10.) All materials and procedures used for assessing and identifying child with disabilities must be selected and administered so as not to be biased in terms of race, gender, culture or socioeconomic status.
- 11.) Tests must be selected and administered so as best to ensure that when a test is administered to a child with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, the test results accurately reflect the child's aptitude or achievement level or whatever other factors the test purports to measure, rather than reflecting the child's impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills (unless those skills are the factors that the test purports to measure).
- 12.) Tests and other evaluation materials include those tailored to assess specific areas of educational need (including current classroom-based assessments and observations of the teacher and related service providers, physical condition, social or cultural background, information provided by the parents, and adaptive behavior), and not merely those that are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient.

13.) Information obtained from all of these sources, including evaluations and information provided by the parent, must be documented and carefully considered.

14.) A child shall not be determined to have a disability if the determinant factor is a lack of explicit and systematic instruction in essential components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, including oral reading skills, and reading comprehension strategies) or a lack of instruction in math; or limited English proficiency.

Note: The presence of a disability is not sufficient to establish eligibility for special education. The disability must result in an educational deficit that requires specially designed instruction (i.e., special education).