

Standards for Special Education Evaluation & Eligibility

The following standards for special education evaluation and eligibility shall be effective July 1, 2017.

AUTISM

I. Definition

- (1) "Autism" means a developmental disability, which significantly affects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three (3) that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experience. The term does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an Emotional Disturbance, as defined in this section.
- (2) The term of Autism also includes students who have been diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder such as Autism, a Pervasive Developmental Disorder, or Asperger's Syndrome when the child's educational performance is adversely affected. Autism may exist concurrently with other areas of disability.
- (3) A child could be found eligible as having Autism if the child manifests these characteristics in early childhood (as social demands increase). Children with Autism demonstrate both of the following characteristics (i.e., (a) and (b) below):
 - (a) Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts, as manifested by all of the following:
 1. Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity (e.g., abnormal social approach, failure of normal back and forth conversation, reduced sharing of interests, reduced sharing of emotions/affect, lack of initiation of social interaction, poor social imitation);
 2. Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors used for social interaction (e.g., impairments in social use of eye contact, use and understanding of body postures, use and understanding of gestures; abnormal volume, pitch, intonation, rate, rhythm, stress, prosody, and/or volume of speech; abnormal use and understanding affect, lack of coordinated verbal and nonverbal communication, and lack of coordination nonverbal communication); and
 3. Deficits in developing and maintaining relationships appropriate to developmental level; ranging from difficulties adjusting behavior to social contexts, through difficulties in sharing imaginative play, to an apparent absence of interest in people.

And

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- (b) Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities as manifested by at least two (2) of the following:
 - 1. Stereotyped or repetitive speech, motor movements, or use of objects (e.g., echolalia, repetitive use of objects, idiosyncratic language, simple motor stereotypies);
 - 2. Excessive adherence to routines, ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behavior, or excessive resistance to change (e.g., motor rituals, insistence on same route or food, repetitive questioning, or extreme distress at small changes);
 - 3. Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus (e.g., strong attachment to or preoccupation with unusual objects, excessively circumscribed or perseverative interests); or
 - 4. Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of environment (e.g., apparent indifference to pain/heat/cold, adverse response to sounds or textures, excessive smelling or touching of objects, fascination with lights or spinning objects).

II. Evaluation

The characteristics identified in the Autism Definition are present.

Evaluation Procedures

A comprehensive evaluation performed by a multidisciplinary team using a variety of sources of information that are sensitive to cultural, linguistic, and environmental factors or sensory impairments to include the following:

- (1) Parental interviews including developmental history;
- (2) Behavioral observations in two (2) or more settings (can be two (2) settings within the school) addressing characteristics related to Autism;
- (3) Health history;
- (4) Pragmatic communication skills (further language evaluation if identified as an area of concern);
- (5) Cognitive/developmental skills;
- (6) Social-emotional and behavior functioning (to include social skills and adaptive behaviors) that includes at least one (1) standardized or normed instrument

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specific to autism and one (1) normative measure of general behavior/ social-emotional functioning;

- (7) Sensory;
- (8) Academic skills; and
- (9) Documentation, including observation and/or assessment, of how Autism adversely affects the child's educational performance in his/her learning environment and the need for specialized instruction and related services (i.e., to include academic and/or nonacademic areas).

Evaluation Participants

Information shall be gathered from the following persons in the evaluation of Autism:

- (1) The parent;
- (2) The child's general education classroom teacher (with a child of less than school age, an individual qualified to teach a child of his/her age);
- (3) A licensed special education teacher;
- (4) A licensed school psychologist, licensed psychologist, licensed psychological examiner (under the direct supervision of a licensed psychologist), licensed senior psychological examiner, or licensed psychiatrist;
- (5) A licensed speech/language pathologist; and
- (6) Other professional personnel as needed (e.g., occupational therapist, physical therapist, licensed physician, neurologist, nurse licensed practitioner, physician's assistant, or school counselor).