

Key Questions in Planning the Evaluation Process

The following questions guide the planning process to ensure that the appropriate information has been considered for determining the child's eligibility and if eligible, for developing the child's IEP.

1. Is the child functioning within a typical range of development for his/her age?

This is a decision related to (a) the need for interventions or (b) suspecting a disability and a need for specialized instruction (special education and/or related services).

Are additional assessments needed to determine whether the child is in need of interventions or a referral to determine eligibility for special education and related services? The Early Learning Program Guidelines require a health screening and a developmental screening within 60 days of enrollment. Screenings may provide sufficient data to plan for interventions if there is not sufficient cause to warrant an evaluation for special education eligibility.

Assessment for intervention* planning (may also provide additional information for eligibility)

- What interventions are most appropriate (if the child is not eligible for special education and related services)?
- What is the child's present level of developmental performance?
- Is the child's health a factor? Based upon follow-up for health needs, are special considerations in programming needed?
- What does the child need to be successful in the classroom, home and/or community?
- What are the effects of adaptations and assistance of child's performance?
- What are the child's usual patterns of responding?
- What is the relationship between the child's response or behaviors and environmental variables or conditions? How do these appear to be influencing the child's performance?

*OSEP clarification aka the "Brekken letter" dated June 2, 2010, addresses using the "response to intervention (RTI)" approach for preschoolers. OSEP's response: "The IDEA does not require, or encourage, a [district] to use an RTI approach prior to a referral for evaluation or as part of determining whether a [preschooler] is eligibility for special education and related services." In addition, the letter clearly states that a district cannot require another early learning program to provide interventions prior to referral for an evaluation.

2. Does the child have a disability or developmental delay? Is the child eligible for special education and related services?

Eligibility as a preschool child with a disability means there is a need for special education and related services.

- Does a disability or developmental delay exist?
- If so, what is the nature and extent of the disability or delay?
- How does this impact the child's ability to participate in developmentally appropriate activities?
- Does the child meet the specified criteria?

DATA SOURCES FOR DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

Records review (This section must include data from Help Me Grow. Information from Help Me Grow can include screenings, assessments such as the Bailey or Battelle, or the Child Outcomes Summary Form (COSF). The COSF may not be completed at the time of the transition conference but can be requested once the child exits Help Me Grow.)

- Has the team located and reviewed all information that exists for the child?
- Is screening information included?
- What assessments and/or programming have been provided?
- What does the information tell the team about whether the difficulties have been present over time?

- What does the information tell the team about whether the difficulties have been present across settings?
- What does the information tell the team about how the child learns best?
- What else does the team need to know? Do the following data sources provide that information?

Interview

- What are the perceptions of the significant adults in the child's life?
- What have you learned about the conditions that impact the child's behaviors?
- What have you learned about the settings that impact the child's behaviors?
- What have you learned about the interactions with adults that impact the child's behaviors?

Observations – multiple observations across a variety of settings and activities

- What learning behaviors are seen in a variety of settings and circumstances? How do these behaviors vary?
- What have you learned about the conditions that impact the child's behaviors?
- What have you learned about the settings that impact the child's behaviors?
- What have you learned about the interactions with adults that impact the child's behaviors?
- How does the child's behavior compare to nondisabled, same-aged peers?

Criterion-referenced or Curriculum-based assessments

- What have you learned about the depth and breadth of the child's knowledge, skills, and abilities?
- Did you learn anything about the child's preferences, interests and learning styles?
- What have you learned about the conditions that impact the child's behaviors?
- What have you learned about the settings that impact the child's behaviors?
- What have you learned about the interactions with adults that impact the child's behaviors?
- To what extent is the child's learning skills or behavior different from nondisabled, same-aged peers?
- To what extent is the child's learning skills or behavior different from age or grade level standards?
- In conjunction with other information, are the child's strengths and needs understood?

Norm-referenced assessments (Remember an IQ is only required for cognitive disability.)

- To what extent is the child's learning skills or behavior different from nondisabled, same-aged peers?
- To what extent is the child's learning skills or behavior different from age or grade level standards?
- In conjunction with other information, are the child's strengths and needs understood?

3. How does this evaluation inform the team about the child's need for specialized instruction?

Information from the evaluation process should assist the team in developing the child's profile, present levels of performance, individual goals and Section 7 of the IEP that addresses specialized instruction.

Goal Development

- What are the child's strengths?
- What are the child's challenges?
- What skills need to be developed?
- What general knowledge should be addressed?
- What should the child's educational program address with regard to the content standards?
- What, if any, social-emotional needs/development should be supported?
- What, if any, self-help skills need support?

4. What type of environment is necessary to address the child's need for specialized instruction?

When considering what assessment information is needed, the type of environment in which the child may receive services can impact decisions on data that is needed and if the data reviewed addresses the following factors:

Environmental assessment

- Is there a general curriculum?

- How involved is the general preschool staff in supporting the child's needs identified through the ETR process?
 - How involved must the special educators be to ensure the needs identified on the ETR are sufficiently addressed?
 - Is a high quality learning environment being provided?
 - Are there modifications or adaptations to the environment necessary (space, materials, equipment)?
 - Are all the children making important learning progress?
5. How will this information assist the adults working with the child when determining progress in the general curriculum and progress on IEP goals? Is the child making adequate progress in learning important skills?

The ETR and the IEP provide the basis for planning the child's educational program including access to the general curriculum. The ETR and IEP provide a baseline from which to measure a child's progress at regularly scheduled intervals throughout the year or as otherwise required by the IEP. The following questions indicate the types of questions to be asked when measuring child progress.

- What is the child's initial performance of important skills?
- What is the child's present performance of important skills?
- Is the child using these skills across contexts/environments?
- How is the child performing in skills other than those listed on the IEP?
- What is the child's demonstrated performance for social-emotional skills across contexts/environments?
- What is the child's demonstrated performance for social-emotional skills across contexts/environments?
- What is the child's demonstrated performance for self-help skills across contexts/environments?
- What is the child's demonstrated performance for acquisition and use of knowledge and skills across contexts/environments?
- Is the child able to integrate skills in different developmental domains to demonstrate an ability to function in various contexts/environments?
- What is the child's performance across all curricular domains and development?
- Is progress being measured against IEP goals?
- Is progress being measured against content standards?
- Is progress being measured against developmental milestones?
- Is the Early Childhood Outcomes Summary Form being used as a measurement?