

# What Every Parent Should Know About IDEA Evaluations

## Purpose of IDEA Evaluations:

- To determine if the child is a "child with a disability" as defined by IDEA (meaning the child has a disability, the disability adversely impacts educational performance, and requires specialized instruction and related services)
- To gather information to help determine the child's educational needs
- To guide decision making about appropriate educational programming for the child (development of an IEP)

## Request for Evaluation:

- Either a parent or educational agency (school or AEA) may initiate a request for an initial evaluation for special education eligibility.
- A reevaluation must be conducted if the school determines that the educational or service needs of the student, including any improvements in academic or functional performance, make it necessary OR If the child's parent or teacher requests a reevaluation.

## Timeline for Evaluation:

- Generally, the initial evaluation must be conducted within 60 days of receiving pa-parental consent.
- Screening of a student to determine appropriate teaching strategies for instructional purposes is not an evaluation for special education eligibility and must not delay the evaluation process.

- A reevaluation may not occur more than once a year unless the parent and the school agree otherwise.
- A reevaluation must occur at least once every three years, unless the parent and school agree it is unnecessary.

## Language and Materials Used:

- Evaluation materials used must be in the child's native language or mode of communication AND in the form most likely to yield accurate information on what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally.
- If a child changes school districts during the school year, assessments must be coordinated to ensure a full evaluation is prompt and complete.

## Review and Data:

- An evaluation must include review of existing data, including information provided by the parents, classroom and school assessments and observations, and observations by teachers and related services providers. The review can be done without a meeting.
- It must be decided what, if any, additional information is needed to determine:
  - If the child continues to have a disability that requires special education
  - The educational needs of the child
  - Whether any changes to the special education program or related services are needed

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## Existing Special Education:

- A child receiving special education services must be evaluated before a determination is made that the child is no longer eligible.
- Reevaluation is not required when special education services end due to graduation from high school with a regular diploma or when a child ages out of eligibility for special education.

## Scope of Evaluation:

- An evaluation must be full and individual. Full means using a variety of assessment tools and strategies and including functional, developmental, and academic information about the child.
- The evaluation must be sufficiently comprehensive to identify ALL of the child's special education and related service needs.

- All areas of the child's functional need must be considered:
  - Health
  - Vision and hearing
  - Social and emotional status
  - General intelligence
  - Academic performance
  - Communication
  - Motor abilities

## Other Factors:

- An evaluation must not discriminate on a racial or cultural basis or on English proficiency.
- A child must not be determined to be eligible for special education due to lack of appropriate instruction in reading, lack of appropriate instruction in math, or limited English proficiency.