

# Dyslexia Screening

Early identification of children at risk for developing dyslexia followed by the implementation of intervention is a realistic aim for practitioners and policy-makers.

**Dyslexia** is a brain-based learning disability that specifically impairs a person's ability to develop word reading and spelling skills. Individuals with dyslexia typically read and spell at levels significantly lower than expected despite having normal intelligence.<sup>3</sup>

**Screening for dyslexia** is the act of gauging the long-term risk for poor outcomes of word reading and spelling skills that are considered to significantly impede literacy development in children.



**Screening is not diagnosis.** Screening for dyslexia risk is very different than the purpose of diagnosing dyslexia. Just as a hearing screening quickly tests to see how well you hear different sounds and determines if more testing is required, a dyslexia screener might identify risks that warrant further examination.

**What should be included in a screen for dyslexia?** Effective screeners should include multiple measures representing different aspects of:

- Early print knowledge (e.g., letter names and sounds)
- Language (phonological awareness, vocabulary, and RAN)
- Decoding and word-reading skills (depending on age)

**Can screening measures be applied universally?** Screening measures and cut-points may vary based on the overall risk of the population (e.g., poverty level of the school/district) and proportion of English language learners.



**Actions after screening.** Those identified at high risk for developing dyslexia are entitled to evidence-informed instruction (without the need for a formal diagnosis) shown to positively influence word reading and spelling skills within the context of multi-tier systems of support (MTSS).<sup>2</sup>

**Why is early intervention important?** Evidence indicates the effects of treatment increase the earlier they are implemented.<sup>1</sup> Identifying children who are at risk for dyslexia and providing targeted treatment at school entry is considered state of the art, suggesting the need for timely action rather than waiting for diagnosis.<sup>4</sup>

**Who can help with screening?** There is a need for shared responsibility for early identification of risk for developmental dyslexia among families, health care providers, and school personnel.

**When can we start screening for dyslexia?** Screening for dyslexia does not reach an acceptable clinical level until close to school entry. Thus, early screening for dyslexia should be conducted at school entry to identify children who are at risk of difficulties in learning to read.

## References

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