

# Evaluation

## AUTISM

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Model operating procedures created by



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## **AUTISM**

### **What is Required**

A student must be assessed under the IDEA in all areas of suspected disability. Autism or AU is one of the areas of eligible disabilities under the IDEA.

Autism (AU) is a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, which may adversely affect the student's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism include engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. While the characteristics of autism are generally evident before age 3, age 3 is not a cut-off point for IDEA eligibility. A student who manifests these characteristics after age 3 could be identified as having autism if the student meets the other eligibility criteria. Students with pervasive developmental disorders are included under the disability category of autism. A student does not meet the eligibility criteria for autism if the student's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the student has an emotional disturbance. See [EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE].

To assess for AU, the District or Campus Assessment Personnel will comply with the general evaluation procedures. See [EVALUATION PROCEDURES]. In addition, for AU, the written report of the evaluation by this group of qualified professionals must include specific recommendations for behavioral interventions and strategies.

### **Additional Procedures**

A referral for an autism evaluation may be indicated when the District or Campus Personnel working with the student and/or the parent of the student suspects the student is exhibiting social and behavioral characteristics of autism.

An evaluation for a student suspected of being a student with autism often includes the following areas: academic achievement, adaptive behavior, autism screening, cognition, developmental, emotional and behavioral, functional behavioral, motor, sensory, social relationships, speech language, and transition/vocational. A multi-disciplinary team will complete the evaluation for AU, which may include, as appropriate an educational diagnostician, a LSSP, a Speech/Language Pathologist, and/or an Occupational Therapist. The multi-disciplinary team should collaborate to create an evaluation plan to identify the procedures/assessments to be used in each area of the evaluation, to identify the person(s) responsible for collecting the data, to set a date for a follow-up discussion

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to review the data, and to make recommendations as to how the report will be integrated into one report. The resulting FIE should present a coherent rationale to either support or negate a recommendation for special education eligibility as a student with AU and rule out alternative educational disorders and environmental explanations for the student's observed behavioral and/or academic difficulties.

In addition to the general evaluation procedures, as part of an AU assessment, the Campus and District Assessment Personnel should consider some or all of the following:

- Emphasis on pragmatic/social language skills and assessments
- Emotional, behavioral or social functioning should be assessed across a variety of times or settings and should include both structured and unstructured observations
- Student interviews may be exploration or play-based as appropriate
- Include assessment and recommendations to address all areas contained in the AU Supplement/Section of the IEP, including in-home training, parent training, futures training, and social skills
- Consider the use of a functional behavioral assessment to address behaviors in the classroom and at home that may affect the classroom

For students with AU, specific strategies must be considered by the ARD Committee, based on peer-reviewed, research-based educational programming practices to the extent practicable and, when needed, such practices must be addressed in the IEP: See [SPECIAL FACTORS - Autism].

A medical diagnosis of autism will not in itself entitle a student to receive special education and related services. To meet the IDEA's definition of autism, the student's disability must meet the criteria set out in state and federal law, and have an adverse effect on the student's educational performance. If the student does not meet the eligibility criteria for AU, or any other eligibility criteria under the IDEA, or does not need special education or related services due to his/her disability, Campus Personnel should refer the student to the Campus or District Personnel responsible for compliance with Section 504 to determine whether the student is eligible for accommodations or services as a student with a disability under Section 504.

## **Evidence of Implementation**

- Notice of Evaluation

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- Consent for Evaluation
- Referral Information
- Assessment Plan
- Autism Supplement
- FIE
- ARD/IEP

## **Resources**

[The Legal Framework for the Child-Centered Special Education Process: Autism Framework - Region 18](#)

[Autism Resources -Texas Education Agency](#)

[Texas Autism Resource Guide for Effective Teaching \(TARGET\) - Region 13](#)

[Autism - SPEDEX](#)

## **CITATIONS**

Board Policy EHBAB; 34 CFR. 300.8(c), 300.304; 19 TAC 89.1040(b)–(c), 89.1050(a)(5); 89.1055