Related Resources:

- Autism
- Deaf-Blindness
- Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- Developmental Delay
- Emotional Disability
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment (OHI)
- Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment

Broad Category: EVALUATION

PROCEDURES:

Autism

- The district uses a team observation approach to determine if there are characteristics or a suspicion of Autism. If it's determined there is a suspicion of Autism, the evaluation team of qualified professionals will conduct the evaluation or the district will contract with a school psychologist.
- A Speech Language Pathologist, diagnostician, Occupational Therapist, etc. could be members of the evaluation team for Autism.
- The team of qualified professionals are aware they cannot require a medical/psychological diagnosis of autism in order to meet eligibility for autism under IDEA.
- The team of qualified professionals are trained to ensure the absence of the display of characteristics often associated with autism listed in 34 CFR §300.8(c)(1)(i) (engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences) is not used to automatically exclude students from meeting eligibility under IDEA.
- The team of qualified professionals are trained to properly identify when a child's educational performance is adversely affected by an emotional disability rather than autism.
- The team of qualified professionals are trained to ensure they are aware that autism can manifest after age three.
- The district operating procedures for initial evaluations and reevaluations are followed with evaluating for Autism.
- Cultural and linguistic differences considered when evaluating for autism.
- An ARD/IEP committee can require an FBA and get consent from the parent. The special education counselor or a school psychologist will complete the FBA in order to create a behavior intervention plan.

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- A BIP is created by reviewing antecedent, behavior, and consequences that have occurred previously when there has been undesirable behavior due to the student's disability. The committee determines strategies to prevent or lessen the undesirable behaviors based on this review.

Deaf Blindness

- The district will contract with the Residential School for the Deaf and Blind for evaluation assistance and consultation in programming for each individual student as needed.
- In addition to the eligibility requirements under deaf or hard of hearing and visual impairment and the student becoming eligible as deafblind because of meeting those requirements, the district will determine eligibility for deaf-blindness in each of the following circumstances:
    - The student meets eligibility as a student with a visual impairment and has a suspected hearing loss that cannot be demonstrated conclusively, but a speech/language therapist, a certified speech and language therapist, or a licensed speech language pathologist indicates there is no speech at an age when speech would normally be expected;
    - The student has documented hearing and visual losses that, if considered individually, may not meet the requirements for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing or for a visual impairment, but the combination of such losses adversely affects the student's educational performance; and
    - The student has a documented medical diagnosis of a progressive medical condition that will result in concomitant hearing and visual losses that, without the provision of special education services, will adversely affect the student's educational performance.

Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- The district will contract with the Regional Day School for the Deaf for evaluation assistance and consultation in programming for each individual student as needed.
- The district will assist parents or guardians with obtaining an audiological evaluation performed by a licensed audiologist at no cost.
- The communication assessment conducted by the MDT will be timely, comprehensive, tailored to the student's unique needs, focused on communication and language, and how communication impacts the student's education. The evaluation will ensure the student receives a free and appropriate public education.
- The multidisciplinary team will include a description of the implications of the hearing loss for the student's hearing in a variety of circumstances with or without recommended hearing assistive technology.
- A child under the age of 3 meets the criteria for deaf or hard of hearing if the student's record indicates that the child's experiencing a developmental delay because of hearing loss or impairment, or the child has a physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay and a sensory impairment. The Regional Day School for the Deaf will assist the district in making the determination of eligibility.
- The district will obtain Consent to Release Confidential Information from the parent.

Developmental Delay

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- A qualified group of professionals will conduct the evaluation of a student ages 3-9 suspected of having a developmental delay.
- The group of professionals will evaluate for at least one of the thirteen disability categories and the evaluation indicates a need for special education and related services and shows evidence of, but does not clearly confirm, the presence of the suspected disability or disabilities due to the child's young age.
- The disability criteria for developmental delay is not the first consideration for the group of qualified professionals.
- To use this eligibly category multiple sources of data will converge to indicate the student has a developmental delay by one of the following;
    - **A.** Performance on appropriate norm-referenced measures, including developmental measures, indicate that the student is at least two standard deviations below the mean or at the 2nd percentile of performance, when considering the standard error of measurement in one area of development
        - Physical,
        - Cognitive,
        - Communication,
        - Social or emotional, or
        - Adaptive
    - **B.** Performance on appropriate norm-referenced measures including developmental measures, indicate that the child is at least 1.5 standard deviations below the mean or at the 7th percentile of performance, when considering the standard error of measurement, in at least two areas of development
        - Physical,
        - Cognitive,
        - Communication,
        - Social or emotional, or
        - Adaptive, and
    - **B.** Along with additional convergent evidence, such as interviews and observation data that supports the delay in those areas.
    - **C.** A body of evidence from multiple direct and indirect sources, such as play-based assessments, information from the student's parent, interviews, observations, work samples, checklists, and other informal and formal measures of development, that clearly document a history and pattern of atypical development that is significantly impeding the student's performance and progress across settings when compared to age-appropriate expectations and developmental milestones in one or more areas of development;
        - Physical,
        - Cognitive,
        - Communication,
        - Social or emotional, or
        - Adaptive

Emotional Disability

- The district will conduct or contract with a school psychologist for an evaluation to determine if a student has an emotional disability.

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- A psychologist, school psychologist, special education counselor can be included in the group of qualified professionals when evaluating a student suspected of having an emotional disability.
- The district operating procedures for evaluation and reevaluations will be followed for planning an initial evaluation and a reevaluation for emotional disability.
- An ARD/IEP committee can require an FBA and get consent from the parent. The special education counselor or a school psychologist will complete the FBA in order to create a behavior intervention plan
- A BIP is created by reviewing antecedent, behavior, and consequences that have occurred previously when there has been undesirable behavior due to the student's disability. The committee determines strategies to prevent or lessen the undesirable behaviors based on this review.
- The campuses have site-wide behavior expectations, a plan for teacher expected behaviors, and positive reinforcers.
- Cultural and linguistic differences considered when evaluating for an emotional disability.
- The evaluation personnel are trained in how an emotional disability is confirmed when autism is also a suspected disability [34 CFR §300.8(c)(1)(ii) states autism does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disability].

Intellectual Disability

- The qualified professional will assess cognitive abilities and adaptive behaviors to determine if a student has an intellectual disability.
- The qualified professional has an assortment of standardized and norm referenced tools to evaluate for an intellectual disability based on the student's individual needs.
- Observations, parent input, teacher input, and/or norm referenced assessment tools will be used to gather data on adaptive behaviors.
- To determine eligibility as a student with an Intellectual Disability, there must be significantly sub-average intellectual functioning and deficits in at least two of the areas of adaptive behavior: communication, self-care, home living, social/interpersonal skills, use of community resources, self-direction, functional academic skills, leisure, health, or safety.
- Cultural and linguistic differences are considered when evaluating for an intellectual disability.

Multiple Disabilities

- The student has a combination of disabilities resulting in such severe educational need that the student cannot be accommodated in special education programs designed solely for students with one of the impairments.
- "Multiple Disabilities" does not include deaf-blindness.

- A student must have a combination of disabilities and meet all the following conditions:
    - The student's disabilities are expected to continue indefinitely, and
    - The disabilities severely impair performance in two or more of the following areas:
        - Psychomotor skills
        - Self-care skills

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  - Communication
  - Social and emotional development; or
  - Cognition

- A group of qualified professionals conducting an evaluation of a student suspected of having multiple disabilities will conduct assessments and observations, and collect data, as necessary for the ARD committee to make eligibility determinations.
- Special education staff are trained on the criteria for coding multiple disabilities in TSDS/PEIMS.

Orthopedic Impairment

- Eligibility must include a medical diagnosis provided by a licensed physician. The district will ensure that such services are at no cost to the parent.
- The group of professionals conducting the evaluation may consider components such as a motor skills assessment and assistive technology.
- The district may seek the parent or guardian's consent to release and exchange confidential information with the private provider to understand private evaluation reports and get their recommendations or conclusions to consider in the ARD committee meeting.

Other Health Impairment

- A student may be considered eligible for special education and related services as a student with an Other Health Impairment (OHI) if the student exhibits limited strength, vitality or alertness, including heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, resulting in limited alertness in the educational environment.
- This can include such health conditions as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome. (not an exhaustive list)
- A group of qualified professionals will conduct assessments and observations, and collect data, as necessary for the ARD committee to make determination.
- Eligibility must include a medical diagnosis provided by a licensed physician, a physician assistant or an advanced practice registered nurse, with authority delegated under the Texas Occupation Code. The district will ensure that such services are at no cost to the parent.
- The district may seek the parent or guardian's consent to release and exchange confidential information with the private provider to obtain evaluative input.
- The OHI form will be completed by the medical provider that describes how the student's other health impairment impacts them.

Specific Learning Disability

- Prior to conducting an initial evaluation of a student suspected of having a specific learning disability, the group of qualified professionals will ensure that the learning disability is not due to lack of appropriate instruction in reading or mathematics by considering the following:
    - Data that demonstrates the student was provided appropriate instruction in reading and/or mathematics within general education settings by qualified personnel.

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- Data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals, reflecting formal evaluation of student progress during instruction, which must be provided to the student's parents
  - Documentation of the repeated assessments may include RtI progress monitoring data, in-class tests on grade-level curriculum, or other regularly administered district or classroom assessments. Intervals are considered reasonable if consistent with the assessment requirements of a student's specific instructional program.

- A group of qualified professionals uses the following methods to evaluate for a specific learning disability;
  - Use a variety of assessment tools and strategies
  - Review achievement results of the student to identify if they achieve adequately for their age and/or meet state-approved grade level standards in oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, or mathematics problem solving when provided learning experiences and appropriate instruction for the age and grade-level of the student.
  - Review progress data from scientific, research-based intervention
  - Identify any relevant patterns of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both relative to age, state-approved grade-level standards, or intellectual development

  - Verify if any of the following factors are the primary cause of the student's learning disability
    - vision, hearing, and/or motor development, intellectual disability, emotional disability, cultural factors, environmental or economic disadvantage, or emergent bilingual
    - The presence of a sensory impairment, such as visual impairment, deaf-blindness, or being deaf or hard of hearing does not rule out the possibility of the presence of an SLD.
- Dyslexia is an example of and may meet the definition of a specific learning disability in Basic Reading and/or Reading Fluency.
- Dysgraphia may meet the definition of a specific learning disability in Written Expression.
- When considering a student for eligibly with a specific learning disability, the student must be observed in the student's learning environment, including the general education classroom setting, to document the student's academic performance and behavior in the areas of difficulty.
- The presence of a significant variance among specific areas of cognitive function or between specific areas of cognitive function and academic achievement is not required when determining whether a student has a specific learning disability.
- The multi-disciplinary team must decide to use information from;
  - an observation in routine classroom instruction and monitoring of the student's performance that was done before the student was referred for an evaluation, or

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    - Have at least one member of the group of qualified professionals conduct an observation of the student's academic performance in the general education classroom after the students has been referred for an evaluation and the school has obtained parental consent.
- Determination of the presence of a specific learning disability must be made by a team consisting of;
    - The student's parents,
    - At least one person qualified to conduct individual diagnostic examinations of children including;
        - A school psychologist,
        - An education diagnostician,
        - A speech language pathologist, or
        - A remedial learning teacher, and
    - The student's general education teacher or, if the student does not have a general education teacher, a general education classroom teacher qualified to teach a student of his or her age is required.
- A child younger than school age may be observed in their home setting or other age appropriate environments; daycare, play groups, etc.
- If a student is being evaluated that has received all or part of their instruction in a homeschool setting, the qualified group of professionals will consider relevant academic data that is provided by the parent to determine adequate instruction for their age and/or grade level.
- When a bilingual evaluation is needed, the district will contract the evaluation to an evaluator trained in assessing for a learning disability in the home language of the student.
- Evaluations that are provided from out of state will be considered and compared to Texas standards for the identification of a Specific Learning Disability.
- Evaluators are trained in the assessment and interpretation of dyslexia and other related disorders based on the Texas Dyslexia Handbook requirements.
- For student's suspected of having dyslexia, the team must include a person with specific knowledge in the reading process, dyslexia, and related disorders, and dyslexia instruction who is;
    - a licensed dyslexia therapist (LDT),
    - an individual who hold the most advanced dyslexia=related certification issued by an association recognized by the SBOE, and identified in, or substantially similar to an association identified in, either the rules or Handbook adopted by the SBIE; or
    - if neither of the first two is available, an individual who meets applicable training requirements adopted by the SBOE.
- When determining eligibility or continued eligibility of dyslexia or related disorder, the ARD committee must include a professional who meets these requirements, including any requirements of TEA's "Dyslexia handbook: Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders."
- When a student is identified with dyslexia and/or dysgraphia, the terms dyslexia and/or dysgraphia, as appropriate, must be used in a student's evaluation report, however, for formal eligibility purposed under special education, the category of specific learning disability will be reports by the district.
- When making a determination regarding dyslexia, the following questions must be considered;
    - Do the data show difficulty with accurate and/or fluent word reading, poor spelling skills, or poor decoding ability?

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  - Do these difficulties (typically) result from a deficit in the phonological component of language?
  - Are these difficulties unexpected for the student's age in relation to the student's other abilities and provisions of effective classroom instruction?
- The team must first look for a pattern of evidence reflective of the primary characteristics of dyslexia, i.e., unexpectedly low performance ins one or all of the following areas;
  - Reading words in isolation,
  - Decoding unfamiliar words accurately and automatically,
  - Reading fluency for connected text (rate and/or accuracy and/or prosody), and
  - Spelling (an isolated difficulty in spelling would not be sufficient to identify dyslexia).
- If the ARD committee determines that the student exhibits weaknesses in reading and spelling, the committee will then examine the student's data to determine whether these difficulties are unexpected in relation to the student's other abilities, sociocultural factors, language difference, irregular attendance, or lack of appropriate and effective instruction.
  - No single instrument, score, or formula will automatically rule in or rule out dyslexia; average phonological scores alone do not rule out dyslexia;
  - It is not required that a student demonstrate a specific cognitive weakness on standardized assessments as demonstrated by achieving below a certain threshold to otherwise display of pattern of strengths and weakness relevant to the identification of dyslexia; and
  - It is not one single indicator but a preponderance of data (both informal and formal) that provides the committee with evidence for whether these difficulties are unexpected.

Speech or Language Impairment

- The group of qualified professionals that collects or reviews evaluation data in connection with the determination of a student's eligibility based on a speech or language impairment must include a certified speech and hearing therapist, a certified speech and language therapist, or a licenses speech language pathologist.
- A speech or language impairment includes communication disorders, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, expressive or receptive language impairment, or voice impairment that adversely affects a student's educational performance.
- When evaluating an emergent bilingual student for a speech or language impairment, the district will contract the evaluation to an evaluator trained in assessing for a speech or language impairment in the home language of the student.
- Cultural and linguistic differences considered when evaluating for a speech or language impairment.

Traumatic Brain Injury

- Student's with a traumatic brain injury have acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects educational performance.

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- The term applied to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments on one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech.
- The term does not apply to injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.
- Eligibility must include a medical diagnosis provide by a licensed physician. The district will ensure that such services are at no cost to the parent.
- The group of qualified professionals that collects or reviews evaluation data in connection with the determination of student's eligibility based on a traumatic brain injury will include;
    - A licensed school psychologist,
    - An educational diagnostician, or
    - Other appropriate certified or licensed practitioner with experience and training in the area of disability.
- The district may seek the parent or guardian's consent to release and exchange confidential information with the private provider to obtain evaluative input.

Visual Impairment

- The district will use a certified and/or licensed teacher of visual impairment and a certified orientation and mobility provider for evaluation assistance and consultation in programming for each individual student as needed.
- The district will assist parents or guardians with obtaining eye exams and vision evaluations performed by a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist at no cost to the parent.
- A group of qualified professionals will provide a written report that includes;
    - This medical report of the student's vision loss stated in exact measures of visual field and corrected visual acuity, at a distance and at near range, in each eye, if exact measures cannot be obtained, the eye specialist must so state and provide best estimates.
    - The report will include prognosis whenever possible and whether the student has no vision or visual loss after correction; or a progressive medical condition that will result in no vision or visual loss after correction.
    - The report will include a functional vision evaluation by a certified teacher of students with visual impairments or ca certified orientation and mobility specialist that includes the performance of tasks in a variety of environments requiring the use of both near and distance vision and recommendations concerning the need for a clinical low vision evaluation;
    - A learning media assessment by a certified teacher of students with visual impairments including recommendations concerning which specific visual, tactual, and/or auditory learning media are appropriate for the student and whether or not there is a need for ongoing evaluation in this area; and
    - An orientation and mobility evaluation conducted by a person who is appropriately certified as an orientation and mobility specialist and must be conducted in a variety of lighting conditions and in a variety of settings, including the student's home, school, and community and in setting unfamiliar to the student.

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- A child under the age of 3 meets the criteria for visual impairment if the student's record indicates that the child's experiencing a developmental delay because of vision loss or impairment, or the child has a physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay and a sensory impairment.
- The district may seek the parent or guardian's consent to release and exchange confidential information with the private provider to obtain evaluative input.
- The district will communicate with Early Childhood Intervention and/or the child's parents, certified teacher of the visually impaired, and orientation and mobility provider to determine eligibility for a student between 0 through in accordance with 19 TAC §89.1040(c)(12)(C).

STAFF RESPONSIBLE:

District Level: Director of Special Education/Evaluation Personnel

Campus Level: Campus Administrators/ECSE Teacher/General Education Teacher/Special Education Teacher

TIMELINES FOR IDENTIFYING DISABILITY CONDITIONS:

- Initial evaluations
- Reevaluations

EVIDENCE OF PRACTICE:

- Forms or checklists used
- Training artifacts (sign-in sheets, agendas, etc.)
- List of qualified evaluators with appropriate licenses and certifications
- Copies of evaluations

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