



Key Component 1: Reviewing Initial and Triennial Assessment Results with the IEP Team *during the IEP*

Reviewing evaluation results is an important first step during an initial and/or triennial/reevaluation Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting. This review helps the IEP team determine if the student requires the support of special education. During the IEP meeting, assessor(s) will review results of the evaluation(s). Once the results are reviewed, the IEP team will determine if the student meets the eligibility criteria for special education.



This section will review the following elements:

- [Explaining assessment results](#)
- [Meeting the criteria for more than one area of eligibility](#)
- [When a student does not qualify](#)
- [Documenting the team's discussion](#)
- [Disagreements about eligibility](#)



What do I need to keep in mind when explaining evaluation results?

During the IEP meeting for initials, re-evaluations/triennials, and “other assessments,” assessors will explain to the IEP team members the data sources used for the evaluation and the subsequent results. This review helps identify the student’s strengths, challenges, and areas of need. By thoroughly examining these results, the IEP team is able to collaborate in determining eligibility and, if needed, ensure that the IEP provides the most effective and personalized educational plan.

Additional considerations:

- Know your audience by considering the following:
 - ☐ Has the parent previously attended IEP meetings, or is this their first?
 - ☐ Was the parent provided a draft copy of the report, or is this their first time receiving the information?
- Keep in mind that an assessment report can be technical and may contain new concepts. It is important to share information in a manner easily understood by the whole team. Avoid using jargon without explaining the term(s).
- Focus on explaining what you learned about the student rather than just detailing the test results. Remember that multiple sources of data were used in this assessment; therefore, discuss sources of data beyond just standardized testing scores (see [RIOT Protocol](#)).
- In addition to concerns noted throughout the evaluation, ensure that strengths, preferences, and interests are also discussed.
- Consider using data visualization (graphs) to explain test results.

DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

How does the student qualify for special education?

The [California Code of Regulations](#) defines 13 areas of eligibility (plus Established Medical Disability for ages 3-5 inclusive), as listed below. The IEP team is required to assess all areas of suspected disability.

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|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ■ Autism | ■ Intellectual disabilities | ■ Speech or language impairment |
| ■ Deaf-blindness | ■ Multiple disabilities | ■ Traumatic brain injury |
| ■ Deafness | ■ Orthopedic impairment | ■ Visual impairment |
| ■ Emotional disability | ■ Other health impairment | |
| ■ Hearing impairment | ■ Specific learning disability | |



As eligibility is discussed at the IEP meeting, the following three prongs of eligibility must be reviewed:

- whether the student meets the criteria for a disability as outlined in the California Education Code
- whether the disability has an adverse effect on educational performance
- whether the adverse effect on education performance requires special education and related services

Who determines eligibility for special education?

While assessment reports include documentation that either supports the student's eligibility or demonstrates why the student is not eligible, final decisions about eligibility are made at the IEP meeting by a group of qualified professionals and the parent(s). No one team member makes the final decision about eligibility.

At the IEP meeting, eligibility is discussed after the sharing of all evaluation/assessment results. Typically, this part of the meeting is led by the school psychologist or speech-language pathologist (when speech or language impairment is being considered).

To ensure parent understanding and informed consent, the following steps should be followed:

- Share the criteria for each area of eligibility being considered by the team, using definitions from the [California Code of Regulations](#) and family-friendly language. Respond to any questions team members may have about the eligibility criteria.
- Explain how the student does or does not meet the criteria for the disability.
- If the student meets the criteria, ensure that the educational impact of the disability is clearly stated to the parents.
- If the student has a disability and there is an educational impact, the team will discuss whether the student requires special education and related services.
- All decisions about eligibility are made by the IEP team.

If a student meets the criteria for more than one area of eligibility, how does the team decide which area should be primary?

When a student meets eligibility requirements for more than one area of eligibility, it may be helpful for the team to clarify that eligibility does not drive service, and all of the student's needs will be addressed, regardless of the primary disability chosen by the IEP team.



The primary disability identified by the IEP team explains to anyone reviewing the document the area of eligibility most impactful to the student's learning, as well as the reason that special education services are required.

SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY DISCREPANCY DOCUMENTATION

The determination for students qualifying with an eligibility of specific learning disability involves multiple steps and requires the student qualifying using the discrepancy, patterns of strengths and weaknesses, or response to intervention (RTI). Based on the model, document(s) may need to be completed based on Local Education Agency (LEA) procedures. Please consult with your LEA.

What are the next steps when a student is not eligible or no longer eligible for special education services?

If the team agrees that the student does not meet each of the three prongs to qualify for special education, then the following steps are taken:

- Document the discussion and decision within the IEP document using the IEP team's notes.
- Because the student is not eligible, no discussion is needed regarding goals, supports, services, or placement.
- Ensure the IEP meeting participants have signed the document.

How do I document the team's discussion about eligibility in the IEP document?

Whether the student qualifies for special education or not, it is good practice to document in the IEP notes which areas of eligibility the IEP team considered and the decision related to each of those areas. If there is a disagreement or need for further clarification, that information is also typically documented in the notes to capture the discussion for those reviewing the document in the future.

How do I handle disagreement about eligibility?

Each member of the IEP team needs to share their thoughts and opinions about the eligibility determination. If there is disagreement about eligibility, care should be given to determine the specific question or disagreement. If needed, further explanation and discussion of the evidence that supported the decision can be reviewed. If no agreement can be reached about eligibility, document the disagreement and summarize the conversation within the IEP document. Be sure to follow your LEA's procedures regarding next steps.



EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT CONSIDERATIONS

- Are assessments completed in all areas related to the suspected disability?
- Do the assessments identify all of the student's needs?
- Is there a statement regarding how the student's disability affects their involvement and progress in the general education curriculum (or, for preschool, how the disability affects the student's participation in appropriate activities) ?
- Were a variety of assessment tools and strategies used to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the student, including information provided by the parent(s)?
- In the case of specific learning disability eligibility, do assessments include observations of the student's learning environment to document their academic performance and behavior in the areas of difficulty?
- Have the student's strengths been considered?
- Ensure that assessments and other evaluation materials:
 - ☐ are not racially or culturally discriminatory.
 - ☐ are in the child's native language or other mode of communication. According to [California Education Code](#), assessments must be "provided and administered in the language and form most likely to provide accurate information on what the student knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally, unless it is not feasible to provide or administer."

Additional resources: [Educational Benefit Handout](#)

Your feedback is vital as the user of this handout.
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