

When is an evaluation required?

An evaluation must be conducted by the school and/or Area Education Agency (AEA) in order to determine if a student is eligible for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Parents can request an evaluation for Special Education services at any time or the school could initiate the process.

The first step for a student to become eligible for an IEP is the Disability Suspected process, which is used to determine the need for an evaluation. An evaluation is only required if the child is suspected of having a disability that might be impacting their education (see Related Resources). To qualify for an IEP, evaluation results must show that a student has a disability which is defined in Iowa as having a physical or mental condition that adversely affects educational performance, and need specialized services.

There are two kinds of evaluations related to Special Education eligibility:

1. An **initial evaluation** is done to determine if a student is eligible for Special Education services. If a student is found to be eligible, the team uses the evaluation results to determine what goals and services are needed to address the impact of the student's disability. The team, including parents, will develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
2. An IEP **reevaluation** is required by law every three years, unless the team, including parents, agrees it is not necessary. The purpose is to determine if a student who already has an IEP still qualifies and if his/her needs have changed. If a student's needs have changed, the goals or services may also need to be changed.

Parents also may request a reevaluation of their student's needs related to the IEP up to once per year, or more often if the school agrees it is necessary. This can include evaluating a new area of concern.

What is a comprehensive evaluation?

A comprehensive evaluation covers all areas that may be impacted by a disability. It should identify all of a student's special education and related service needs.

In order for an evaluation to be comprehensive a student should be evaluated in all areas related to the disability or area of concern, referred to as **performance domains**. Performance domains are the skill areas in which a student can be evaluated. The seven performance domains are: academic, behavior, physical, health, hearing/vision, adaptive behavior, and communication. See chart on the next page for more explanation of what falls under each.

IEP teams, including parents, should review the existing information available in each of the performance domains and decide whether additional evaluations should be conducted in that area or if it can be ruled out as a factor impacting the student's learning. The evaluation results must be detailed enough to identify the student's educational needs.

When an evaluation is completed, an Educational Evaluation Report (EER) will be written to include all of the information that was collected through the evaluation. A meeting will then be held with parents, at a mutually agreed upon time, to review the results and make decisions about the student's eligibility and needs.

What are some helpful tips for IEP Evaluations?

- Put all evaluation requests in writing. A sample letter requesting an Initial Evaluation or Reevaluation is available on ASK's website.
- Share specific concerns about your student's learning or behavior with the team before the evaluation begins.
- Parents can request an evaluation for assistive technology (AT).*
- Both the initial evaluation and reevaluation can include testing and observations that require

parent consent.

- Parents signing permission for an initial evaluation starts the 60 calendar day timeline. There is no specific timeline required for reevaluations.
- Before the meeting parents can request a copy of the evaluation results to review and prepare any questions or concerns.
- If parents disagree with the results of the AEA’s evaluation or believe that an area of need was not evaluated they can request a second opinion through AEA or an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) from a private evaluator.

Related Resources

- Requesting an Evaluation for Special Education
- Sample Letter Requesting an Initial Evaluation
- Reevaluations
- Independent Educational Evaluations (IEE)

From the Iowa IDEA Information website:

- Iowa Performance Domains

Performance Domains

Areas to consider for Special Education evaluations

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| Academic | Grade level achievement of standards related to basic reading skills (e.g., early literacy, phonics, phonemic awareness, concepts of print, decoding, fluency), reading comprehension (e.g., vocabulary, comprehension, sequencing), basic math skills (e.g., early math readiness, math calculations, numeracy, number sense), applied math skills (e.g., mathematical problem solving, time, money), written expression, listening comprehension, and oral expression. |
| Behavior | Awareness of self, identification, and expression of emotions, self-regulation, and interaction with others. |
| Physical | Gross/large motor skills, fine/small motor skills, and mobility for learning, living, and work. |
| Health | The general condition of the body or mind, especially in terms of the presence or absence of illness, injury, or impairments. |
| Hearing/Vision | The ability to perceive sound and/or the ability to see. |
| Adaptive Behavior | Everyday living skills (e.g., dressing, eating, toileting), work skills, or school functioning skills (e.g., meeting timelines, organization of materials, engagement and persistence) that a child learns in the process of adapting to his or her surroundings. |
| Communication | Receptive and expressive language. This includes, expressive language (social communication), vocabulary, speech sound production, voice or fluency. |
| *Assistive Technology | Includes devices and/or services and supports that enable learners with disabilities to access their right to FAPE in the least restrictive environment. Assistive technology may be considered in many areas including mobility, hearing, vision, computer access, reading, written language, positioning & seating, and recreation. |

*Assistive Technology is not recognized as a Performance Domain but must be considered by IEP teams.

ASK Essential Questions

- Did the team include all areas of concern regarding my child’s performance?
- Did I sign permission for the evaluation?