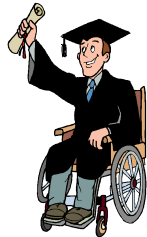


- IV. Assessing students with disabilities



- 4.4.3: What is the eligibility process for students with disabilities?



What is the eligibility process for students with disabilities?

- The process of assessing for the potential presence of a disability is...
 - complex
 - it considers multiple sources of information
 - systematic
 - it follows a set of procedures
 - comprehensive
 - it considers the whole student

- Evaluation and identification leads to...



- Appropriate program (IEP) leads to...



- Placement

» (Bateman, 1998)

- When assessing for the presence of a disability, the multidisciplinary team must...
 - use multiple instruments & procedure
 - conduct individual assessments
 - conduct assessments in the child's primary language or mode of communication
 - use validated evaluation materials
 - be nondiscriminatory
 - use trained personnel to administer assessments
 - gain parent permission prior to disability assessment

- The multidisciplinary team is made up of...
 - special education teacher(s)
 - general education teacher(s)
 - someone who can interpret test scores instructionally
 - the local education agency representative
 - often a lead teacher or administrator
 - parent (must be invited)
 - student (when appropriate but must be invited after age 14)

- Various areas may be assessed including...
 - intelligence
 - language
 - perception
 - achievement
 - behavior
 - emotional/social development
 - motor
 - health
 - vision and hearing

- There are several common steps involved in assessing a student for the presence of a disability including....

- Step One: Observation
 - Is the noticing of potential problems.
 - Is not part of the formal process conducted by schools.
 - Parents, teachers, physicians, and others may notice there might be a problem.
 -

- Some typical problems observed for mild disabilities include...
- Learning disabilities
 - seems frustrated with academics
 - seems to be more capable than his/her work indicates

- Emotional and behavioral disorders
 - seems socially not to be adjusted
 - seems to act out or is withdrawn
 - may display problematic behavior in more than one setting
- AD/HD
 - seems inattentive
 - seems hyperactive
 - seems impulsive

- Mental retardation
 - may have a medical history indicative of a disability
 - may have missed developmental milestones
 - may have particular syndromes
 - has problems learning

- Step Two: Screening

- Is the process of determining who might have a disability that involves...
 - using medical screening when appropriate
 - examining classroom work products
 - giving group intelligence tests
 - giving group achievement tests
 - giving vision and hearing screening
 - no requirement of parent permission in most states

- Learning disabilities

- seems resistant to treatment
- displays inconsistent classroom work
- has an average to above average group IQ
- has group achievement tests that are below peers
- is not explained by vision and hearing problems

- Emotional and behavioral disorders

- has difficulty staying on-task
- does not follow basic rules
- performs low on group IQ tests
- performs low on group achievement tests
- is not explained by vision and hearing problems

- AD/HD

- has classroom work that is consistently poor
- has difficulty staying on-task
- performs sporadically on group IQ
- performs sporadically on group achievement testing
- has no particular medical condition
- is not explained by vision and hearing problems

- Mental retardation

- may have a medical screening that identifies the problem
- has limited academic skills
- has a group IQ score that is below average
- is not explained by vision and hearing problems

- Step Three: Pre-referral

- Is the process of paying closer attention to those who might have a disability as indicated by the screening.
 - Is it a problem of poor teaching or a disability? The teacher implements suggestions from school-based team to see if the student can improve. An ecological assessment might be conducted to rule out environmental issues.

- Will progress to the next stage if student is not responsive to reasonable adaptations in curriculum and/or behavior management techniques
- In all cases, a true disability is not responsive with reasonable adaptations.

- **Step Four: Referral**
 - Is a formal process where the student is referred for individual assessment. The process is...
 - in writing
 - particular to each school
 - only implemented *after* parent permission is obtained and their procedural safeguards have been explained to them.

- **Procedural safeguards** inform the parents of their rights during the assessment process. School must...
 - Send parents written notice of proposed actions regarding their child.
 - Give parents complete safeguards notice during meetings.
 - Make mediation available if they disagree.
 - Provide parents with a genuine opportunity to participate.
 - Allow parents access to student records. (Bateman, 1998)

- Procedural safeguards include the right to...
 - 1. Obtain an independent educational evaluation of their child if not satisfied with the school's evaluation;
 - 2. Receive prior written notice for actions proposed or refused by the school district;
 - 3. Grant consent before letting a school conduct an initial evaluation or reevaluation of their child and consent to initial provision of special education and related services;

- 4. Have access to all educational records about their child;
- 5. Present complaints to initiate due process hearings;
- 6. Have their child's education placement maintained throughout the dispute;
- 7. Know procedures for students who are subject to placement in an interim alternative educational setting;

- 8. Know requirements for placing their child in a private school at public expense;
- 9. Use mediation to resolve disputes;
- 10. Take a complaint to an impartial hearing officer for a due process hearing;

- 11. Appeal the hearing officer's decision;
- 12. File civil lawsuits against schools;
- 13. Know conditions for recovering attorneys' fees;
- 14. Know the state complaint procedures, including how to file and timelines.

» (The ARC: <http://www.thearc.org/faqs/qa-idea-rights.html>)

- Step Five: Formal *individualized* evaluation

- Is the formal process of assessing the student through...
 - individualized IQ testing
 - individualized achievement test
 - anecdotal records
 - curriculum-based assessment
 - direct observation
 - ecological assessment
 - particular disability testing

- The evaluation process....

- must include someone who is knowledgeable about the instructional implications of the evaluation
- has a goal of being instructionally "real" and "meaningful"
- encourages parent and student participation
 - equal partnership

- allows for parents to an independent educational evaluation at public expense if they disagree with the process
- allows for due process or mediation if necessary.
- uses multiple sources of data.
- attends to multicultural assessment concerns

- should not single out a child for testing without notice of parents.
- should not equate evaluation with testing.
- should not rely on any single standardized battery of assessment
- should not rely exclusively on any formula or quantitative guidelines to determine eligibility.

- should not be based solely on the information from other professionals such as physicians or psychiatrists.
- should not use the process to discriminate

» (Bateman, 1998)

- The evaluation process for each disability usually includes...

- Learning disabilities
 - behavior rating scales to rule out behavior problems
 - individual achievement tests
 - individual IQ tests
- Emotional and behavior disorders
 - individual in-depth behavioral assessment as compared to same culture and developmental stages as peers
 - individual achievement tests
 - individual IQ tests

- AD/HD

- a psychological evaluation by psychiatrist or psychologist
- individual achievement tests
- individual IQ tests
- the use of the DSM-IV criteria

- Mental retardation

- adaptive behavior scales
- achievement tests
- individual IQ tests

- Step Six: Placement into appropriate education

- Is the process of placing students in the most appropriate educational setting.

- **During the placement process, do...**

- Remember that program appropriateness is primary while the least restrictive environment is secondary.
- Provide students with a continuum of services.
- Evaluate placement at least annually.

- Ensure that decisions are made by a group.
- Consider potential harmful effects of the decisions made.
- Ensure that students with disabilities are involved with non-disabled as much as possible

- **During the placement process, do NOT...**

- Remove a child with a disability from general education unless it impedes their education.
- Substitute “full inclusion” for continuum of services.
- Exclude parents.
- Forget to follow all procedural requirements.
- Ever place a student based on a disability category!!!

» (Bateman, 1998)

- Once placement is determined, students with disabilities must be...
 - re-evaluated at least every three years to determine if special education services are still needed