

## HEC & TRIPSCY TRAINING

- Comprehensive Evaluation Process - How to Ask the Right Questions and Get the Answers you Need.

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## Comprehensive Evaluation Process

How to ask the right questions and get the answers you need!

## Why conduct evaluations?

- Vermont regulations define evaluations as “observations, tests, and other diagnostic measures, individually selected and administered to determine the existence of a disability, the effect the disability has on the child’s education and functional performance, a need for specialized services, and for an appropriate program”
- An initial referral for a special education evaluation is made when the student’s learning needs appear to exceed the resources and supports available within the Educational Support Team and additional information is necessary to identify and plan for the student’s educational needs. The referral may come from the Educational Support Team, parent, or teacher.

## Why conduct evaluations? (continued)

- A reevaluation is conducted in part to determine whether or not the student remains eligible. However, the reevaluation is also important for determining whether or not current programming is effective and to inform development of future instructional goals/objectives.

## Who should be involved?

An Evaluation and Planning Team is a group of people knowledgeable about the student who convene to plan the evaluation, review evaluation results and make a decision about eligibility, and plan how to meet the needs of the learner.

Evaluation and Planning Team (EPT) shall include:

- 1.) A local education agency representative (LEA)
- 2.) Special education teacher/service provider
- 3.) Regular education teacher
- 4.) Student (and agency representatives) if transition is to be discussed

## Who should be involved? (continued)

- 5) Other individuals that have knowledge/expertise regarding the child, included related service personnel
- 6.) An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of the evaluation results
- 7.) The parent, guardian or educational surrogate
- 8.) For a child suspected of having a specific learning disability, a person qualified to conduct individual diagnostic examinations of children.

(Some individuals may serve dual roles)

## When should the evaluation be initiated and completed?

### Initiation of the evaluation-

The regulations state, "When a school district receives or initiates a referral for an evaluation for a student who may be eligible for special education, an evaluation and planning team (EPT) shall be convened without undue delay" – generally considered to be an initial contact with the parent as soon as possible and a meeting convened within thirty days.

### Completion of the evaluation-

\*Initial evaluation – within 60 days of signed consent or from the date of the notice indicating the intent to review existing data – delays may be issued for exceptional, child centered circumstances.

\*Reevaluation – completed by the triennial review date

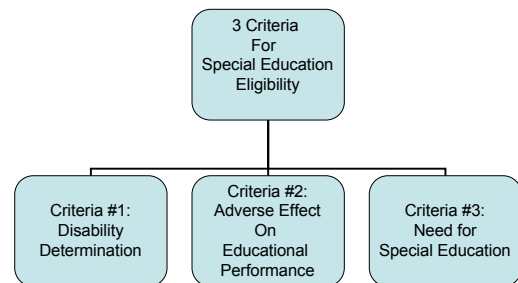
## How should the evaluation be initiated?

Step 1: Contact parent to inform them that a team is being formed and to determine the best time (and format) for the evaluation and planning team meeting. It is best practice to describe the evaluation process to the parent and the role that they will play in the process. Following this contact, the school must send a notice of the date and time of the meeting and a copy of Parental Rights.

## How should the evaluation be initiated? (Continued)

Step 2: Convene the meeting to discuss and plan the areas to be assessed, the procedures to be used in carrying out the evaluation, and personnel by title responsible for performing the evaluations. Questions should be developed which will assist the team with the determination of eligibility and the development of an appropriate education or accommodation plan (IEP, 504, or EST).

When explaining the criteria for special education eligibility to parents, it can be very helpful to develop a visual to support this explanation.



## How do you ask the right questions for disability determination?

Step 3: At this stage of the planning process, the team should discuss what they know about the student. This information can be organized and charted for all team members using a 't-chart' format with one side devoted to the student's strengths and the other devoted to the student's limitations. This format can help the team to identify which disability conditions might apply to the student.

Step 4: The team should then identify which areas of suspected disability are of concern and develop related questions. The team should document these questions within the evaluation plan as well as additional questions that are specifically related to the student (ex. Are deficits within the area of phonological processing impacting John's ability to acquire reading skills?) The necessary evaluation procedures and personnel by title should also be discussed and documented.

Morning Activity #1

## Example of a T-Chart

### Student Strengths

- Very social, well liked by peers
- Loves Science, math
- Strong reasoning
- Well developed vocabulary
- Athletic

### Student Limitations

- Limited word identification
- Difficulty with spelling which impacts written expression
- Difficulty with reading fluency

### Student characteristics to be considered

Vermont regulations require that "the EPT shall assess all student characteristics/factors that may have a significant influence on eligibility, services to be offered or accommodations to be made", including:

- 1.) Physical characteristics
- 2.) Social/Behavioral/Emotional characteristics
- 3.) Adaptive behavior across settings
- 4.) Relevant life circumstances
- 5.) Speech characteristics
- 6.) Language and communication skills
- 7.) Intellectual or cognitive characteristics

### Student characteristics to be considered (Continued)

- 8.) Areas of concern in the basic skill areas
- 9.) Vocational needs
- 10.) Skills in the learning environment
- 11.) Transition needs beyond graduation for students age 14 and above
- 12.) Assistive technology needs related to devices and services
- 13.) Student's current level of performance in all curriculum areas
- 14.) Observation for an individual with a suspected learning disability

### Next Steps

- Once the team has determined and planned the evaluation questions/ procedures/personnel related to the suspected disabilities, it is important for the team to do the same for adverse effect criteria and the need for special education criteria.

(Refer to the Adverse Effect materials)

### Need for Special Education

- Questions related to the need for special education should focus upon whether or not the educational needs of the student can be met within the regular education system of support or whether specialized instruction/supports are necessary that are beyond what is available within the regular education system of support. Questions can also be developed that specifically address the types of services/accommodations needed to allow the student to access the general education curriculum.
- The answers to these questions may come from the reports issued by the evaluators, parent/teacher/student interviews, a record review, or observations of the student.

### And the evaluation begins...

- Once the Evaluation Plan is developed, the parent should be provided the Notice for Special Education Evaluation (Form 3) and asked to sign the Consent for Special Education Evaluation (Form 3a) if new testing will be completed.
- If applicable, testing is scheduled and conducted and other information is compiled.

### Preparing for the eligibility meeting

Once the evaluation procedures have been completed, it is time for the EPT to reconvene. Whenever possible, the following strategies can be helpful to prepare for the eligibility meeting:

1. Provide the team members with the opportunity to review the reports that have been issued by the evaluators prior to the meeting.
2. Meet with the parent(s) or have a conversation prior to the meeting to review the information within the reports together, including explanations of scores and test acronyms.
3. Highlight information within reports that might answer the questions that were asked within the plan.

## Preparing for the eligibility meeting

(Continued)

4. Create an agenda and summary of the test results to review at the meeting.
5. Double check that all evaluation procedures included within the plan have been conducted so that all questions can be discussed at the eligibility meeting.
6. Confirm with team members that they are prepared to share the information that they have been responsible for gathering (ex. adverse effect data from the classroom teacher)

## Determining Eligibility

In order to determine eligibility and prepare the evaluation report, the EPT must discuss and answer the questions that were developed as part of the evaluation plan and conclude whether or not the student meets the criteria for eligibility. These answers should be documented within the Evaluation Plan and Report. According to Vt. Regulations, the report should include:

- 1.) A conclusion supported by a rationale as to whether or not the student is eligible for special education based on the presence of a disability, demonstration of adverse effect on educational performance, and a need for special education services.
- 2.) The evaluation procedures used including any modifications/changes made from the plan.

## Determining Eligibility (Continued)

- 3.) A summary of all educationally relevant information collected during the evaluation.
- 4.) Recommendations as to the need for accommodations in curriculum, assessments, programming, behavior management, supplemental aids and services.
- 5.) The initials of all team members indicating agreement or disagreement with the eligibility conclusion. A group member who does not agree with the conclusion must submit a separate statement presenting his or her conclusions and this statement shall become part of the Evaluation Plan and Report.
- 6.) The written report of an observation of the student, if an observation has been conducted.

## Additional considerations

- 1.) If the student is found to have a disability but does not demonstrate adverse effect and/or a need for special education, the EPT must refer the student to the building administrator to initiate the 504 process.
- 2.) If the student is not found to have a disability, the team should still consider whether or not the student is demonstrating an adverse effect upon their education so that the EST can be informed of recommended supports and accommodations.
- 3.) If the student is referred to either the 504 or EST team, it is best practice to have one member of the EPT follow-up with the new team to insure that information derived from the evaluation is contained within the student's educational support plan.

## Final Thoughts

Strong comprehensive evaluations:

- Reflect the needs of the learner
- Reflect the voices of all team members
- Comply with special education regulations while still communicating information in a clear, 'reader friendly' manner
- Are concise yet provide sufficient information to plan effectively for the student.
- Lead to better learning outcomes for the student!!