Comprehensive Evaluation Process
Providing Comprehensive, Team-based Evaluations for Students with Special Needs

Welcome and Site Check In

- Review of other topics and dates
- Review the format
- Introduction to today’s topic and speaker

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Agenda

9:00-9:15  Introductions/Site check in
9:15-10:15 Basics for Conducting Evaluations
10:15-10:25 Break
10:25-10:55 Tiered Activities
10:55-11:15 Sharing Activities
11:15-11:30 How I Act in Conflict
11:30-12:00 Collaborative Teaming Activity Intro
12:00-3:00 Afternoon Activities

Today’s Outcomes

• Vermont’s Comprehensive Evaluation Process - the Federal law and VT requirements, including changes in IDEIA 2004
• Developing collaborative evaluation plans
• How to develop evaluation questions that will get you useful information for use in the school setting
• Teaming to support each other and a child with special needs’ overall school functioning

Why do Evaluations?

• Determine eligibility for special education
• Inform development of instructional goals and objectives
• Inform IEP teams in designing appropriate placement in least restrictive environment
• Examine program effectiveness and needs (revaluations)
• Provide recommendations regarding accommodations in curriculum, materials, mode of presentation, environment, etc.
Requirements of Evaluations

- Testing in native language
- Tests not the sole criteria (PASE vs. Hannon, 1980).
- Administered by properly trained personnel
- Individually administered
- Completed within 60 days:
  a) From date written parental consent is received
  b) Or from date of notice of re-evaluation of existing data

New IDEIA Requirements

- Evaluations may not occur more than once a year unless agreed to by the parent and the LEA
- No re-evaluation is needed if everyone agrees

Referrals

- May come from a variety of sources including parents, teachers, EST, physicians, other agencies, etc.
- Evaluation must proceed without “undo delay”
Parental Consent
Required Twice

• Permission to assess
  – Initial evaluations
  – When new information is needed for reevaluations

• Permission to place in special education
  -Required after the initial IEP for the initial placement decision
  (amount of time with non-disabled peers)
  -Permission not required to review existing data

Parental Refusal to Evaluate

• Document several different attempts to contact the parent thorough
  a) Detailed phone logs
  b) Copies of correspondence
  c) Visits to home or workplace

• After several attempts, send a letter saying that the reevaluation will begin on ___ unless we hear back from you

• The school can file for mediation or due process

Is There A Timeline for a Special Education Evaluation?

Evaluation Timeline

1. School district requests/ initiates evaluation
2. Meeting convened without undue delay
3. Written Notice of Delay before 60 days are up
4. Parental Consent received
5. Meeting held to determine eligibility
6. Eval completed within 60 days
7. Special Circumstances
8. Meeting held
Notice of Delay

• Vermont rules allow notice of delay if the 60 days will need to be extended. Notice can only be used for exceptional circumstances.
• New IDEIA allows extension if the student moves during the evaluation time frame or the parent refuses to make the child available.
• If you do need to delay, you must send a notice of the delay before the expiration of the 60 calendar days.
• The notice must contain of schedule of the evaluation activities.

Evaluation and Procedures

EPT shall, where appropriate, assess all students characteristics and other factors such as:

• Physical Characteristics
• Social, behavioral, or emotional characteristics
• Adaptive behavior across settings
• Relevant life circumstances

Evaluation and Procedures

• Speech characteristics
• Language and communication skills
• Intellectual or cognitive characteristics
• Areas of concern in basic skills
• Vocational needs
• Skills in learning environment
• Transition needs
• Assistive technology needs
• Current levels of performance in all curriculum areas with respect to which sped ed services and aids may be required.
How Do We Organize our Thinking to Design Our Evaluation Plan

- In Vermont we have three gates – eligibility, adverse effect, and need for specialized instruction.
- Ask questions that will gather information for all of the gates. Know the purpose- ask the right questions to get useful answers.

Disability Determination Gate One

- 12 disability categories in Vermont
- Specific, often numbers-based, criteria for each one
- Write evaluation questions to determine if students exhibit the criteria for the possible disability.

What are the Disability Categories

- Learning Impairment
- Visual Impairment
- Emotional Disturbance
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Autism
- Deaf-Blindness
- Specific Learning Disability
- Deafness or Hard of Hearing
- Speech/Language Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Multiple Disabilities
Learning Impairment

1) An impairment or delay in learning of significant magnitude to cause student's performance to fall at or below -1.5 standard deviations from the mean on an intelligence test
2) Concurrent deficits in adaptive behavior

Visual Impairment

1) Evaluated by optometrist or ophthalmologist
2) Demonstrated by visual acuity that is 20/70 or worse in better eye with correction or
3) Peripheral fields that subtends an angle not greater than 20 degrees at widest diameter
4) Mobility and orientation skills are also considered to be basic skills and special education services.

Deafness or Hard of Hearing

1) To be determined by an audiologist, otologist, or otolaryngologist
2) Demonstrated be a 25 decibal HL threshold (ANSI, 69) or worse for one or more frequencies 250-8000HZ
3) In one or both ears
Speech/Language Impairment

1) Significant deficits in listening comprehension or oral expression

2) Opinion needed from SLP as to existence of speech/language impairment and effect on student's ability to function

Speech/Language Impairment

Criteria for Listening Comprehension:
A deficit of at least -2.0 SD from the test mean on one or more measures of auditory processing or comprehension of connected speech.

Auditory Processing or Comprehension Includes:
- Semantics
- Syntax
- Phonology
- Recalling Information
- Following Directions
- Pragmantics

Speech/Language Impairment

Criteria for Oral Expression
A disability exists when a child demonstrates a significant deficit in one or more of the following conditions:
- Voice
- Fluency
- Articulation
- Oral Disclosure
Orthopedic Impairment

1) Resulting from congenital anomaly, disease or other condition
2) Opinion needed from licensed physician as to existence of orthopedic impairment and its effect on the student’s ability to function

Other Health Impairment

1) Having limited strength, vitality, alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli
2) Results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment
3) Cause shall be chronic or an acute health problem

Other Health Impairment

Need opinion from person:
1) Whose professional license authorizes him or her to offer opinion on existence of specific condition and its effect on student’s ability to function
2) Who has specific training and experience in diagnosing and recommending treatment for the condition suspected
Emotional Disturbance

A condition, including schizophrenia, exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree:

1) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors
2) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers

3) Inappropriate types of behaviors or feelings under normal circumstances
4) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression
5) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems

Need to obtain opinion of licensed psychologist or psychiatrist as to existence of emotional disturbances and its effect on student's ability to function

Upon determination of ED, parent needs to be informed of availability of interagency coordination of services
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Emotional Disturbance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Socially Maladjusted:</td>
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<td>A persistent pattern of violating societal norms such as multiple acts of truancy, substance or sexual abuse, and is marked by struggle with authority, low frustration, impulsivity, or manipulative behaviors</td>
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<tr>
<td>A student who is socially maladjusted shall NOT be considered emotionally disturbed unless he/she also meets criteria for emotional disturbance</td>
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<th>Autism</th>
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<td>A developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and non-verbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shall obtain opinion of licensed physician as to existence of autism and its effect on the student's ability to function</td>
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<th>Traumatic Brain Injury</th>
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<tr>
<td>An injury to brain caused by external physical force or by internal occurrence such as stroke or aneurysm, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment or both</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shall obtain opinion of licensed physician as to existence of traumatic brain injury and its effect on the student’s ability to function</td>
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Traumatic Brain Injury

Includes open or closed head injuries resulting in impairment in one or more areas, including: cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem solving; sensory, perceptual and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech.

Does not include brain injuries that are congenital, degenerative, or caused by birth trauma.

Deaf Blindness

Concomitant hearing and visual impairments which cause severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that cannot be accommodated for in programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

Multiple Disability

Concomitant impairments such as learning impairment-blindness, learning impairment-orthopedic impairment, etc. resulting in severe educational needs that cannot be accommodated for in special education programs solely for one of the impairments.
Specific Learning Disabilities Undergoing Big Changes

• The newest IDEA, the IDEIA, allows for an alternative to using the discrepancy model for identifying student with SLD
• The recommendation is to use Response to Intervention (RtI)
• Response to Intervention has implications for the school-wide delivery or service and assessments
• RtI will be optional in Vermont for some time

Gate 2- Adverse Effect 2362(c)

1) To conclude that a disability has an adverse effect on the student’s educational performance, the EPT shall determine and document that, as a result of his or her disability, the student is functioning significantly below age and grade norms for age or grade peers in one or more of the basic skills defined in Rule 2362(f)

Gate 2- Adverse Effect

2) “Significantly below age or grade norms” means the 15th percentile or below, or -1.0 standard deviation or more below the mean, or the equivalent, as reflected by performance on three or more of the following measures of school performance, generally over a six month period of time.
Measures for Determining Adverse Effect
Gate Two

- Standard or percentile scores on individually-administered nationally normed achievement test
- Grades
- Curriculum-based measures
- Criterion-reference of group administered norm referenced assessments
- Student work, language samples, or portfolios

Build Your Case

- Present all the basic skill areas in which an adverse effect was found
- List at least three different measures that document performance below the 15% (40% for EEE) compared to classmates for at least six months
- Use charts, graphs and visuals

Documentation does not have to include the child’s life work!

Choose simple measures!

There is no indication that adverse effect needs to be proved beyond reasonable doubt
Power of Classroom Observations

- Federal Law requires classroom observation for determining a specific learning disability but it is best practice for all evaluations.
- You will get a lot of information from classroom observations related to adverse affect or gate 2 - team members can share responsibilities for the different environments (OT lunch, dressing, art, PT PE recess, music, SLP library, class).

Observations can be done by anyone on the evaluation team

In school:
- Reported in writing
- By trained personnel
- By someone other than classroom teacher

Should address:
- Effect of classroom environment on student
- Teacher/peer interactions
- Ability to benefit from materials, curriculum and instructional methods
- Ability to follow oral and written directions
- Ability to communicate ideas in oral and written form
- Ability to attend to instruction and complete assignments on time
- Other observable student characteristics or instructional conditions adversely impacting student

Need for Specialized Instruction
Gate Three

- Does the student require supports and services above the regular and remedial program in order to have an appropriate education?
Need for Special Education
A student must require specialized instruction in order to be eligible for special education.

Specialized instruction means adapting the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction and is remedial and/or adaptive in nature;

- To address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability; and
- To ensure access to or participation of the child to the general curriculum

Need for Special Education
A child that requires only related services such as; behavior plans, social skills instruction, counseling, O.T., P.T., transportation, etc is not deemed to be a child with a need for special education services

Working with the Team to Design the Evaluation Plan Questions
- Think about what you want to know
- Know the purpose of the questions you are asking
  - Eligibility
  - Adverse Effect
  - Need for Specialized Instruction or supports/accommodations
- Ask questions that are practical and that will get you information you can use
Example of Questions
Related Service Providers Might Help You Answer

- Eligibility
  - EEE - Does Johnny have a 40% delay in motor skills?
  - If student is not in EEE, there are no OT/PT related eligibility questions.

- Adverse Effect
  - Suzie has difficulty with written expression. Is there a motor component to this challenge?
  - Johnny has difficulty participating during PE. Is there a motor component to this challenge? What accommodations or supports would help support his participation?
  - Due to his disability are there activities within the school setting that Daniel has difficulty participating in or that will require specialized instruction or accommodations?
  - Julie is unable to attend to dress/undress for recess and after using the toilet? What is causing these challenges? What supports does she need?

-Specialized Instruction
  - Considering Suzie’s motor challenges, should we teach her cursive?
  - Johnny has motor challenges, what supports and accommodations does he need to participate in PE or on the playground?
  - What are Daniel’s sensory processing challenges, and what supports or accommodations does he need to participate in all group settings within school?
  - What are Jenny’s social pragmatic language skills and how do they affect her ability to interact with peers and adults in both structured and informal school settings.

Nuts and Bolts
of the Evaluation Plan

- Do not write names, just titles or positions
- Do not need to write the names of exact tests you will be giving, but you must outline the areas being tested
- You must have a face-to-face eval plan meeting and eligibility meeting for the initial evaluation
- For re-evaluation planning it is not required that you have a face to face meeting, but you must have good documentation of the eval plan discussions if you do not meet
- You must have a formal meeting if parents request one
- Consider the assistive technology needs of the student
New Transition Planning Requirements

• VT rules require a statement regarding transition needs for students beginning at age 14
• Age appropriate measurable postsecondary transition goals are required in the IEP beginning at age 16
• Age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and independent living skills, to develop the transition goals
• When student graduates or exits due to age, the LEA must write a summary of the student’s academic achievement and functional performance and provide recommendations on how to assist the child in meeting his/her postsecondary goals

What Does a Written Evaluation Report Contain?

Written Evaluation Report

Documentation of eligibility:
• A determination of eligibility for special education, supported by rationale that includes:
  1) Presence or absence of a disability
  2) If there is a disability, does it have an adverse effect on educational performance in one or more basic skill areas
  3) If 1 and 2 are present, does the student need special education services to benefit from his or her educational program
Written Evaluation Report

- Evaluation Procedures used, including:
  1) Description of modifications/changes made from eval procedures specified in eval plan
  2) Changes in test administration
- Summary of educationally relevant information collected during evaluation
- Recommendations as to need for accommodations
- Initials of all team members indicating agreement of disagreement
- Written observation report if required

Tips for Reports

- Provide functional, performance-based recommendations – not recommendations for types or amounts of services
- Specifically answer the questions asked - exhaustive reports that don’t relate clearly to questions or that do not have pieces that can easily be cut and pasted to answer the evaluation plan questions are not useful
- Most helpful are performance based observations and recommendations related to helping the student access, participate, or succeed in the school environment or extracurricular activities or needs

If a child is not found eligible

- May refer to EST or other programs
- Must report services/and or accommodations needs to building principal.
- 504 is not a consolation prize
  - Must have a disability
  - Have significant impact on a major life activity
  - 504 plans do include services - actually in the law there is no language about accommodations
  - Look at language if you are not familiar with it
Independent Evaluations

• After school has completed their evaluation, the parent may request an independent evaluation at no cost to them if they disagree with the evaluation
• School may keep a list of qualified independent evaluators
• School may limit to certain region and other costs (per diems, travel expenses)
• School IEP team must seriously consider the results of such an evaluation

Independent Educational Evaluation

An ‘independent educational evaluation’ means an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the school district responsible for the education of the child

Independent Educational Evaluation

• School district shall provide parent information about where the eval may be obtained
• School district criteria (including location and qualification of examiner) shall be the same as if the school district initiated the evaluation
• Timelines and other conditions may not be imposed by the school district
• School district may pursue mediation or due process to demonstrate an independent eval obtained by parent does not meet school district criteria
• If a hearing is initiated and the final decision is that the school district’s eval is appropriate, the parent has the right to an independent eval, but not at the school’s expense
Independent Educational Evaluation

• School district may ask why parents want an independent eval but the parents are not required to answer. School districts may not unreasonably delay the independent eval or the initiation of due process.
• If parent obtains independent eval at private expense, results of evaluation:
  A. Shall be considered by EPT whenever it makes decision, with respect to provision of FAPE
  B. May be presented as evidence at a hearing regarding the child
• If hearing officer requests independent eval, school must comply at no cost to parent

Tiered Activities to Apply Knowledge

• Choose one activity to complete as a large or small group
  • RtI Action Planning
  • Adverse Effect Case Study
  • Questions and Tools
• Create a visual representation of your work to share with the larger audience

ACTIVITIES