

Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureaus of Special Education and Early Intervention Special Education and Preschool Early Intervention Evaluations & Virtual Assessment Guidance

Local education agencies (LEAs) and Preschool Early Intervention (PS EI) programs must provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of eligible young children and students with disabilities and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, LEAs and PS EI may not be able to provide all services in the same manner they are typically provided. [Educational and related services and supports may need to be adjusted accordingly.](#)

PDE recognizes the physical and psychological well-being of students, families, educators and communities are the immediate and overriding priority. There are concerns about conducting evaluations during this turbulent time of crisis and the inherent difficulty in ethically, validly, and reliably administering certain types of measures virtually.

PDE has considered the unique challenges the COVID-19 pandemic presents regarding Early Intervention and special education evaluations and virtual assessment. The Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureaus of Special Education (BSE) and Early Intervention (EI) supports evaluations and assessment practices that require in-person testing or observations that cannot be done remotely being postponed until school reopens or face-to-face EI services resume. The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights' guidance states, "If an evaluation of a student with a disability requires a face-to-face assessment or observation, the evaluation would need to be delayed until school reopens. Initial evaluations and re-evaluations that do not require face-to-face assessments or observations may take place while schools are closed, so long as a student's parent or legal guardian consents."

What standardized evaluation tools are permitted when using virtual practices to help determine eligibility for Early Intervention services?

Evaluators are asked to review individual tool protocols and publisher guidance regarding implementation of a standardized tool using virtual practices. It is recommended that if the assessment is conducted through virtual practices that video observation be used as much as possible to increase scoring reliability on items that may be unclear. Evaluators should use their professional judgement to help interpret scoring as they will not be conducted under standardized conditions. Remember, tests don't make decisions, qualified professionals do. [View information from the publishers of commonly used evaluation tools in Early Intervention](#), as gathered by Early Intervention Technical Assistance.

May counseling be provided virtually to students during the closure?

Yes. Counseling to address emotional difficulties associated with COVID-19 may be provided through virtual means. Counseling should be conducted through platforms specifically designed for that purpose.

May standardized tests such as IQ tests or formal achievement tests be administered virtually?

No. Standardized tests such as IQ tests, or formal achievement tests are not designed to be administered virtually. The administration of such tests must be given through the means in which they were developed and standardized to be considered valid and reliable. Deviations from standardization must be reported and, at times, can invalidate test results which could potentially impact eligibility determinations. Therefore, evaluations that require in-person testing or observations should be postponed until school reopens.

May LEAs conduct evaluations and/or re-evaluations that require in-person testing during the closure?

No. Federal law requires LEAs to ensure that assessments and other evaluation materials used to assess a child are used for the purposes for which the assessments or measures are valid and reliable and are administered in accordance with any instructions provided by the producer of the assessment. For purposes of identifying a child with a specific learning disability, direct observation and certain assessments cannot be administered through means other than face-to-face. A comprehensive and individualized evaluation, initial or re-evaluation, for these children require direct classroom-based observation of these children in their typical learning environment to document their academic performance and behavior in areas of difficulty.

May LEAs conduct evaluations and/or re-evaluations that do not require in-person testing during the closures?

Yes. If the evaluation or reevaluation does not require in-person testing or observation, it may be completed while the school building is closed, with parent consent, and in accordance with the LEA's policies, practices, and procedures.

Will a remote evaluation and/or re-evaluation be considered an "assessment conducted under standard conditions?"

No. Remote evaluations conducted while students are in their homes are not considered standard conditions.

For a child transitioning from PS EI into Kindergarten, may an LEA adopt or revise the IEP for a child with the disability category of Development Delay (DD) for Kindergarten?

Yes. LEAs may adopt or revise the current preschool IEP and issue a NOREP to provided services in Kindergarten.

For children transitioning from PS EI into Kindergarten, must LEAs conduct a re-evaluation for a child with the disability category of DD prior to beginning Kindergarten?

No. LEAs must consider each child individually to determine if a re-evaluation is necessary prior to beginning Kindergarten. LEAs must re-evaluate each child prior to the child reaching the LEA's age of beginners.

May an LEA identify a school age child as having a DD following a school age re-evaluation?

No. An LEA may not identify a child with a DD once they begin Kindergarten.

Will a Kindergarten student that transitioned from PS EI with DD be included in the December 1 Child Count collection?

No. DD is not a reportable category for the December 1 Child Count collection.

For a child transitioning from PS EI into 1st grade, may an LEA adopt or revise the IEP for a child with the disability category of DD for 1st grade?

No. LEAs must re-evaluate a student with a DD prior to beginning 1st grade.

References

School Code

11 P.S. §§ 875-101 – 875-502

24 P.S. Article XIII

State Board of Education Regulations

22 Pa. Code Chapters 11 & 14

Federal Law

20 U.S.C. §§ 1400 et seq. (IDEA)

Federal Regulations

34 C.F.R. Part 300