

Autism Eligibility Guidelines



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Education

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Part 1: Worksheet and Supporting Information

Worksheet for Determination of Eligibility for Special Education Services Under the Classification of Autism

How to Use the Worksheet

Introduction

The worksheet is designed to support open dialogue and a decision-making framework for determining eligibility for special education services under the disability category of Autism. The Planning and Placement Team (PPT) completes this worksheet collaboratively when determining the eligibility.

First complete the demographics section at the top of the worksheet, noting the student's: a) full name, b) date of birth, c) grade, d) district name, e) school name, f) date of the PPT meeting during which the worksheet was completed, and g) the names and roles of all PPT members present during the completion of the worksheet. At the end of the worksheet, the PPT will note the date the worksheet was completed. The worksheet completion date should be the same as the date of the PPT meeting.

The worksheet should then be followed sequentially from top to bottom, with the PPT engaging in discussions on each eligibility step in the order presented and coming to a consensus on each eligibility question. When consensus cannot be reached, the PPT should document dissenting opinions in the notes section at the bottom of the worksheet and/or in the PPT summary. The information in these guidelines can be utilized when additional guidance is needed to make a decision on each step. It is recommended that the worksheet and guidelines be reviewed when planning for the eligibility determination process in order to make sure the appropriate evaluations are conducted and the appropriate data are collected.

Coordination and collaboration between school and home are crucial throughout the eligibility process for any disability category. Parents are meaningful participants in the PPT and should be supported in attending and participating in the eligibility PPT meeting. See 34 C.F.R. § 300.322. In addition, 34 C.F.R. § 300.321 states that, whenever appropriate, the child with a disability should be included in the PPT.

Please note: Many steps in this worksheet focus on areas of concern in order to determine if special education services are needed. However, it is critical for the PPT to also discuss and incorporate the student's areas of strength and interests. The PPT should aim to ensure the discussions are balanced between discussing areas of need and discussing areas of strength, in order to ensure a neurodiversity-affirming, person-centered approach to education.

Step 1: IDEA Definition

Step 1 of the eligibility determination process is for the PPT to review the IDEA definition of Autism as a team. The IDEA defines Autism as one (1) of thirteen (13) special education primary disability categories. For a student to meet criteria for special education services under the disability category of Autism, the PPT needs to determine that all parts of the IDEA Autism definition have been met. Reviewing the IDEA definition of Autism as a team provides a reminder that the purpose of the meeting is to determine eligibility pursuant to the IDEA, and not to confirm or deny a medical or clinical diagnosis.

IDEA Autism Definition Breakdown: Parents, students, and other PPT members may need the definition broken down in order to fully understand the terms used. [See Appendix B](#) for a breakdown of the terms used in the IDEA definition of Autism.

Autism Eligibility Determination Versus Autism Diagnosis: Autism is a term that is defined both as a clinical/medical disorder within the healthcare system and as an educational disability within the educational system. While there is overlap between the two (2) systems, there are also significant differences between them related to the term Autism.

Clinical/Medical Definition: Autism as a clinical/medical disorder is made by a professional with expertise in evaluating children with a variety of behavioral and emotional disorders, typically a psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, neuropsychologist, specially trained neurologist, or developmental pediatricians. The diagnosis is based on the Diagnostic Statistical Manual, 5th Edition, text revised (DSM-V-TR). A clinical/medical diagnosis of Autism is not required in order for a child to receive special education services.

Educational Definition: Autism as an educational classification is one (1) of thirteen (13) primary disability categories outlined in the IDEA legislation. In order to receive special education services under the classification of Autism, a PPT must follow the steps of this worksheet, or a similar process, to determine that all aspects of the IDEA definition of Autism are met. As such, the educational classification of Autism is not necessarily synonymous with the clinical/medical diagnosis of the same child. For example, a child could have a clinical diagnosis of Autism that is not adversely affecting their educational performance. In this case, the student would not be eligible for special education services under the classification of Autism.

If the PPT checks "Yes," [continue to Step 2](#) (below).

If the PPT checks "No," STOP and review the definition, ensuring all members of the PPT have a chance to ask clarifying questions. Then, check "Yes" and [continue to Step 2](#) (below).

Step 2: Evaluation/Data

In Step 2, the PPT determines whether the evaluation and the available data are sufficiently comprehensive to identify all the child's special education and related services needs. To complete this step, check yes or no, and document which assessments and data sources were considered during the eligibility meeting.

Evaluations: 34 C.F.R. § 300.532(g) requires that a child be assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability. Standardized assessment of cognitive functioning, adaptive skills, executive function, social/emotional, speech/language/communication, academic achievement, sensory profiles, and motor foundation/motor planning, may add valuable information but must be determined on a case-by-case basis. The PPT should also consider incorporating results of hearing screenings and behavior assessments, if deemed necessary. If the student is fourteen (14) years of age or older, vocational and interest assessments must be administered. Reports from outside evaluators, as well as input from community and in-home providers, should be considered when completing the worksheet.

A strong evaluation will include:

- *Parental input, including a developmental history:* The developmental history is important because certain characteristics in the definition may not be currently exhibited, but the child may have a history of displaying them.
- *Multi-method, multi-informant:* A strong evaluation will include multiple methods, including, for example, rating scales, review of educational records, interviews, observations, and direct assessments. Input from multiple informants, including the family and the school-based team, should also be included.
- *Autism-specific instrument:* When determining if a child meets the criteria for classification in the category of Autism, Autism-specific measures should be part of the evaluation process. Examples of well-validated assessment tools are included in [Appendix D](#).

- *Assessment of Strengths:* Identification of the student's strengths is necessary to develop a supportive learning environment for the child.
- *Cultural/linguistic/socio-economic considerations:* Strong evaluations will consider relevant cultural factors, linguistic factors, and socio-economic factors. The evaluation should be administered in the student's primary language.

Who should conduct the assessment? Administrators must ensure that assessments are administered by trained and knowledgeable personnel and are administered in accordance with any instructions provided by the producers of the assessments. See 34 C.F.R. 300.304. The multidisciplinary team that conducts the evaluation may include general and special educators, school psychologists, school nurses, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and social workers. Professionals who conduct evaluations as part of an eligibility determination must meet professional criteria for assessment skills and should have specific training and experience in evaluating children with Autism.

Data Sources: Data should also be collected and analyzed to determine if the disability adversely affects the child's ability to benefit from regular education without additional supports. Standardized assessments alone cannot determine educational performance. The PPT should consider the student's functioning level within the school environment. Analysis may focus on academic, behavioral, social-emotional, or adaptive data. Consider incorporating the following data to determine adverse educational impact:

- Parent input
- Teacher input
- Educational records and reports regarding child's achievement, behavior, participation, and social/communication interaction
- Observations in school settings
- Work samples
- Attendance records
- Criterion-referenced assessment (i.e., assessments that measure a student's performance against a set of predetermined criteria or standards)
- Curriculum-based assessment and benchmarks (i.e., assessments that measure a student's understanding and proficiency in a specific area of study)
- Measures of academic achievement
- Intervention and progress monitoring data

A note about co-occurring disabilities: Research suggests that the majority of individuals diagnosed with Autism also have at least one (1) other co-occurring disability or mental health condition, including, for example, anxiety, depression, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Autism Research Institute, 2021). As such, a thorough evaluation is imperative in order to guide a discussion around appropriate supports, as well as the disability category or categories that are impacting the student's educational performance.

What should occur if evaluation and data components are inconsistent or varied? It is the job of the PPT to combine and integrate data and evaluation results. When evaluation components are inconsistent or varied, the PPT should consider possible reasons, and obtain additional information, if needed.

If the PPT checks "Yes," [continue to Step 3](#).

If the PPT checks "No," STOP and [skip to Step 7](#). Check off: "Evaluation data are insufficient to determine eligibility. The PPT will determine next steps."

Step 3: Characteristics of Autism

In Step 3, the PPT determines whether there is evidence of behaviors in two (2) broad areas related to the IDEA definition of Autism; a) verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, and b) restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior. Step 3 provides examples of behaviors that fall under the two (2) categories. Though a clinical diagnosis is not being made, the DSM-5-TR definition of Autism is used as a guide to provide illustrative examples under each area, as these examples align with many Autism-specific instruments that are typically used during the eligibility process.

In this step, the PPT considers each broad category separately. Using the information gathered from the evaluation and data sources, along with clinical judgment, the PPT discusses each example area and checks each box for which there is evidence of the characteristic. Then, the PPT writes in all relevant evidence of the Autism characteristics related to the category. The check boxes serve as a graphic organizer to help PPTs determine which evidence to include. If there is no convincing evidence of the category, the PPT can write “no convincing evidence” or “N/A.”

What is considered “evidence” of a characteristic? In order to determine whether there is evidence of the characteristics, all available and relevant information should be combined and synthesized. When evaluation and data components are inconsistent or varied, the PPT should consider possible reasons and obtain additional information if needed. The PPT may use measure-specific clinical cut-offs and/or clinical judgment to determine whether there is evidence of behaviors across the areas.

The PPT checks “Yes” if there is convincing evidence of Autism characteristics across verbal and nonverbal communication, social interaction, and restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior. In other words, all areas of 3a should be checked and at least 2 areas of 3b should be checked.

If the PPT checks “Yes,” [continue to Step 4](#) (below). A “Yes” is necessary but not sufficient to determine eligibility for special education services.

If the PPT checks “No,” [continue to Step 7](#). If the PPT determines the child does not meet the definition of Autism, the PPT may consider another disability category.

Step 4: Educational Impact

In Step 4, the PPT determines if the Autism characteristics noted in Step 3 adversely affect the student’s educational performance. The terms “adversely affect” and “educational performance” are not specifically defined in the IDEA regulations, but additional guidance on each term is provided below.

Educational Performance: The IDEA specifies that the purpose of education is to enable the child to develop skills toward independence and meaningful community involvement as an adult. Educational performance goes beyond academic performance to also include social/emotional, functional, or behavioral skills. The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has stated that the decision around whether educational performance is adversely affected should not be based only on discrepancies in age or grade performance in academic subject areas, rather as individualized on a case-by-case basis. The IDEA and its regulations provide protections for students with high cognition and disability affecting only non-academic performance (OSEP Letter to Lilli/Felton, 1995).

Adversely Affect: The language in the federal regulations does not contain requirements of the degree to which education needs to be adversely affected. According to the OSEP, adverse impact must be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the unique needs of the student and does not require that the child has failed or been retained in a course or grade (OSEP letter to Clarke, 48, 2007). According to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), an adverse effect exists when educational performance is negatively affected because of the manifestation of the student’s disability. Evidence must exist that supports a relationship between the manifestation of the student’s disability and decreased educational performance. While an adverse effect on educational performance may imply a marked difference between the student’s academic performance and reasonable (not optimal) expectations of performance, the definition of educational performance cannot be limited to academics.

A note about masking and educational impact: According to the National Autistic Society, masking is a strategy used by some autistic people, consciously or unconsciously, to appear non-autistic. For example, autistic individuals may force themselves to make eye contact or suppress stimming (e.g., hand flapping, rocking, humming). Masking can take a large amount of energy, and lead to exhaustion, distraction, or mental health issues that may impact the individual's educational performance. The PPT should consider whether masking may be a contributing factor impacting the student's educational performance.

If the PPT checks "Yes," [continue to Step 5](#) (below). A "Yes" is necessary but not sufficient to determine eligibility for special education services.

If the PPT checks "No," STOP and [skip to Step 7](#). Based on your answer to Step 4, check off one (1) of the following options:

- does not meet the eligibility criteria for Autism and is not eligible for special education and related services under the primary disability category of Autism.
- has a medical diagnosis of Autism but the disability does not adversely affect their education and/or does not require specially designed instruction, therefore is not eligible for special education and related services under the primary disability category of Autism.

Step 5: Rule Out(s)

In Step 5, the PPT uses the results of the evaluation(s) and available data to rule out whether certain factors may be the primary cause of the educational difficulties, instead of the suspected disability.

- *Medical Conditions:* Utilize medical reports and input from parents to determine whether a medical cause may be the primary reason for the student's educational difficulties.
- *Environmental or cultural factors:* When determining eligibility, the PPT must consider environmental and cultural factors in order to address disproportionality of racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students in special education. Examples of environmental disadvantages may include transiency, homelessness, limited access to enrichment resources, or significant home responsibilities that interfere with learning. Cultural disadvantages may include limited experiences in majority-based culture, limited involvement in organizations of any culture, or varying standards between majority-based culture and the student's culture.
- *Limited English Proficiency:* A student is not determined to be eligible for special education if the determinant factor for their educational difficulties is limited English proficiency.
- *Emotional Disability:* According to the IDEA definition of Autism, Autism does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance. In CT, the term Emotional Disability is used in lieu of emotional disturbance. If it is suspected that Emotional Disability may be the primary cause of adverse educational performance, review Connecticut's [Guidelines for Identifying and Educating Students with Emotional Disability](#).
- *Lack of appropriate instruction:* A student is not determined to be eligible for special education if the determinant factor is lack of instruction in areas such as reading and mathematics, or lack of instruction due to issues with school attendance.

If the PPT checks "Yes," [continue to Step 6](#).

If the PPT checks "No," STOP here and discuss what support the student requires in order to address the rule-out factor.

Step 6: Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

In Step 6, the PPT uses the information from the evaluation(s) and available data to determine if the student requires specially designed instruction (SDI). SDI is defined in the IDEA as “adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction— (i) To address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability; and (ii) To ensure access of the child to the general curriculum...” See 34 C.F.R. § 300.39(b)(3). SDI does not include accommodation or differentiation. SDI is also not a placement, place, or the addition of a staff member. SDI is applicable to all areas of educational performance, including academics, social/emotional functioning, functional or adaptive skills, and skills related to behavior in school.

If the student does not require SDI, the PPT may consider eligibility for support under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

If the PPT checks “Yes,” [continue to Step 7](#) (below).

If the PPT checks “No,” [continue to Step 7](#) (below), checking off one (1) of the following:

- does not meet the eligibility criteria for Autism and is not eligible for special education and related services under the primary disability category of Autism.
- meets the eligibility criteria for Autism but the disability does not adversely affect their education and/or does not require specially designed instruction, therefore is not eligible for special education and related services under the primary disability category of Autism.

Step 7: Conclusion

In the final step, the PPT makes a determination based on the responses from Steps 1–6. If the PPT responded “Yes” to all questions, the student qualifies for special education services under the disability category of Autism, and the PPT can start to plan for the student’s IEP. See below for suggestions relevant to each determination in Step 7:

Case example

- *Conclusion:* Meets the eligibility criteria for Autism and is eligible for special education and related services.
Suggested Next Step: The PPT uses the results of the evaluation(s) and available data to plan for the student’s IEP. [See additional information and resources in Part 2.](#)
- *Conclusion:* Does not meet the eligibility criteria for Autism and is not eligible for special education and related services under the primary disability category of Autism.
Suggested Next Step: The PPT should consider other primary disability categories for the purpose of eligibility. A new referral can be made at any time if there are changes in the student’s educational performance.
- *Conclusion:* Has a medical diagnosis of Autism but the disability does not adversely impact their education and/or does not require specially designed instruction, therefore is not eligible for special education and related services under the primary disability category of Autism.
Suggested Next Step: No additional steps are needed from the PPT. [See Part 2](#) for additional information and resources for the student and family. A new referral can be made at any time if there are changes in the student’s educational performance.
- *Conclusion:* Evaluation data are insufficient to determine eligibility. The PPT will determine next steps.
Suggested Next Step: The PPT should discuss what additional data are needed, make a plan to gather the data, and reconvene when the information has been gathered. When the PPT reconvenes, a new worksheet should be completed, starting at Step 1.



Part 2: After eligibility determination has been made

Resources for districts

- [Autism Spectrum Disorder-ASD Related Resources from the State](#)

Resources for families

- [A Parent's Guide to Special Education in Connecticut](#)
- [Before, During, and After the PPT Meeting](#)
- [Waiver for Persons with Autism from the Department of Social Services](#)
- [Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center \(CPAC\)](#)
- [Transition Bill of Rights](#)
- [Start Here: a guide for parents of autistic kids](#)

Resources for students

- [Autistic Self Advocacy Network \(ASAN\)](#)
- [Transition Bill of Rights](#)
- [Additional Resources for Students from the CSDE](#)
- [Welcome to the Autistic Community](#)



Part 3: Background Information

Purpose of the CSDE Autism Eligibility Worksheet

The purpose of the CSDE Autism Eligibility Worksheet is to provide a brief overview to assist PPTs in the process of determining special education eligibility under the category of Autism.

Summary of the Revision Process

The original report of the Connecticut Task Force on Issues for the Education of Children with Autism (Task Force Report) was published in 1996 and was written with an emphasis on strong collaboration between home and school in the education of children with Autism. The Task Force Report was revised in 1998 and in 2005. Each revision incorporated changes in relevant Federal and State legislation, as well as additional changes in research findings related to Autism Spectrum Disorders.

To keep current with additional changes in legislation, research, and best practice, the CSDE began the process of a revision to the Guidelines for Identification and Education of Children and Youth with Autism in 2024. The process resulted in an updated worksheet for determining special education eligibility under the classification of Autism and accompany guidelines providing supporting information to complete the worksheet which supersedes the previous version.

The process of revision occurred in two (2) phases: a needs assessment phase and a revision phase.

Needs assessment: A comprehensive multi-method, multi-informant needs assessment was conducted in order to learn from as many perspectives as possible. The needs assessment included:

A comprehensive literature review: focusing on updated research relevant to Autism special education eligibility and assessment, as well as a review of Autism eligibility guidelines from other states.

Focus groups: Before the worksheet and guidelines were revised, a series of focus groups were conducted in order to gain more insights around what participants like about the current worksheet and guidelines, what they want addressed, and what questions they have. The focus groups included attorneys, school psychologists, directors of special education, program directors, PPT chairs, and a member of CPAC.

Survey of school professionals: A widely spread virtual survey was completed by over 100 staff members who work in schools and intersect with Autism eligibility. The survey asked questions about what participants like about the current worksheet and guidelines, what they want addressed, and what questions they have.

Survey of families: Families who have been through the eligibility process were also asked to complete a survey to gain insights from the parent perspective of what they like about the current worksheet and guidelines, what they want addressed, and what questions they have.

Revision: The results of the needs assessment were combined and analyzed to create a checklist of revisions. The checklist was used to revise the worksheet and accompanying guidelines. The focus groups then came together again to review and provide feedback on the updated worksheet and guidelines. The document was posted for public comment to gain additional feedback. The additional feedback was then incorporated.

Goals of the CSDE Autism Eligibility Worksheet

The following goals were identified through focus group discussions and survey results:

- Align the updated worksheet to keep current with research, and state and federal mandates.
- Provide consistent statewide guidance to PPTs regarding determining eligibility for special education under the disability category of Autism in a way that is current with the research, and state and federal mandates.
- Provide a decision-making framework that facilitates conversations between all members of the PPT.
- Break down the legislation on special education eligibility in terms that are accessible to all members of the PPT.
- Provide clarity around a) best practices in evaluation of Autism, b) determining educational impact, c) ensure documents have accessible language, enough illustrative examples, and functional definitions of key terms.

Worksheet for Determination of Eligibility for Special Education Services Under the Classification of Autism

Name of Student: _____ School: _____
Date of Birth: _____ Date of PPT Meeting: _____
Grade: _____ PPT Members Present: _____
District: _____

Directions: The planning and placement team (PPT) should complete this worksheet collaboratively when determining the eligibility for special education services under the disability category of Autism. Prior to completing the worksheet, the PPT should review the [How to Use the Worksheet](#) or clarifying information on how to complete each step.

Eligibility Step 1: [Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act \(IDEA\) definition](#)

34 C.F.R. § 300.8(c)(1)

- (i) Autism means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction generally evident before age three (3) that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, unusual responses to sensory experiences
- (ii) Autism does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance*
- (iii) A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after age three (3) could be identified as having autism if the criteria in paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section are satisfied.

**Emotional disturbance is referred to as Emotional Disability in Connecticut.*

The PPT reviewed the IDEA definition of Autism as a team to establish a shared understanding of the term.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Eligibility Step 2: [Evaluation/Data](#)

Note below which assessments and data sources were considered during this eligibility determination, and the area(s) the assessment/data targeted:

- Assessment/Area

The PPT reviewed the evaluation/data and discussed whether the information is sufficiently comprehensive to identify all the child's special education and related services needs.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Eligibility Step 3: [Characteristics of Autism](#)

Review the characteristics associated with Autism below. For each check box, the PPT should determine whether there is evidence of the characteristic. For each box checked, provide specific evidence of the characteristic. Use the information to answer the question below (3c).

3a: Verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Differences in **nonverbal communication used for social interaction**, which may include differences in use of eye contact, facial expressions, body language, or understanding and use of gestures, differences in speech volume, prosody, pitch, rate, or rhythm.
- ☐ Differences in **verbal communication used for social interactions**, which may include differences in back-and-forth conversation, sharing of interests, emotions, or affect, or initiating or responding to social interactions.
- ☐ Differences in **developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships**, which may include difficulties adjusting behavior to suit various social contexts; difficulties in sharing imaginative play or in making friends; absence of interest in peers.

*Provide evidence below for each area checked related to **verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction**, based on evaluations, observations, and clinical judgment.*

- Evidence

3b: Restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Stereotyped or repetitive body movements, use of objects, or speech (e.g., lining up toys or flipping objects, rocking, flicking, repeating words, phrases or sounds without understanding them, idiosyncratic phrases).
- ☐ Insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines, or ritualized patterns of behavior (e.g., extreme distress at small changes, difficulties with transitions, rigid thinking patterns).
- ☐ Highly restricted, fixated interests that are atypical in intensity or focus (e.g., strong attachment to or preoccupation with certain objects or topics).
- ☐ Hyper- or hypo reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment (e.g., indifference to pain/temperature, adverse response to specific sounds or textures, excessive smelling or touching of objects, visual fascination with lights or movement).

*Provide evidence below for each area checked related to **restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior**, based on evaluations, observations, and clinical judgment.*

- Evidence

3c:

The PPT determined there is evidence of the following: a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication, social interaction, and restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior. To check “yes,” all areas of 3a should be checked and at least 2 areas in 3b should be checked.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Eligibility Step 4: [Educational Impact](#)

At least one (1) of the following areas of educational performance is impacted significantly (*check all that apply*):

- ☐ Academic
- ☐ Social/emotional
- ☐ Functional/adaptive/life skills
- ☐ Behavioral
- ☐ Based on (*note the evaluation/data sources used to determine educational impact below*):
 - Evaluation/data sources

Based on the evaluation, data, and clinical judgment, an adverse effect on educational performance was found. In other words, the student is performing significantly below age or developmental expectations due to the suspected area of disability.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Eligibility Step 5: [Rule Out\(s\)](#)

Check the box of the factors that have been ruled out by the PPT:

- ☐ Medical conditions
- ☐ Environmental or cultural factors
- ☐ Limited English proficiency
- ☐ Emotional Disability
- ☐ Lack of appropriate instruction

All the following contributing factors have been ruled out as the primary cause of the student's unsatisfactory progress in school.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Eligibility Step 6: [Specially Designed Instruction \(SDI\)](#)

SDI is needed in at least one (1) of the following areas of educational performance:

- **Academic** (e.g., specialized reading, writing, or math program; explicit instruction on strategies to access the curriculum)
- **Social/emotional** (e.g., explicit instruction in social skills or social problem-solving)
- **Functional** (e.g., life skills/adaptive/vocational curriculum)
- **Behavioral** (e.g., 1:1 support in learning and using coping skills)

**Note: examples are not exhaustive.*

Based on the evaluation, data, and clinical judgment, the student requires specially designed instruction (SDI) related to the areas of the suspected disability, beyond differentiation and accommodations.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Eligibility Step 7: [Conclusion](#)

The PPT has reviewed the information presented and has made the determination that the student:

- ☐ meets the eligibility criteria for Autism and is eligible for special education and related services.
- ☐ does not meet the eligibility criteria for Autism and is not eligible for special education and related services under the primary disability category of Autism.
- ☐ has a medical diagnosis of Autism but the disability does not adversely affect their education and/or does not require specially designed instruction, therefore is not eligible for special education and related services under the primary disability category of Autism.
- ☐ Evaluation data are insufficient to determine eligibility. The PPT will determine next steps.

See the [Autism Eligibility Decision Guide](#) for guidance on determining a conclusion.

Notes:

Best practice suggests that dissenting opinions may be documented in the recommendations or parent input section of the IEP.

Date of Worksheet Completion:

Date

Appendices

[Appendix A: List of Contributors](#)

[Appendix B: Definition of Important Terms in the IDEA Definition of Autism](#)

[Appendix C: Autism Eligibility Decision Guide](#)

[Appendix D: Validated Autism-Specific Assessment Tools](#)

[Appendix E: References](#)

Appendix A:

List of Contributors

The CSDE acknowledges the contributions of the following:

- Dr. Jennifer Connolly, EASTCONN
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Appendix B:

Definition of Important Terms in the IDEA Definition of Autism

IDEA: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), most recently updated in 2004, ensures access to a free and appropriate public education to all students with disabilities. This act provides guidance to public agencies on how to provide early intervention, special education, and related services to students with disabilities.

Developmental disability: A condition related to physical, learning, language, or behavior impairments. These impairments often begin during a child's developmental period and can result in impacts to day-to-day living (CDC, n.d.).

Verbal communication: The way a person uses spoken language to express themselves.

Nonverbal communication: The way a person communicates without spoken language include facial expressions, body language, gestures, eye contact, or use of personal space.

Adversely affects: An adverse effect exists when educational performance is negatively affected because of the manifestation of the student's disability. Evidence must exist that supports a relationship between the manifestation of the student's disability and decreased educational performance. While an adverse effect on educational performance may imply a marked difference between the student's academic performance and reasonable (not optimal) expectations of performance, the definition of educational performance cannot be limited to academics.

Repetitive activities and stereotyped movements: Behaviors or actions that are repeated over and over, often in a set pattern or routine.

Sensory experiences: Sensory input from the world, like sights, sounds, smells, textures, and tastes.

Emotional Disturbance: Condition in which a child has significant difficulties in managing emotions and behaviors, which affects their ability to succeed in a typical educational setting. This category is meant to cover a variety of emotional and behavioral issues that can interfere with a student's learning. In Connecticut, this is referred to as Emotional Disability.

Appendix C:

Autism Eligibility Decision Guide

Step 1: [Focus on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#):

The PPT reviewed the IDEA definition of Autism.

- If checked "No": Review the IDEA definition at the PPT. Check Yes after the definition has been reviewed thoroughly.
- If checked "Yes": Continue to Step 2.

Step 2: [Evaluation/Data](#):

The evaluation is sufficiently comprehensive to identify all the child's special education and related services needs.

- If checked "No": Go to Step 7 and check:
Evaluation data are insufficient to determine eligibility. The PPT will determine next steps.
- If checked "Yes": Continue to Step 3.

Step 3: [Autism Characteristics](#):

Was there evidence of Autism characteristics?

- If checked "No": Go to Step 7.
- If checked "Yes": Continue to Step 4.

Step 4: [Educational Impact](#):

Based on the evaluation, data, and clinical judgment, an adverse effect on education performance was found.

- If Step 3 checked "No", and Step 4 checked "No": Continue to Step 7 and check:
does not meet the eligibility criteria for Autism and is not eligible for special education and related services under the primary disability category of Autism.
- If Step 3 checked "No", and Step 4 checked "Yes": Continue to Step 7 and check:
does not meet the eligibility criteria for Autism and is not eligible for special education and related services under the primary disability category of Autism.
Note that the PPT may decide to evaluate for a different disability category.
- If Step 3 checked "Yes", and Step 4 checked "No": Continue to Step 7 and check:
meets the eligibility criteria for Autism but the disability does not adversely affect their education and/or does not require specially designed instruction, therefore is not eligible for special education and related services under the primary disability category of Autism.
- If Step 3 checked "Yes", and Step 4 checked "Yes": Continue to Step 5.

Step 5: [Rule Out\(s\)](#):

All of the following contributing factors have been ruled out as the primary cause of the student's educational difficulties.

- If checked "No": Continue to Step 7 and check:
meets the eligibility criteria for Autism but the disability does not adversely impact their education and/or does not require specially designed instruction, therefore is not eligible for special education and related services under the primary disability category of Autism.
- If checked "Yes": Continue to Step 6.

Step 6: [Specially Designed Instruction \(SDI\)](#):

Based on the evaluation, data, and clinical judgment, the student requires SDI related to the areas of the suspected disability, beyond differentiation, accommodations, and modifications.

- If checked "No": Continue to Step 7 and check:
meets the eligibility criteria for Autism but the disability does not adversely affect their education and/or does not require specially designed instruction, therefore is not eligible for special education and related services under the primary disability category of Autism.
- If checked "Yes": Continue to Step 7 and check:
meets the eligibility criteria for Autism and is eligible for special education and related services.

Appendix D:

Validated Autism-Specific Assessment Tools

The following table lists examples of validated Autism-specific measures. The list is by no means exhaustive but provides some information about measures commonly used when assessing a school-aged child. It is critical that evaluators be trained and experienced in the measures chosen. It is equally important that parents/caretakers be familiar with what the measures are attempting to identify and how that information will be used to help plan for their child.

Name of Instrument	Ages Covered	Brief Description
Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised (ADI-R) (Western Psychological Services)	12+ months	A standardized diagnostic interview that solicits detailed information from caregivers regarding social interaction, communication, and behavior. Yields classification as ASD or not. Requires training and extensive time to administer. Good evidence of reliability and validity.
Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, Second Edition (ADOS-2) (Western Psychological Services)	12+ months	Series of semi-structured tasks designed to elicit social communication, and social interactive skills and play. Trained clinicians provide ratings of reciprocal interaction and communication skills, which yield a classification as Autism or ASD. Good evidence of reliability and validity.
Childhood Autism Rating Scale, Second Edition (CARS-2) (American Guidance Service)	2+ years	Widely used direct observational tool designed to be used by a trained clinician. A cutoff score identifies a child as falling within the autistic range (mild, moderate, severe) or not. Good evidence of reliability when based upon adequate sample of behavior.
Autism Screening Instrument for Educational Planning (ASIEP-2) (ProEd)	18 months–adult	Screening instrument that can provide a profile of abilities in spontaneous verbal behavior, social interaction, education level, and learning characteristics. Typically, administered by school psychologists or teachers, this tool is used for educational planning.
Autism Behavior Checklist (ABC)	3 years–adult	This brief checklist is included in the ASIEP and is designed to be completed by parents or teachers. The ABC may be used to identify behaviors associated with Autism and may help structure observations. Its relationship to diagnosis is unclear.

Name of Instrument	Ages Covered	Brief Description
Gilliam Autism Rating Scale, Third Edition (GARS-3) American Guidance Service	3–22 years	Brief checklist of behaviors associated with Autism. It is designed to be completed by parents and clinicians. Relationship to diagnosis remains unclear.
Diagnostic Interview for Social and Communication Disorders (DISCO)	All ages	320-item semi-structured interview used by clinicians to elicit information from caregivers about the individual's profile of development and behavior
Social Responsiveness Scale, Second Edition (SRS-2)	4–18 years	A 65-item, parent-report, ordinally scaled (1= "not true" to 4= "almost always true") quantitative assessment of the severity of Autism traits. It is one (1) of the most frequently used quantitative measures of Autism symptoms (Constantino & Gruber, 2012).
Social Communication Questionnaire (SCQ)	4+ years	The lifetime version of the SCQ is a parent-report dichotomously keyed (yes/no) rating scale that consists of 40 questions many of which tap DSM-IV-TR symptom domains (Rutter et al., 2003)

Appendix E:

References

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