

Evaluation and Eligibility Practices

Leadership Conference
Wichita Airport Hilton
July 29, 2011

Agenda

- Review revisions to Chapter 3 in the Process Handbook: Initial Evaluation and Eligibility
- Review models for conducting initial evaluation
 - Response to Intervention
 - Patterns of strengths and weaknesses
- Review revisions to Eligibility Indicators document.
- Plans for training during 2011-12 regarding evaluation and eligibility determination practices

Chapter 3 in Process Handbook

- Laws and regulations have not changed
- Mental Retardation was changed to Intellectual Disability
- Two methodologies continue to be available for evaluation and eligibility determination for all exceptionalities:
 - Response to Intervention
 - Patterns of Strength and Weakness
- Guidance with regard to using an aptitude-achievement discrepancy has changed. Teams should no longer use discrepancy as one of the criteria for identifying students as having a learning disability.

Rationale for Change

- IDEA 2004 has clarified that the determination of a severe discrepancy between IQ and achievement is not necessary in order to identify a student as having a specific learning disability. None of the federal regulations addressing special education evaluation requirements, including the additional procedures for SLD identification, indicate that any particular assessment or combination of assessments must be conducted.

Rationale for Change

- There is little scientific basis for using this approach, and a substantial body of evidence has concluded that discrepancy models do not accurately identify students with learning disabilities.
- There is no objective way to separate out the effects of environmental, sensory, cultural, and emotional factors, each of which may contribute to learning problems but fail to meet the exclusionary criterion that they are the primary cause of them.

Models for Evaluation and Eligibility

- Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS)
 - Most data are collected via a systems approach for screening and monitoring intervention outcomes.
 - Additional data collected for individual students if needed.
- Pattern of Strengths and Weaknesses
 - Most data is collected through an individual student approach for screening and monitoring intervention outcomes.
 - Additional data collected for individual students if needed.

Appropriate Testing Practices

- Evaluation teams must decide which tests are appropriate to use given the referral question and what type of assessment is needed to answer questions about an individual student's need for intervention and support.
- Eliminating the use of IQ-achievement discrepancy for eligibility determination does not mean eliminating the appropriate use of IQ and achievement tests.

Eligibility Determination

- Eligibility decisions for all exceptionalities should focus on student achievement within the context of age and/or grade-level standards.
- Classic two-prong test still applies
 - Does data support the presence of an exceptionality?
 - Does data support the need for specially designed instruction (special education and related services)?

Eligibility Indicators Document

- Prong 1 indicators were reorganized to more explicitly match the definitions
 - This enables teams to compare data to each component of the definition
- Mental Retardation was changed to Intellectual Disability
- References to aptitude-achievement discrepancy were removed from the indicators for Learning Disability.

So what?

- No longer using discrepancy criteria is guidance and not a regulatory requirement
- Implications of continued use includes
 - Using unreliable data for instructional decisions
 - Potentially being found to have inappropriate identification practices relating to disproportionality.

TASN plans for supporting the changes...

- Updated guidance is available now
 - Chapter 3 Process Handbook
 - Revised Eligibility Indicators Document
- Fall 2011 Webinar summarizing changes
- Early 2012 State-wide training will begin regarding:
 - Evaluation utilizing both models
 - Eligibility Determination

Q & A

References

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