

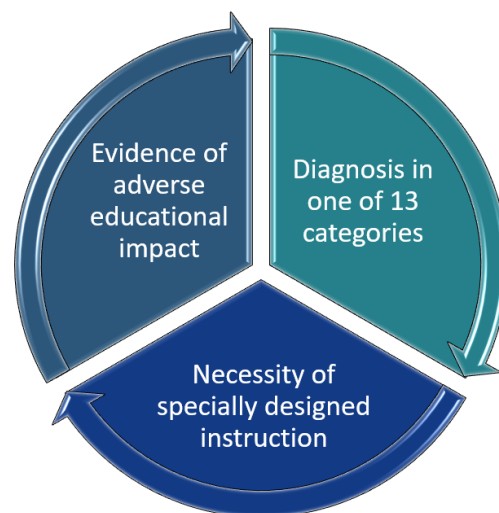


SCHOOL-BASED SLPS INFO SERIES

TOPIC #1: ELIGIBILITY

WHICH STUDENTS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SCHOOL-BASED SPEECH-LANGUAGE SERVICES?

Students are eligible for special education based on three criteria: diagnosis in one of thirteen IDEA disability categories, need for specially designed instruction, and evidence of adverse educational impact.



What are the thirteen disability categories?

- The 13 disability categories are defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Speech-language impairment is one disability category, but SLPs may see students who qualify in other disability categories as well
- The categories are: Autism, Deaf-Blindness, Emotional Disturbance, Hearing Impairment, Intellectual Disability, Developmental Delay, Multiple Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Specific Learning Disability, **Speech or Language Impairment**, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Visual Impairment

What is Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)?

“Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child... the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction—

- To address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability; and
- To ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children.”

(IDEA, 2004)

What is adverse educational impact?

- “Adverse educational impact” means that a student’s disability directly inhibits their performance in school
- Educational impact may refer to academic performance or functional performance
- Educational impact is determined through comprehensive assessment



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

If a student has a disability in one of the thirteen disability categories, are they automatically eligible for special education?

No, a student is not automatically eligible for special education (including speech-language services) if they have a disability. They must also exhibit a need for specially designed instruction and demonstrate adverse educational impact related to their disability.

Are students who are eligible for speech-language services in a medical environment automatically eligible for services in an educational environment?

No, a student is not automatically eligible for speech-language services in an educational environment simply because they are eligible for them in a medical environment. The important difference is the concept of “educational impact.” Evidence must show that a student’s disability is negatively impacting their education in order to be eligible for school-based speech-language services.

What if one team member believes the student is eligible, even though they do not meet the criteria?

Special education decisions are team-based, so one person cannot solely make that decision.

Can a student be eligible for speech-language services simply based on a standardized test score?

Eligibility for services requires comprehensive assessment including a variety of assessment tools. It cannot be based solely on a standardized test score. Standardized test scores can help us make decisions, but they are not required by law.

Does Pennsylvania follow any “cut-off scores” or “standard deviation” rules for speech-language eligibility for school-age students?

Pennsylvania does not follow any rules pertaining to “cut-off scores” or “standard deviation” levels for school-age students. Rather, SLPs in PA use comprehensive assessments to determine whether the student meets the three criteria for eligibility.

Why is it important that I follow the eligibility guidelines?

Following IDEA eligibility guidelines is important because it’s the law. There are risks to both overqualification and underqualification, including students not receiving appropriate services, students missing class unnecessarily, negative educational outcomes, SLP burnout, negative fiscal implications, and much more.

WHO MIGHT NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR SPEECH-LANGUAGE SERVICES IN THE SCHOOLS?

- A student with age-appropriate developmental articulation or language errors
- A student with autism who is an effective communicator with no educational impact
- A student with language differences that result from a second language, unless there are also difficulties in the primary language
- A student with articulation errors or dysfluencies, but no educational impact
- A student with *only* low vocabulary scores and no other indicators of impairment
- A student with an articulation impairment secondary to dental abnormality or prosthetic

These are just a few examples. Many other scenarios are possible.

Questions? Contact the PaTTAN Speech Initiative at 800-360-7282.



