



Initial Evaluation for Special Education

An evaluation is the first step in the [special education process](#). A child must have a full and individual first (or initial) evaluation to determine whether he or she has a disability and may be eligible to receive special education programs and/or services. Initials must follow a certain [timeline](#).

Consent Is Needed for Evaluations

The federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) requires the school makes you, as the parent, aware in writing (called “notice”) when the school wants to do an evaluation for your child. Parents can also request an evaluation, and they must put this request in writing. The school cannot do an evaluation until you agree in writing with a signature (called “informed consent”). Your consent is voluntary and you can withdraw consent at any time. The first time the school does an evaluation for special education is called the initial evaluation. The notice for an initial evaluation must also include information outlining your rights in a document called the [Procedural Safeguards](#).

Why an evaluation is done

A special education evaluation is done to:

1. See if your child has a disability as defined by the IDEA or [Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education \(MARSE\)](#). (Parents may be concerned about one disability, but districts must consider all suspected disabilities.)
2. Find information which helps define your child’s educational needs.
3. Provide information about appropriate educational programming for your child.

How an evaluation is done

A team of school professionals called a “multidisciplinary evaluation team” (MET) will:

- Assess your child according to your consent.
- Meet to review the information about your child.
- Make a recommendation about whether your child meets (eligibility) requirements for special education programs and/or services.

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Determining Eligibility for Special Education

The *Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education* (MARSE) defines 13 disability categories. Your child must meet the requirements in one of the disability categories to be eligible for special education services.

During the evaluation, the MET will review test results, observations, and other measures and make a recommendation to the IEP team regarding eligibility.

As a parent, you are to be provided a copy of the evaluation report. You are also part of the IEP team who decides on your child's eligibility for special education.

Learn more from the Michigan Alliance for Families about determining eligibility. For more information, go to [determining eligibility](#) and the [disability categories](#).

Evaluation Results

If your child is found eligible for special education programs and services, an individualized education program (IEP) will be developed. Areas of need found in the evaluation will become the basis for the IEP. As a parent, you will be asked to sign initial consent for the district to provide special education programs and services to your child.

If you do not agree with the results of the evaluation, you can ask for an independent educational evaluation (IEE) at the school district's expense.

Resources



[Michigan Alliance for Families: Eligibility](#)

[Michigan Alliance for Families: Evaluation](#)

- [Center for Parent Information & Resources: Evaluating Children for Disability](#)
- [Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education \(MARSE\)](#)
- [Michigan Department of Education: Guidance for Timeline for Initial Evaluations](#)