

**School Policy for Initial Evaluation Process for Special Services**  
**The Tomorrow Center**  
**Department of Special Education**

**Purpose:** To establish a clear, compliant, and collaborative process for the initial evaluation of students who may require special services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Ohio law.

**Policy Statement:** The school is committed to ensuring that all students suspected of having a disability are identified, evaluated, and provided with appropriate educational services in accordance with IDEA and Ohio state requirements. The school will adhere to a systematic and timely process involving parents, teachers, and specialized staff to determine the need for special services.

**Initial Request for Evaluation:**

**1. Parent or Guardian Request:**

- A parent or guardian may submit a formal written request for their child to be evaluated for special education services.

**2. Teacher Identification:**

- If a teacher suspects that a student may have a disability, they must document their observations and concerns and submit a formal report to the Special Education Director.

**Coordination by Special Education Director:**

1. Upon receiving a request or report, the Special Education Director will:
  - Notify the parent or guardian in writing of the request.
  - Coordinate a meeting involving the parent or guardian, the school psychologist, and relevant school personnel.
  - Outline the Response to Intervention (RTI) process and timelines.
2. The Special Education Director will ensure that parents are informed of their rights under IDEA and provide a copy of the procedural safeguards notice.

**Response to Intervention (RTI) Process:**

Statement: Will assist to reduce over identification of students in a particular category. The RTI process can not be used to delay the evaluation process.

**1. Implementation:**

- The RTI process will be initiated within 10 school days of the initial meeting. This process involves providing the student with evidence-based interventions targeted to address specific areas of concern.

**2. Monitoring and Documentation:**

- Progress will be monitored and documented over a 30-school-day period.
- Data will be reviewed collaboratively to determine if the student is responding to the interventions.

**Determination of Additional Needs:**

1. If, after 30 school days, the RTI team determines that the student's needs exceed what can be addressed through RTI:
  - The process will move to a formal evaluation conducted by the school psychologist.
  - The parent or guardian will be provided with a Prior Written Notice and consent form for the formal evaluation.
2. If the parent provides consent, the school psychologist will conduct the evaluation in accordance with IDEA and Ohio's state criteria for determining eligibility for special services.

#### **Formal Evaluation Process:**

1. The evaluation will:
  - Utilize multiple sources of data, including the student's response to scientific, research-based interventions.
  - Assess the student's academic, behavioral, and functional performance.
2. The evaluation must be completed within 60 calendar days from the date of parental consent.
3. The school will adhere to Ohio's regulations regarding the identification of students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), ensuring that:
  - A severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement is not required.
  - State criteria and scientifically based methods are used to determine eligibility.

#### **Eligibility Determination:**

1. Following the evaluation, a multidisciplinary team (including the parent) will convene to review the results and determine eligibility for special education services.
2. The decision will be based on the comprehensive evaluation data and in accordance with state and federal guidelines.

#### **Early Intervening Services (EIS):**

1. The school may allocate up to 15% of IDEA Part B funds to develop and implement EIS for students not currently identified as needing special education but requiring additional support to succeed in the general education environment.
2. The use of EIS funds will be documented and reported in compliance with state and federal regulations.

**Reporting and Compliance:** The school will maintain detailed records of all requests, interventions, evaluations, and determinations. Annual reviews will ensure compliance with IDEA and Ohio's special education regulations.

**Fidelity Team:** To ensure consistent, compliant, and high-quality implementation of the initial evaluation process, a Fidelity Team will use a **Fidelity Checklist for Initial Evaluation Process (appendix a)** to oversee procedures, review documentation, and monitor adherence to timelines and legal requirements.

#### **Membership of the Fidelity Team:**

- **Special Education Director** – Team lead; oversees compliance and coordination.
- **School Psychologist** – Ensures evaluation practices meet federal and state standards.
- **Building Administrator (Principal or Assistant Principal)** – Provides building-level oversight and ensures teacher implementation of procedures.
- **General Education Teacher (Representative)** – Provides classroom-based insights on student performance and interventions.
- **Intervention Specialist** – Shares expertise in evidence-based interventions and supports documentation fidelity.
- **School Counselor or Social Worker (if applicable)** – Contributes knowledge of student social-emotional needs and outside supports.
- **Parent/Guardian Representative (when appropriate)** – Ensures transparency and family collaboration in the process.

#### **Responsibilities of the Fidelity Team:**

1. Review all initial evaluation requests for compliance with IDEA and Ohio law.
2. Monitor the Response to Intervention (RTI) implementation and documentation to ensure fidelity.
3. Verify timelines are followed (10-day initiation of RTI, 30-day RTI documentation, 60-day evaluation completion).
4. Audit evaluation records and reports for accuracy and compliance.
5. Provide annual training for staff on evaluation procedures and updates to state/federal law.
6. Report findings and recommendations to the Department of Special Education annually.

#### **Legal References:**

- IDEA Final Regulations (Federal Register, August 14, 2006)
- Ohio Department of Education Guidelines for Special Education
- <http://idea.ed.gov>

## **Appendix A – Fidelity Checklist for Initial Evaluation Process**

The Fidelity Team will use the following checklist during reviews to ensure compliance:

### **Initial Request & Notification**

- ☐ Parent/guardian request documented in writing
- ☐ Teacher referral documented and submitted to Special Education Director
- ☐ Parent/guardian notified in writing within required timeframe
- ☐ Procedural safeguards provided

### **Coordination & RTI Process**

- ☐ Initial meeting scheduled within required timeframe
- ☐ RTI interventions initiated within 10 school days
- ☐ Evidence-based interventions documented
- ☐ Progress monitoring data collected for 30 school days
- ☐ Collaborative review of RTI data completed

### **Formal Evaluation Process**

- ☐ Prior Written Notice provided before evaluation
- ☐ Parental consent form signed and dated
- ☐ Evaluation initiated immediately upon consent
- ☐ Evaluation completed within 60 calendar days
- ☐ Multiple data sources included (academic, behavioral, functional)
- ☐ State SLD criteria applied (no reliance on discrepancy model)

### **Eligibility Determination**

- ☐ Multidisciplinary team meeting held with parent participation
- ☐ Eligibility determination based on comprehensive data
- ☐ Documentation of eligibility meeting maintained in student record

### **Compliance & Reporting**

- ☐ All timelines met (10-day RTI initiation, 30-day RTI data collection, 60-day evaluation)
- ☐ Records maintained in compliance with IDEA and Ohio law
- ☐ Fidelity Team review completed annually