



Initial Evaluation for Special Education

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

Consent Is Needed for Initial Evaluations

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) requires school districts to provide parents written notice when the school would like to evaluate your child. Parents can also contact the school to request an initial evaluation. When a parent makes a verbal request, the school will help the parent put their request in writing. The school will then have 10 school days to respond to your request by giving you prior written notice proposing or refusing to complete the initial evaluation. The notice must also include information outlining your parental rights with a document called [Procedural Safeguards](#). One of your rights is that the school cannot do an initial evaluation until you agree in writing with your signature. Your consent is voluntary, and you can withdraw consent of the initial evaluation at any time.

Why an initial evaluation is done

A special education initial 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. Identify your child's educational needs.

How an initial evaluation is done

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

- Evaluate your child.
- Meet with you to review the initial evaluation results.
- Make a recommendation to the IEP Team whether or not your child meets eligibility requirements for special education programs and/or services.

October 2024





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.

After the initial evaluation, a MET representative will meet with the IEP Team to review test results and observations, then share the MET Team's recommendation regarding student 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](#).

Initial 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 initial evaluation will become the basis for the IEP. As the parent, you must sign the 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 initial 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 \(MARSE\) With Related IDEA Federal Regulations](#) (see Initial Evaluation section)
- Michigan Department of Education:
 - » [Guidance for Timeline for Initial Evaluations](#)
 - » [Initial Evaluation Procedure for Special Education Programs and Services](#)