



A Parent's Guide to

The Initial Evaluation Process

And

The 13 Disability Categories for School Aged Students

Who are we?



- We are Arkansas' Parent Training and Information Center
- We are a statewide organization with regional mentors
- We are funded by The U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), grants, and private donations.

Parent Training & Information Centers

Serve

Serve families of children from birth to age 26 with disabilities

Help

Help families and other agencies understand the benefits of IDEA & Section 504

Provide

Provide a variety of free services: individual support, workshops, publications, community events, social media connections, etc,

Work

Work together with stakeholders to improve outcomes for youth & adults with disabilities

Our Director Shelby Knight





Meet our Team!

<https://thecenterforexceptionalfamilies.org/our-team/parent-mentors/>



Goals for this presentation

- Understand the initial evaluation process for Special Education services.
- Learn about required meetings, timelines, and paperwork
- Understand disability categories and criteria for services

The Referral Conference

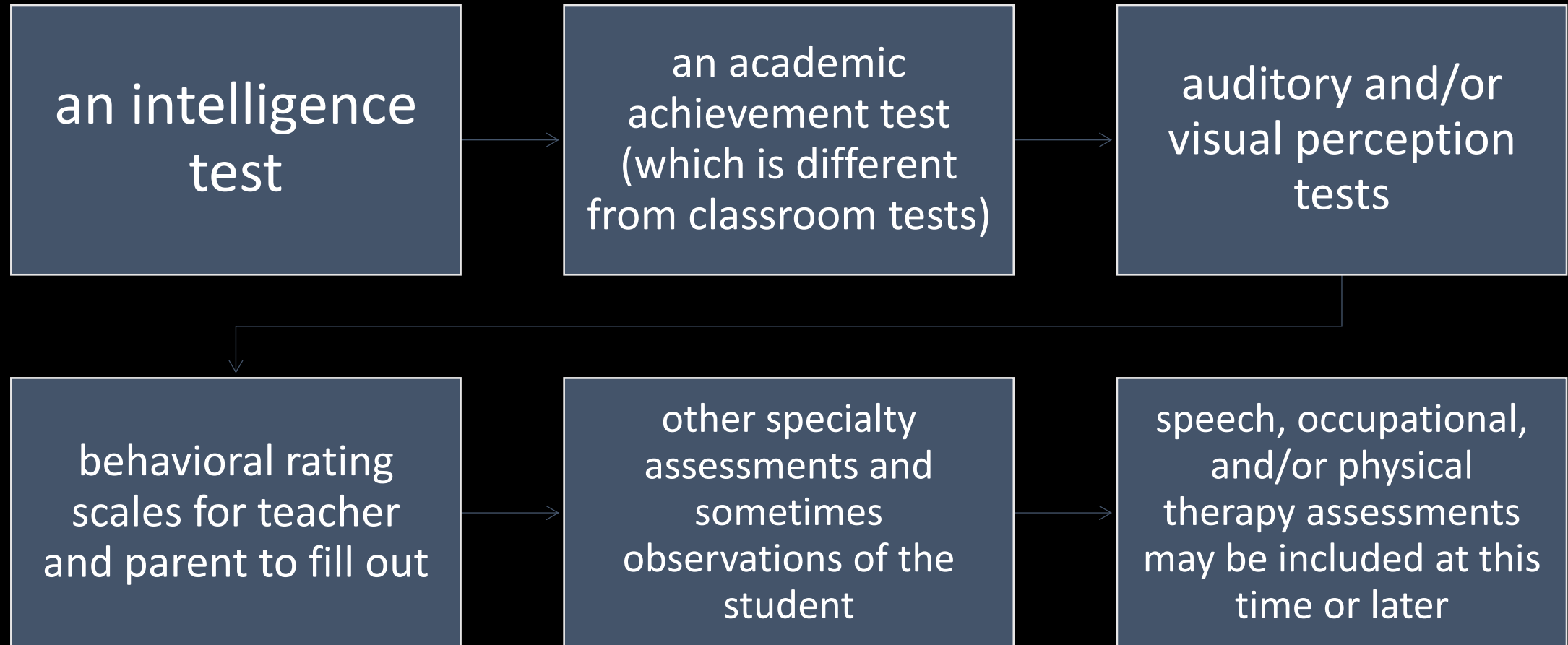
- The referral conference is the starting point to decide if a student needs extra help in school. Parents, guardians, or school staff can recommend a student for evaluation. During the conference, everyone will give input to decide if the student needs further evaluation for special education services and what kinds of evaluations need to be done. Parents should bring any test reports or medical information about their child to the meeting.
- If the decision is made to evaluate for special education services, the parent will need to give written permission to the school. Giving permission for an evaluation doesn't mean agreeing to special education or changing placement. After the referral conference and permissions are signed, a timeline is set.

Evaluation Timeline and Beginning Process

- According to IDEA, a school has *60 calendar days* (not school days) to complete the evaluation.
- It is very important that the student is in school during this time. If the student is unavailable, then the timeline may be needed to be adjusted. Attendance matters.
- Before an initial evaluation is done, the student will need to have a hearing and vision test. These are done regularly at school, so the school nurse may have the results on file. If not, these tests can be done at school, or the parent can provide these if they were done privately.
- If the student has glasses, be sure they are wearing them during the evaluation.

The Evaluation Process

A school psychologist will conduct the testing. Most schools have a school psychologist on staff, however smaller schools may have one come from the local educational cooperative. Some of the evaluations could include:





How long are these assessments?

- While there is a 60 day timeline, the student shouldn't be stressed over a long period of time. Some tests take a few minutes, and some may take a few hours. The specialist are sensitive to a student's needs and do watch for stress during testing. The student will be given breaks if needed. But the parent or guardian should feel free to express to the school any medical or other issues that may make testing difficult for the student or any accommodations (snacks for diabetes, medications at a certain time of day, etc.) the student may need so they can do their best.

What happens next?

- After all the testing is completed the school psychology specialist will score all the evaluations and write a detailed report so that the parent and school can see how the student performed on the assessments.
- Once the evaluation is completed the school has **30 days** to hold another conference to review the results with the parent or guardian, anyone the parent wishes to invite to the meeting, and school personnel. The school will send a notice of conference to invite the parent to this meeting, called an Evaluation Programming Conference to talk about results and what those results will mean for the student.

Disability Categories

IDEA has 13 categories of disability. At the Evaluation Programming Conference, you will see if your child may qualify under one or more of these categories:

- **Autism**
- **Deaf-Blindness**
- **Hearing Impairment (including deafness)**
- **Emotional Disturbance**
- **Intellectual Disability**
- **Multiple Disabilities**
- **Orthopedic Impairment**
- **Other Health Impairment**
- **Specific Learning Disability**
- **Speech or Language Impairment**
- **Traumatic Brain Injury**
- **Visual Impairment including Blindness**

Criteria for identification of a disability category

Each of 13 categories have requirements that must be identified by the evaluation. The disability must have an adverse affect on academic achievement

It is up to the committee (those who have been involved in the referral and evaluation process) to review the evaluation report carefully to determine if the student has met the criteria set forth by IDEA

Some students may qualify in more than one disability so the committee will determine which category is primary.

Some students may not qualify in any of the categories.

Disability categories may be subject to change upon re-evaluations



Office of Special Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education

Thank you
for your
participation!

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