

Best Practice Guidelines in Assessment

Iowa Best Practice Guidelines for Persons Who ASSESS Individuals Suspected to Have or Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Assessment by
Knowledgeable
Staff:
COMPETENCY

COMPETENCY:

- Staff possess knowledge of developmental norms that result in uneven profiles
 - Staff possess knowledge of how autism impacts learning and curricular needs
 - Staff possess knowledge of techniques for student self management
 - Staff possess direct experience in assessing students with autism
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Assessment by
Knowledgeable
Staff:
IDEAL

IDEAL

- Staff are able to recognize typical and atypical sequences of development across social, language, *and restricted repertoire of interests, activities and imaginative abilities* when assessing the student's past and current skill levels
 - Multiple members of the assessment staff have been trained via Regional Autism Resource Team Training or like program
 - Staff are experienced at assessing self management abilities and developing programs to help generalize adaptive behaviors previously dependent on external cueing
 - Multiple staff have had experiences assessing student with autism across age, functioning levels and over time
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Assessment by
Knowledgeable
Staff:
ACCEPTABLE

ACCEPTABLE

- Staff are able to recognize typical and atypical sequences of development across social, language, and restricted repertoire of interests, activities and imaginative abilities when assessing the student's past and current skill levels
- Active consultation is provided to the assessment team as appropriate by trained Autism Resource Team members or experience persons. Consultation information has been incorporated in this assessment phase
- Staff are aware of the need for assessing self management abilities and seek assistance as appropriate to develop programs to generalize adaptive behaviors previously dependent on external cueing
- Staff have limited experience in assessing students with autism but seek consultation as appropriate

**Assessment by
Knowledgeable
Staff:
NOT
ACCEPTABLE**

NOT ACCEPTABLE

- Staff do not recognize atypical sequences of development and variability in skill level
 - The team assessing the student has had no previous staff development in autism assessment and completes the evaluation without utilizing Autism Resource Team support
 - Staff are not aware of the need for assessing self management abilities
 - Staff have limited or no experience in assessing students with autism and do not seek consultation
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**Staff Assess the
Comprehensive
Needs of the
Student:
COMPETENCY**

COMPETENCY:

- Staff possess knowledge about the student
 - Parental priorities are an integral part of assessment
 - Assessment of needs and services includes contact with agencies / providers outside of educational services
 - Staff assess students' needs in the areas of:
 - Academics
 - Social skills
 - Behavior
 - Speech and language related services
 - Cognitive, vocational, and community education
 - Assessment includes individual impact of:
 - Developmental rates and sequences
 - Sensory processing
 - Restricted repertoire of interests
 - Multiple sources are used to assess learning needs
 - A range of language instruments and informal procedures which match the students' needs are used to assess communication levels
 - Assessments to identify behavioral strengths and needs recognize the importance of settings, events, and other ecological factors on performance
 - Staff provide ongoing assessment of the need for generalization
 - Ongoing assessment occurs regarding level of supports and curricular modifications necessary to promote student success in his or her least restrictive environment
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**Staff Assess the
Comprehensive
Needs of the
Student:
IDEAL**

IDEAL:

- Staff have had direct experience with the student across various environments over time
 - The dynamic needs of the family are recognized and prioritized in the ongoing assessment of the student with special needs
 - Agencies / providers outside the educational arena are partners with the team to assess and provide input regarding immediate and long term needs and services required of the student and / or family, e.g. non-school issues such as medical concerns and family support
 - Transdisciplinary input is utilized to develop a student specific plan with long term outcomes which are reviewed and measured on a frequent and systematic basis and which emphasize the need for educational priorities to change over time
 - Information is gathered from multiple sources and discipline specific perspectives to identify present level of educational performance within the six categories of the educational description of autism
 - Ongoing assessment of social-communication interactions including:
 - Communicative functioning
 - Communication style
 - Comprehension of language
 - The above three should be addressed via direct standardized instruments, interview checklist and structured informal procedures with a team. Assessment procedures should be used in an ongoing fashion to measure progress
 - A functional assessment of skills and behaviors to determine the impact of the situation and environment is an ongoing process and is initiated when behaviors are clearly interfering with learning or social acceptance
 - Staff have addressed the student's ability to respond to multiple cues for performance of behaviors and have attempted to generalize these skills to more than one setting
 - Staff engage in annual assessment activities designed to monitor the student's educational program so that the appropriate student specific supports are in place to keep the student meaningfully engaged in the least restrictive environment
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**Staff Assess the
Comprehensive
Needs of the
Student:
NOT
ACCEPTABLE**

NOT ACCEPTABLE:

- Staff have no direct work with the student (paper source information only)
- Family practices and needs are not considered when assessing needs for specialized learning
- Outside agencies / providers are not invited to participate in assessment planning at any level nor is their perspective considered by the team
- There is no annual assessment to determine individual needs for learning, maintaining or generalizing skills into the settings where skills and adaptive behaviors are required
- Information is not gathered from multiple sources and discipline specific perspectives in the assessment of the student's needs in the six areas of the educational description of autism
- Assessment does not include information regarding the nature of communicative attempts, settings observed, function, style or success rate nor assesses comprehension in any systematic manner
- The environment and functions of the behavior are not considered on an ongoing basis when assessing behaviors or skill needs for treatment
- Staff identify external cues to elicit performance but have not addressed generalization of performance
- The student is placed in the least restrictive setting without assessment of changing needs or a plan regarding the program supports needed

For more information or person-to-person contact about these documents, please contact the local AEA Autism Resource Team or Regional Autism Services Program at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics.