

Tips from the Special Education Division: Adding or Discontinuing Services

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Question: Do you need to do a reevaluation when adding or discontinuing special education services?

Answer:

Reevaluations are needed when a student's needs change to the extent that the current evaluation does not provide enough information for the individualized education program (IEP) team to revise the IEP as determined to be needed to support student progress. Determining whether a reevaluation would be needed when adding or discontinuing services is a decision made by the IEP team on a case-by-case basis. It is important to note that, if an evaluation group ensures that the student's evaluation is initially comprehensive, the need for more frequent reevaluations and IEP meetings may be avoided.

This tip includes an overview of IDEA requirements related to reevaluations and factors that IEP teams should consider when discussing adding or discontinuing a service on an IEP.

IDEA Requirements & IEP Team Considerations

[WAC 392-172A-03015](#) provides that a district must ensure that a reevaluation of each student eligible for special education services is conducted in accordance with WAC [392-172A-03020](#) through [392-172A-03080](#) when the district determines that the educational or related services needs, including improved academic achievement and functional performance, of the student warrant a reevaluation. Thus, if a team is thinking about adding or discontinuing a service on a student's IEP, the team should consider whether a reevaluation is warranted.

[OSPI Special Education Technical Assistance Paper No. 5 \(TAP #5\)](#) provides a general overview of special education evaluation requirements and includes responses to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about evaluations and reevaluations.

The following is a list of questions and factors each IEP team should consider when the team is discussing adding or discontinuing a service on the IEP:



1. Does the current evaluation already support the change that the IEP team is considering?

IEP teams should review the results of the student's most recent evaluation to determine what areas of specially designed instruction (SDI) and related services have been recommended by the evaluation group. If, for example, the evaluation indicated that a service such as speech therapy was only needed for one year, then the IEP team could consider discontinuing this service without a reevaluation so long as the student's progress and other data supported the IEP team's decision to discontinue the service. Or, if the student was eligible for SDI in reading, but the evaluation group recommended the student receive instruction in reading fluency before reading comprehension, then the IEP team could consider adding reading comprehension as a service area without conducting a reevaluation.

Remember, a reevaluation can be completed using existing, current data; it does not always require new standardized testing. See [WAC 392-172A-03025](#) and page 7 of [TAP #5](#) (FAQ #3).

2. How old is the current evaluation?

Is a new evaluation due relatively soon, or was it just completed? How current and comprehensive are the recommendations that were made by the evaluation group? Remember that evaluations must occur at least once every three years, or can happen sooner if the district determines that "the educational or related services needs, including improved academic achievement and functional performance of the student warrant a reevaluation" ([WAC 392-172A-03015\(1\)\(a\)](#)). See also page seven of [TAP #5](#) (FAQ #1).

3. How might adding or discontinuing a service impact other areas of need?

If the IEP team determines that the student's needs are changing to the degree that they no longer require SDI/related services for one or more service areas, or now require additional services, what other needs of the student may also need to be further examined/assessed? For example, how might discontinuing occupational therapy impact the student's performance and progress in the area of writing?

4. If a service or services are added or discontinued, does this represent a significant change in placement?

Generally, a reevaluation must be completed before a significant change of placement is made. *In re: Kent School District*, OSPI Cause No. 2016-SE-0111 (WA SEA 2016). The performance and skill levels of students with disabilities frequently vary, and students, accordingly, must be allowed to change from assigned classes and programs. However, a school may not make a significant change in a student with disabilities placement without a reevaluation. [Protecting Students with Disabilities - Frequently Asked Questions about Section 504 and the Education of Children with Disabilities](#)" (OCR). In determining whether a change

in placement has occurred, the district must consider and determine whether the proposed change would substantially or materially alter the student's educational program.

In making this determination, the following factors must be considered:

- Whether the educational program in the student's IEP has been revised;
- Whether the student will be educated with nondisabled children to the same extent;
- Whether the student will have the same opportunities to participate in nonacademic and extracurricular activities; and,
- Whether the new placement option is the same option on the continuum of alternative placements.

See, *Letter to Fisher*, 21 IDELR 992 (OSEP 1994); [TAP #5](#) (FAQ #2) for additional guidance.

5. Should the existing evaluation report be supplemented?

As stated in [TAP #5](#) (page nine, FAQ #8), there may be limited circumstances under which the team could supplement the existing evaluation report in order to support the addition or discontinuation of a service area. This approach should be the exception, rather than a common district practice – districts should not need to supplement an evaluation report if the original evaluation was comprehensive.

6. Is the service being added or discontinued a supplementary aid and service?

Unlike SDI and related services, which are the responsibility of the evaluation group to recommend based on a thorough evaluation, supplementary aids and services (SAS) are the decision of the IEP team (refer to WACs [392-172A-02065](#) and [392-172A-03110\(2\)\(b\)\(ii\)](#)). There would therefore be no requirement to conduct a reevaluation when adding or discontinuing SAS.

Remember! Any decision made about services should be made by the IEP team, not an individual, and be based on current, relevant data.