



# SPECIAL EDUCATION GUIDANCE

## ER-1-AUT Criteria for Disability Category: Autism

This document is in reference to the criteria form that should be used when the IEP team is considering whether a student meets criteria for the disability category of autism as defined under [PI 11.36 \(8\)\(a\), Wis. Admin. Code](#). IEP teams use this form to explain or reference data or evidence considered and the disability category determination. This form is used in conjunction with the Evaluation Report (ER-1) as part of a comprehensive special education evaluation.

The intent of the form is to guide and document the IEP team's discussion as it considers criteria for autism. The form also serves as documentation for a compliance review.

A medical diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder is not required in order to determine whether a student meets the disability category criteria of autism. If medical information is available, it should be considered as part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team's evaluation but must not be the sole component to determine if the student meets the disability category criteria for autism. School personnel may not require parents to obtain a medical diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder before proceeding with a comprehensive special education evaluation. For more information on how to identify a student with autism, go to the [autism webpage](#) at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

FORM CONTENT	CLARIFICATION/EXPLANATION
Date form completed	Enter the date of the IEP team meeting for when the IEP team determined if the student met the disability category criteria for autism.
Initial Evaluation	Check "initial evaluation" if the student was not previously found to meet the disability category criteria for autism. The IEP team must complete all sections of the criteria form.
Reevaluation	Check "reevaluation" if the student was previously found to meet the disability category criteria for autism. A student must meet initial criteria during a reevaluation for this category. The IEP team must complete all sections of the criteria form.

FORM CONTENT	CLARIFICATION/EXPLANATION
<p><b><u>Section I:</u></b>  <b>Social Participation and Communication</b></p>	<p>Both must be checked “yes” in order to be considered for the disability category of Autism. Data or evidence should be briefly shared that support a “yes” or a “no”.</p> <p>The data or evidence should be gathered from a variety of sources including observation, interview, record review, developmental history, rating scales or checklists and other sources as deemed necessary by the IEP team.</p>
<p>The student displays difficulties or differences or both in interacting with people and events. The student may be unable to establish and maintain reciprocal relationships with people. The student may seek consistency in environmental events to the point of exhibiting rigidity in routines.</p>	<p>Must be checked “yes.”</p> <p>Evidence may include, but is not limited to, joint attention, social awareness, reciprocity or turn-taking, imitation, social play, or social cognition.</p>
<p>The student displays problems which extend beyond speech and language to other aspects of social communication, both receptively, and expressively. The student’s verbal language may be absent or, if present, lacks the usual communicative form which may involve deviance or delay or both. The student may have a speech or language disorder or both in addition to communication difficulties associated with autism.</p>	<p>Must be checked “yes.”</p> <p>Evidence may include, but is not limited to, communicative intent, echolalia, topic maintenance, reciprocity, or understanding of non-verbal communication. A variety of assessment tools may be required to explore receptive and expressive speech and language that has an educational impact on a student’s social communication. Norm referenced assessments may not identify more complex pragmatic language difficulties, and other assessments such as language samples and observations may be helpful when identifying communication difficulties associated with autism.</p>

FORM CONTENT	CLARIFICATION/EXPLANATION
<p><b>Section II.</b> <b>Other Characteristics</b></p>	<p>At least one must be checked “yes” in order to be considered for the disability category of autism. Data or evidence should be briefly shared that support a “yes” or a “no.”</p> <p>The data or evidence should be gathered from a variety of sources including observation, interview, record review, developmental history, rating scales or checklists, and other sources as deemed necessary by the IEP team.</p>
<p>The student exhibits delays, arrests, or regressions in motor, sensory, social or learning skills. The student may exhibit precocious or advanced skill development, while other skills may develop at normal or extremely depressed rates. The student may not follow developmental patterns in the acquisition of skills.</p>	<p>May be checked “yes.” The student may exhibit advanced or precocious development in certain concrete visual rote learning skills while exhibiting depressed rates in other areas. The student does not follow a normal developmental pattern or progression in acquiring skills.</p>
<p>The student exhibits abnormalities in the thinking process and in generalizing. The student exhibits strengths in concrete thinking while difficulties are demonstrated in abstract thinking, awareness, and judgment. Perseverant thinking and impaired ability to process symbolic information may be present.</p>	<p>May be checked “yes.” The student may process information in a concrete and literal manner with difficulty understanding abstract and symbolic information or relationships. Student may demonstrate a need with executive functioning skills, i.e., attending, problem solving, organizing, prioritizing, and/or generalizing.</p>
<p>The student exhibits unusual, inconsistent, repetitive, or unconventional responses to sounds, sights, smells, tastes, touch or movement. The student may have a visual or hearing impairment or both in addition to sensory processing difficulties associated with autism.</p>	<p>May be checked “yes.” The student may demonstrate hypersensitivity (over sensitivity or sensory aversion) or hyposensitivity (under sensitivity or sensory seeking) to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment.</p>
<p>The student displays marked distress over changes, insistence on following routines, and a persistent preoccupation with or attachment to objects. The student’s capacity to use objects in an age-appropriate or functional manner may be absent, arrested or delayed. The student may have difficulty displaying a range of interests or imaginative activities or both. The student may exhibit stereotyped body movements.</p>	<p>May be checked “yes.” The student may rely heavily on learned and predictable rules, routines, and structures. Alterations in rules, routines, and structures may significantly impact the student. The student may demonstrate rigidity and perseveration in patterns of thinking, and may exhibit preoccupation with topics, themes, objects, events, or people. The student may use objects or their bodies in unconventional or repetitive ways.</p>

FORM CONTENT	CLARIFICATION/EXPLANATION
<p><b>Section III.</b> <b>Educational Performance</b></p>	<p>Must be checked “yes.”</p>
<p>There is an adverse effect on the student's learning, academic achievement, or functional performance. Explain or reference data or evidence:</p>	<p>Data or evidence must document an adverse effect on the student’s educational performance. Assessing an adverse effect requires the IEP team to consider all aspects of the student’s functioning at school, including academic, cognitive, communication, physical and health, independence and self- determination, and social and emotional functioning.</p>

FORM CONTENT	CLARIFICATION/EXPLANATION
<p><b>Section IV. Exclusionary Factor</b></p>	<p>Check to confirm that the student’s educational performance is not primarily adversely affected due to an emotional behavioral disability.</p> <p>Students may be identified as meeting more than one disability category criteria area. However, if the issues most significantly impacting educational performance for a particular student relate to an emotional behavioral disability, the student cannot meet the disability category criteria for autism. <a href="#">34 CFR § 300.8(c)(1)(ii).</a></p>

FORM CONTENT	CLARIFICATION/EXPLANATION
<p><b>Section V.</b> <b>Disability Category Criteria Determination</b></p>	<p>Check “yes” or “no.” Must meet all criteria in order to check “yes”</p>
<p>The documentation of the criteria above demonstrates developmental disability significantly affecting a student's social interaction and verbal and nonverbal communication, generally evident before age 3, that adversely affects learning and educational performance. The student meets the disability category criteria for autism.</p>	<p>A student whose disability has an adverse effect on educational performance must be found to require specially designed instruction in order to be eligible for special education. Document the need for specially designed instruction on the ER-1 form.</p>



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
Division of Learning Support, Special Education Team  
125 S. Webster Street, P.O. Box 7841  
Madison, WI 53707-7841  
(608) 266-7475  
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