

Date: June 8, 2016

To: Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services

From: Barbara Van Haren, PhD, Director, Special Education Team

Subject: Determining Initial Eligibility for Intellectual Disability and Cognitive Ability (Intellectual Quotient or IQ) Assessments

A question recently came up regarding what to do when trying to determine initial eligibility for an Intellectual Disability if a student is so low functioning that the team cannot get an IQ score?

In order for a student to be given the label of Intellectual Disability during an initial evaluation a child needs to demonstrate significant limitations in three areas: intellectual functioning, adaptive behavior, and educational performance. The new rule directly states the requirement specific to intellectual ability:

*The child has a standard score of 2 or more standard deviations below the mean on an **individually administered intelligence test** which takes into account the child's **mode of communication** and is developed to assess intellectual functioning using this mode. **More than one intelligence test may be used** to produce a comprehensive result. (Emphasis added)*

The IEP Team should document steps taken to determine the best alternative to a formal intelligence test. The Special Education Team at DPI will be developing a worksheet that IEP teams will be able to use to document the team's decision making. Options include but are not limited to:

- Conduct a thorough search to locate appropriate assessments or locate someone outside of the IEP team who may be able to assess the child using a formal individual cognitive assessment.
- Use a developmental assessment of the cognitive domain or other such assessments that would provide objective cognitive information to the team, ensuring an informed determination of intellectual disability as well as useful information for programming.
- For students younger than 9 years old, it may be appropriate to consider Significant Developmental Delay (SDD) as an eligibility option to allow time for educators and evaluators to gain a better understanding of the student and how he/she can communicate in a meaningful manner.

We encourage the use of multiple measures to obtain an IQ score that demonstrates a clear picture of the student and his or her strengths and needs.

For further information or assistance, please contact Molly Bever, Cognitive Disabilities Consultant, at molly.bever@dpi.wi.gov; Eva Kubinski, School Administration Consultant, at eva.kubinski@dpi.wi.gov; or Kathryn Bush, School Psychology Consultant, at kathryn.bush@dpi.wi.gov.