

Special Education Assessment for Preschool-Aged Children: Participating in the Assessment

When a child is being assessed for special education services, the process can sometimes feel long and confusing. Your local education agency (LEA), usually a local school district, has defined steps and timelines for this process to ensure that a thorough assessment is conducted.




Participating in the assessment process

Here is some helpful information about different aspects of the assessment process:

- Signing an agreement to an assessment sets the wheels in motion. The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires the assessment be completed within 60 days of you signing the consent.
- Several professionals may ask you to participate in interviews and complete questionnaires. Each professional needs information for their specialty. For example, a speech therapist will observe and ask questions about communication skills, while a teacher may look for information about global development and your child's daily living activities.
- The assessment will include interviews with you and those who are the closest with your child, observations of your child, and formal assessments of your child.
- Your LEA will create a written report with assessment findings. You will meet with the LEA to review the results.

How can I advocate for my child during the assessment process?

- **Communicate and share information.** Information you give should be accurate and current. Let your assessors know whether anything could make your child behave differently than usual or if any new information arises (e.g., test results from a doctor). If your child is sick, it's okay to ask for the assessment to be rescheduled.
- **Gather contact information.** Write down the name, title, and contact information of professionals who have met with you. You may want to create a binder where you keep business cards and other information you received during the process.
- **Ask questions.** If you are not in the room while your child is assessed, ask questions beforehand to learn more about the process. If you are observing the assessment, you may have questions about what is happening. For example, your child may be reaching for a cup just out of reach without using words and the assessor may not give them the cup. They are likely encouraging your child to say or sign the word "cup." Consider writing your questions down and asking them at the end of the interactions.
- **Be patient.** This 60-day process can feel stressful. If you experience urgent issues, such as challenging behaviors at home, feel free to ask for help from the assessors while the process is happening. You may be directed to websites, written materials, or local parent groups.

 For related Web resources, see "Special Education Assessment for Preschool-Aged Children: Participating in the Assessment" at <https://illinoisearlylearning.org/tipsheets/>

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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