

Autism Spectrum Disorder Educational Guidelines

for

Lapeer County School Districts

Almont

Dryden

Imlay City

Lapeer

North Branch



Spring 2007

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PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide *educationally* relevant information for those working with students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in Lapeer County school districts. This document includes:

- A review of current Federal and State definitions of Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- An outline of the educational evaluation process.
- A description of ASD eligibility and its related impact in the educational setting.

This document was compiled by a multi-disciplinary team utilizing current, peer-reviewed research regarding autism spectrum disorders.

DEFINITIONS OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

IDEA 2004

- (1) (i) *Autism* means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.
- (ii) Autism does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance, as defined in paragraph (c) (4) of this section [see Federal Register/Vol. 71, No. 156, page 46756].
- (iii) A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after age three could be identified as having autism if the criteria in paragraph (c) (1) (i) of this section are satisfied [see above].

MICHIGAN'S REVISED ADMINISTRATIVE RULES

R340.1715 Autism Spectrum Disorder defined; determination.

Rule 15: (1) Autism spectrum disorder is considered a lifelong developmental disability that adversely affects a student's educational performance in 1 or more of the following performance areas:

- A) Academic.
- B) Behavioral.
- C) Social.

Autism spectrum disorder is typically manifested before 36 months of age. A child who first manifests the characteristics after age 3 may also meet criteria. Autism spectrum disorder is characterized by qualitative impairments in reciprocal social interactions, qualitative impairments in communication, and restricted range of interests/repetitive behavior.

(2) Determination for eligibility shall include all of the following:

- (a) Qualitative impairments in social interactions including at least 2 of the following areas:
 - (i) Marked impairment in the use of multiple nonverbal behaviors such as eye-to-eye gaze, facial expression, body postures, and gestures to regulate social interaction.
 - (ii) Failure to develop peer relationships appropriate to developmental level.

- (iii) Marked impairment in spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment, interests, or achievements with other people, for example, by a lack of showing, bringing, or pointing out objects of interest.
 - (iv) Marked impairment in the areas of social or emotional reciprocity.
- (b) Qualitative impairments in communication including at least 1 of the following:
- (i) Delay in or total lack of, the development of spoken language not accompanied by an attempt to compensate through alternative modes of communication such as gesture or mime.
 - (ii) Marked impairment in pragmatics or in the ability to initiate, sustain, or engage in reciprocal conversation with others.
 - (iii) Stereotyped and repetitive use of language or idiosyncratic language.
 - (iv) Lack of varied, spontaneous make-believe play or social imitative play or social imitative play appropriate to developmental level.
- (c) Restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped behaviors including at least 1 of the following:
- (i) Encompassing preoccupation with 1 or more stereotyped and restricted patterns of interest that is abnormal either in intensity or focus.
 - (ii) Apparently inflexible adherence to specific, nonfunctional routines or rituals.
 - (iii) Stereotyped and repetitive motor mannerisms, for example, hand or finger flapping or twisting, or complex whole-body movements.
 - (iv) Persistent preoccupation with parts of objects.

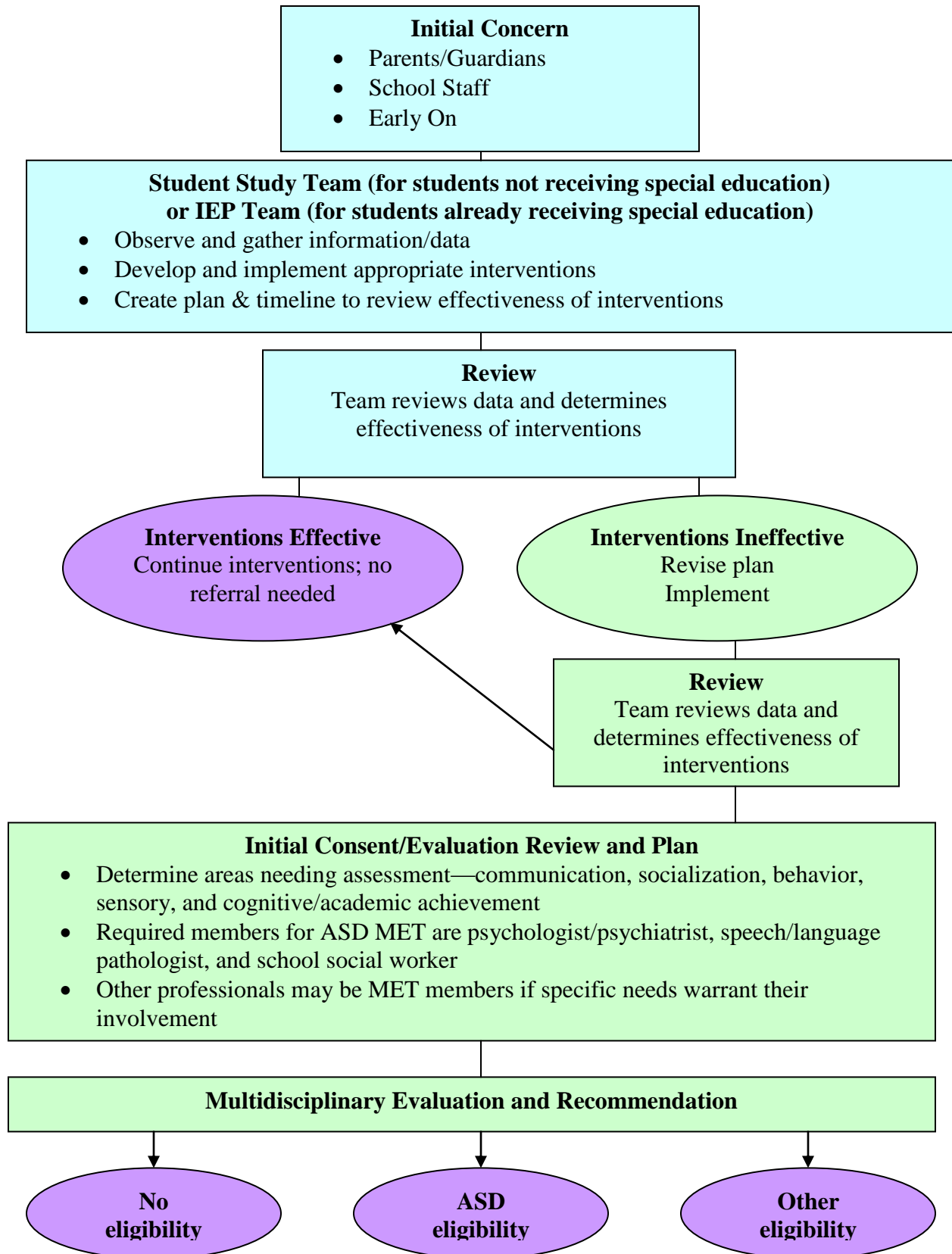
Determination may include usual or inconsistent response to sensory stimuli, in combination with subdivisions (a), (b), and (c) of subrule 2 of this rule.

(3) While autism spectrum disorder may exist concurrently with other diagnoses or areas of disability, to be eligible under this rule, there shall not be a primary diagnosis of schizophrenia or emotional impairment.

(4) A determination of impairment shall be based upon a comprehensive evaluation by a multidisciplinary evaluation team including, at a minimum, a psychologist or psychiatrist, an authorized provider of speech and language under R340.1745 (d), and a school social worker.

(5) Rule effective as of 9/15/2004.

EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION PROCESS



MULTI-DISCIPLINARY EVALUATION

Required Information:

- Developmental history
- Communication skills and characteristics
- Social skills
- Behavior concerns
- Adaptive behavior
- Cognitive abilities
- Sensory-motor concerns
- Educationally relevant medical information

The evaluation of ASD is a process that requires a team of professionals. Time must be taken to ensure that information regarding all aspects of a student's development and needs are gathered. The goal of a school-based evaluation for ASD is not to provide a clinical diagnosis for students, but to determine eligibility as well as the need for special education services based upon the characteristics manifested. Because the determination of ASD is a subjective process, it is essential that at least one member of the evaluation team has a varied experience with individuals on the spectrum to avoid under- or over-identification based on exposure to a limited number of students. Professionals involved in the evaluation process must use their professional judgment, because the determination of many of the characteristics of ASD is based on qualitative components that cannot be quantified by test results.

Process for obtaining the required information may include:

- Review the student's education record
- Conduct interviews
 - Teacher
 - Parent
 - Student
 - Other
- Complete rating scales
 - Teacher
 - Parent
 - Student
 - Other
- Observe student across various settings
- Conduct formalized assessments
 - *Assessments may be chosen at the discretion of the evaluator, with an awareness of the technical adequacy and the limitations of the instruments utilized.