

# NONCATEGORICAL EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION

## I. DEFINITIONS

"Noncategorical" means a condition of developmental delay which impairs a child's functioning and which has a high predictability of impairing normal developmental performance. "Impaired functioning" means that a difference exists between the child's expected level of development and his/her current level of functioning.

### A. Areas of developmental delay

The five developmental delay areas for the purpose of determining eligibility in this category are -

1. Cognition - the ability to use reasoning and problem-solving skills including conceptualization, comprehension and memory. Cognitive ability is the ability to think, and is often thought of in terms of intelligence;
2. Communication - the ability to effectively use and/or understand age appropriate language, including pragmatics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and articulations;
3. Motor - the ability to use gross motor skills for body control such as standing, walking, balance and climbing; and fine motor skills requiring precise, coordinated use of the small muscles;
4. Social or Emotional Development - the ability to develop and maintain functional interpersonal relationships and to exhibit age-appropriate social/emotional behaviors; and
5. Self-Help Development - the ability to engage in age-appropriate activities of daily living.

## II. SCREENING INFORMATION

Screening can be waived if current developmental data [within the past six (6) months] are available; otherwise, it is required.

### A. Required

1. Hearing
2. Vision

3. Formal measures of -
  - a. Development (Include the areas of cognition, motor, social/emotional, self-help)
  - b. Speech/language

**B. Recommended**

1. Informal measures, such as -
  - a. Checklists;
  - b. Inventories;
  - c. Rating scales;
  - d. Interviews;
  - e. Behavioral observations in home and/or other natural environments; and/or
  - f. Access to and review of existing records and available information.

**III. REQUIRED EVALUATION DATA**

- A. **Social History** (Emphasis on developmental, family and health/medical history)
- B. **Assessment**

Assessment instruments must be standardized and have a reliability coefficient of at least .80 to ensure that children are being identified accurately. Tests which are not standardized cannot provide precise information about how a child performs in relation to peers.

1. Cognitive/Intellectual Abilities (One required)
2. Communicative Abilities (Both receptive and expressive areas must be assessed. Assessment must be comprehensive and must not be limited to one-word vocabulary tests. Augmentative/alternative communication should be assessed when indicated.)

3. Motor (If indicated from screening)
4. Social/Emotional (One adaptive behavior assessment required)  
Additional assessment for children ages 3 to 5, who may demonstrate inappropriate behavior which deviates substantially from behavior appropriate for one's age, must include the following -
  - a. Behavioral rating scales or checklist;
  - b. Systematic observations(s) in settings such as free play, instructional situation, group settings, home, etc. Particular attention must be given to the qualitative nature (antecedent - consequence analysis), frequency, duration and consistency of the behavior(s). Consideration should be given to the behavior relative to the child's functioning level, environmental and social experiences, and the degree to which this behavior deviates from the norm.
5. Self-Help (May be included in the cognitive/intellectual, adaptive behavior and/or programming assessments)
6. Programming (One criterion or curriculum-based measure required)

#### **IV. EVALUATION DATA ANALYSIS**

- A. Children ages 3 to 5 are considered to be delayed developmentally when they demonstrate a measurable, verifiable discrepancy between expected performance for the child's chronological age and the current level of performance. The discrepancy is documented by -
  1. Scores of two standard deviations (2SD) or more below the mean for chronological age in one of the five domains, as obtained using standardized norm-referenced instruments and procedures; or
  2. Scores of one and one-half standard deviations (1.5 SD) below the mean for chronological age in two or more of the five domains, as obtained using standardized norm-referenced instruments and procedures.
- B. The criterion of "a delay of two standard deviations in one or more areas" allows a child to be served when he is markedly delayed in only one area. A score of two standards deviations below the mean on a test indicates the child would be functioning in approximately the bottom two percent of his

peer group. A delay of this degree in even one area warrants services, even though there are no other areas of deficit.

- C. Using the criterion of “a delay of 1.5 SD in two or more of the five areas” (cognition, communication, motor, social/emotional, self-help) allows services to be provided to a child who is performing substantially below his peers. This criterion is more accurate than the use of a percentage of delay in developmental age.
- D. A significant delay in self-help and motor skills (gross and fine) could be expressed in months by means of scale development (criterion-referenced) assessments, as illustrated in the following Chart # 1-3.

**CHART # 1-3**

<b>CHRON. AGE</b>	<b>DELAY IN STANDARD DEVIATION</b>	<b>DELAYS IN ONE AREA (DELAY IN MONTHS)</b>	<b>NATIONAL PERCENTILE RANK</b>	<b>AGE EQUIVALENT</b>
3-0 Years	-2.0	11 + months	Less than 3	2-1 or less
	-1.5	8 + months	Less than 7	2-4 or less
4-0 Years	-2.0	14 + months	Less than 3	2-10 or less
	-1.5	11 + months	Less than 7	3-1 or less
5-0 Years	-2.0	18 + months	Less than 3	3-6 or less
	-1.5	14 + months	Less than 7	3-10 or less