

Significant Developmental Delay

Camilla Moss

Significant Developmental Delay

- The term significant developmental delay refers to a delay in a child's development in adaptive behavior, cognition, communication, motor development or emotional development to the extent that, if not provided with special intervention, the delay may adversely affect a child's educational performance in age-appropriate activities. The term does not apply to children who are experiencing a slight or temporary lag in one or more areas of development, or a delay which is primarily due to environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage or lack of experience in age appropriate activities. The SDD eligibility may be used for children from ages **three** through **nine** (the end of the school year in which the child turns nine). [See 34 C.F.R. § 300.8(b)]

Initial eligibility must be established, and an IEP in place, on or before the child's seventh birthday. SDD eligibility is determined by assessing a child in each of the five skill areas of adaptive development, cognition, communication, physical development (gross and fine motor), and social/emotional development. Any child who scores at least 2 standard deviations below the mean in one or more of the five areas or 1½ standard deviations below the mean in two or more areas shall meet eligibility for SDD.

Eligibility

- For children who are kindergarten age or older, initial eligibility shall also include
- documented evidence that the impact on educational performance is not due to:
 - (a) Lack of appropriate instruction in reading or literacy readiness, including the essential components of reading instruction;
 - (b) Lack of appropriate instruction in math or math readiness skills;
 - (c) Limited English proficiency;
 - (d) Visual, hearing or motor disability;
 - (e) Emotional disturbances;
 - (f) Cultural factors; or
 - (g) Environmental or economic disadvantage

The application of professional judgment is a critical element at every stage of eligibility determination: as test instruments are selected, during the evaluation process, in the analysis of evaluation results, as well as the analysis of error patterns on standardized, teacher made or other tests.

- All five skill areas shall be assessed using at least one formal assessment. In those areas in which a significant delay is suspected, at least one additional formal assessment must be utilized to determine the extent of the delay. All formal assessments must be age appropriate, and all scores must be given in standard deviations.
- For children eligible under SDD with hearing; visual; communication; or orthopedic impairments, a complete evaluation must be obtained to determine if the child also meets eligibility criteria for deaf/hard of hearing, visual impairments, speech and language impairments or orthopedic impairments. Students with sensory, physical or communication disabilities must receive services appropriate for their needs, whether or not specific eligibility is determined