

St. Cloud Area School District

A Guide for Completing Reevaluation Reports, Initial Evaluation Reports and Evaluation Plans for Distance Learning



Distance Learning
Special Education
Spring 2020

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Standards of evaluation planning

Thoughtful, timely evaluation planning is critical for conducting relevant, effective evaluations in accordance with due process guidelines and requirements. Evaluation planning is more than simply assigning tests and observations to various team members. It provides the means to identify students' strengths, educational needs, and eligibility for special education. Evaluation planning must be timely, comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and individualized to reflect students' needs.

Timelines and date adjustments

School Closure (March 16-27) not counted as school days

The days of school closure (March 16-27, including the eight-day planning period) do not count as school days because students were not receiving instruction during this period. Part B evaluation timelines would not count the period that schools were temporarily closed in preparation for distance learning.

Evaluation Report language: Wording for changes in due dates of evaluation reports that were due between 3/16/20 - 3/27/20

Due to the Distance Learning Planning period in response to the COVID -19 pandemic, schools were not in session from 3/16/20-3/27/20. The due date of this report was changed to (Date) to reflect the new due date.

Timelines for Part B evaluations during distance learning

If you have a reevaluation or an initial evaluation report in process, please update the report due dates and the 26-school-day date for individual reports to reflect the school closing planning period (March 16-March 27). These days are considered no student contact days and would not be counted toward the 30 school days. *Calendars are available in the Student Plans menu on the left "Calendars" or on StaffNet>Departments>Student Services>Special Education>Resources.*

Timeline for initial Part C evaluations during distance learning

The 45-day Part C timeline to complete an initial evaluation and as well as the initial IFSP meeting do not apply during Distance Learning. The 45-day timeline does not apply if the family is unavailable due to "exceptional family circumstances." The COVID-19 pandemic could be considered an exceptional family circumstance. These circumstances must be documented in the student's file and in the student

conference logs section in Student Plans. If the COVID-19 pandemic results in a delay of the initial evaluation and the IFSP eligibility meeting, this needs to be documented in the associated IFSP.

Reevaluations during distance learning

1. During Distance Learning case managers work with the psychologist to begin the evaluation planning process eight weeks/40 school days prior to the due date for a three year reevaluation.
2. Prior to contacting the parent/guardian, have a plan in mind to discuss with the parent/guardian.
3. Contact parent/guardian by electronic meeting, phone, or email.
4. Explain the evaluation plan and be prepared to gather parent/guardian interview data and updated information regarding the student's diagnoses, medications and outside services.
 - a. If unable to connect with the parent/guardian, document all attempts to contact parent/guardian in the Student Conference Logs.
 - b. Inform parent/guardian how testing is going to work once testing is started.
 - c. If the parent/guardian is okay with emailing the evaluation plan, please verify an email address and also let the parent/guardian know that once the evaluation plan is received and reviewed, they can provide confirmation of their acceptance by email or text.
5. After speaking with the parent/guardian, or two documented attempts to contact parent/guardian, complete the evaluation plan as soon as possible to minimize any delays.
 - a. Email or mail evaluation plan to parent/guardian.
 - b. If mailing the evaluation plan please email Julie Gillen with the PDF(s) that need to be mailed to the parent/guardian. She will confirm receipt of the request when she has mailed the evaluation plan to the parent/guardian.
6. Document receipt of parent/guardian permission in Student Plans when parent/guardian signature is received or the 14-calendar-day parent response period has ended, whichever is first.
 - a. If the parent/guardian gives permission by providing an electronic signature via email or text, attach the email or a screenshot of the text in the student's file.
 - b. If the parent/guardian objects, contact your supervisor/director so they can offer alternative dispute resolution, such as a conciliation conference, in an effort to resolve the disagreement. The full team does not need to participate and the conciliation conference may be held by phone.
7. After permission has been received
 - a. Change the Status of the evaluation plan to "Final"
 - b. Continue to check "My Evaluations" in student plans for any evaluations that you would need to complete.

Help Me Grow referrals since March 16, 2020

During the distance learning planning period, any referrals that were made through the Help Me Grow system were directed to the district. The referrals should be accepted but no action was required during closure (March 16-27). During distance learning, beginning March 30, the district will continue to accept referrals from Help Me Grow and follow-up on referrals made during the closure period.

- Make initial contact with families.
- During the initial contact tell families that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we cannot complete necessary face-to-face assessments during Distance Learning.
- Share options with families by phone and follow up by either e-mailing or mail the family a copy of the procedural safeguards.

Documentation and notification: Scenarios and sample language

Scenario 1: Initial evaluation requests during distance learning

Any request received for an initial evaluation should be discussed with the school psychologist. For an initial evaluation to be completed this school year and to allow for the 30 school days to complete the initial evaluation report we need to have a signature to start by 4/17/20. Some circumstances may require that an initial evaluation be started after 4/17/20; collaborate between case manager and psychologist about decisions to begin these evaluations.

To the extent the school district is able to assess the child without face-to-face contact, the school district should proceed. If an evaluation of a student with a disability requires a face-to-face assessment or observation that cannot occur during distance learning, the team may determine to begin the evaluation but delay the face-to-face portions until on-site instruction resumes. In this case, use the following language in the Evaluation Plan:

Evaluation Plan language addition

Please note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, assessments requiring face to face testing will not be completed until on-site instruction resumes. Direct, face to assessments are included in this plan and are needed to determine the student's special education eligibility and needs. The assessments that require face to face testing are ***

On the other hand, if the team determines that the initial evaluation would not be *started* until on-site instruction resumes, send the following PWN to document this decision.

PWN Language: Initial referral from parent or MTSS

Item 1

The District is proposing to not conduct an initial evaluation for * (name of student) at this time because of Distance Learning due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Parents were notified on * that the request will be addressed when on-site learning resumes.

Item 2

The District received the request for an evaluation on * which is during the Distance Learning period due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consistent with the guidance from the U.S. Department of Education and the Governor of Minnesota there is no physical contact or shared physical space during Distance Learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Completing a comprehensive initial evaluation report during Distance Learning is not a viable option as the team needs to access, observe and work directly with the student. The initial evaluation report will be completed when on site instruction resumes.

Item 3

Distance Learning due to COVID-19.

Item 4

The team considered moving forward with the initial evaluation but determined a meaningful, comprehensive initial evaluation could not be completed without in person face to face assessment and observation of the student.

Item 5

No other relevant factors were identified by the team.

Scenario 2: Evaluation reports for students receiving services under Developmental Delay (Part C) who will turn three in spring or summer 2020

The IFSP will need to be amended and a PWN completed to reflect the change in federal setting to a setting 45. The amended IFSP will stay in place under Developmental Delay (“stay put”). If the IFSP team believes a student is potentially eligible for Part B services, teams will develop evaluation plans for these students in order to determine eligibility under Developmental Delay Part B or initial eligibility in a categorical area when on-site instruction resumes.

PWN language: IFSP amendment to reflect change in federal setting

Item 1

The District proposes to implement an amended Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) as discussed with parent on **. The federal setting is updated to reflect the current setting for a student who is three years old.

Item 2

Consistent with the guidance from the U.S. Department of Education and the Governor of Minnesota there is no physical contact or shared physical space during Distance Learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The federal setting is updated to reflect the home setting for a student turning three.

Evaluation Plan language

Please note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, assessments requiring face to face testing will not be completed until on site instruction resumes. Direct, face to assessments are included in this plan and are needed to determine the student's special education eligibility and needs. The assessments that require face to face testing are ***

Evaluation Report language (background section addition)

Please note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this evaluation was delayed during the planning and Distance Learning period during which direct, face to face evaluations could not be completed.

Scenario 3: Students receiving services under Developmental Delay (Part B) who will turn seven before October 31, 2020

IEPs will stay in place under Developmental Delay ("stay put"). When possible, teams will use present levels of performance and indirect assessments to document special education needs (in most cases this type of evaluation would document no special education needs and the recommendation that the IEP be discontinued). Alternatively, when further evaluation data are needed, teams will develop evaluation plans for students in order to determine initial eligibility in a categorical area when on-site instruction resumes. In such cases where the evaluation will be delayed, the team must determine the disability category that the student will most likely qualify in, and report this to Julie Gillen at the DAO by the student's seventh birthday. The following language will be used within the evaluation plan and report in these cases:

Evaluation Plan language addition

Please note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, assessments requiring face to face testing will not be completed until on site instruction resumes. Direct, face to assessments are included in this plan and are needed to determine the student's special education eligibility and needs. The assessments that require face to face testing are ***

Evaluation Report language (background section addition)

Please note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this evaluation was delayed during the planning and Distance Learning period during which direct, face to face evaluations could not be completed.

Scenario 4: Initial evaluations or reevaluations that cannot be completed during distance learning

If any evaluator cannot complete an assessment procedure during distance learning, contact the case manager and psychologist. If the team determines that assessments cannot be completed due to Distance Learning and this results in the evaluation report not being completed by the due date of the evaluation report, please contact parent/guardian to notify them that evaluation will be delayed and completed when on-site instruction resumes. Complete and send a PWN.

PWN language: Assessments for an *Initial* Report In Process That Cannot be Completed and the Evaluation Report Will Be Put on Hold Until On Site Instruction Resumes

Item 1

The District proposes to PAUSE the initial evaluation that is currently underway for your child. Once on-site instruction resumes, the District will resume the initial evaluation. Parents were notified that once on-site instruction resumes, the team will complete the initial evaluation consistent with applicable state and federal guidance.

Item 2

Consistent with the guidance from the U.S. Department of Education and the Governor of Minnesota there is no physical contact or shared physical space during Distance Learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Completing a comprehensive initial evaluation report during Distance Learning is not a viable option as the team needs to access, observe and work directly with the student. The initial evaluation report will be completed when on site instruction resumes.

Item 3

Distance Learning due to COVID-19.

Item 4

The team considered moving forward with the initial evaluation but determined a meaningful, comprehensive initial evaluation could not be completed without in person face to face assessment and observation of the student.

Item 5

No other relevant factors were identified by the team.

PWN language: Assessment for a *re-evaluation* report In process that cannot be completed and the evaluation report will be put on hold until on-site instruction resumes**Item 1**

The District proposes to PAUSE the re-evaluation that is currently underway for your child. Once on site instruction resumes, the District will resume the re-evaluation. Parents were notified that once on site instruction resumes, the team will have * school days to complete the re-evaluation.

Item 2

Consistent with the guidance from the U.S. Department of Education and the Governor of Minnesota there is no physical contact or shared physical space during Distance Learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Completing a comprehensive re-evaluation report during Distance Learning is not a viable option as the team needs to access, observe and work directly with the student. The re-evaluation report will be completed when on site instruction resumes.

Item 3

Distance Learning due to COVID-19.

Item 4

The team considered moving forward with the re-evaluation but determined a meaningful, comprehensive re-evaluation could not be completed without in person face to face assessment and observation of the student.

Item 5

No other relevant factors were identified by the team.

Evaluation Report language (background section): Reports that were delayed until on-site instruction resumed, report completed after due date

The face to face administration of * (individual, standardized instrument) could not be completed during distance learning due to the COVID-pandemic. The team determined that eligibility and special education needs could not be determined without this data. Therefore, the evaluation could not be completed until the district resumed on-site instruction. Subsequently, this evaluation was completed after the due date.

Scenario 5: Addressing a change in proposed assessment when face-to-face assessment is not possible in re-evaluation

For reevaluations in process, when a standardized assessment cannot be administered during distance learning, the team may propose (with parent consent) to use existing, valid intellectual assessment data in lieu of the direct assessment in order to document continued need. Parental consent must be documented with a PWN.

PWN language: Address a change in the proposed assessments to determine eligibility

Item 1

The District proposes to not complete the **assessment(s) that are part of the evaluation plan dated * Parent was contacted on * date and was notified that due to Distance Learning the assessment could not be completed as the assessment(s) require face to face contact.

Item 2

Consistent with the guidance from the U.S. Department of Education and the Governor of Minnesota there is no physical contact or shared physical space during Distance Learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, because there is a preponderance of data in all areas of concern by which initial criteria or continued need could be documented despite one or more face to face assessments could not be completed, the team is opting to use existing data in lieu of direct assessment. Completing the aforementioned assessment(s) would not influence eligibility.

Item 3

The team considered input from the psychologist, teacher, person assigned to the assessment (s) and parent. The District also considered guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, the Minnesota Department of Education, and the Minnesota Governor.

Item 4

The team considered waiting to complete the aforementioned assessment(s) in process until on-site instruction resumed however decided against this option as their completion would not influence eligibility.

Item 5

Consistent with the guidance from the U.S. Department of Education and the Governor of Minnesota there is no physical contact or shared physical space during Distance Learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Evaluation Plan language

The team considered proposing face to face evaluations. However, given restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the team decided against face-to-face assessment in lieu of indirect methods and reviewing existing data in order to determine the student's present levels of performance and educational needs.

Scenario 6: Re-evaluation to consider initial eligibility criteria for a second disability area where eligibility cannot be completed by due date

If you have a re-evaluation that was in process prior to distance learning and included initial eligibility criteria for a second disability area, the team must complete the re-evaluation by the triennial date (to document continued needs). (Example: a student who is currently SLD, but the team is considering EBD criteria as a secondary disability.) The team will subsequently develop an evaluation plan after on-site instruction resumes to consider eligibility in the additional disability area.

Evaluation Report language (background section)

The team determined that the student continues to demonstrate special education needs in the area of (existing disability area) as described below. Further data is needed to determine (list i.e. cognitive abilities/strengths/weaknesses, achievement levels in reading, written language and math, expressive/receptive communication abilities, gross and fine motor abilities, sensory status etc.). The team will develop an evaluation plan to address the new concerns and to collect data in these areas in order to determine further special education eligibility when the district resumes on-site instruction.