

Optional

Directions for DEC 3(a)/Prior Notice Eligibility Report/Specific Learning Disabilities

This form must be completed by the LD Eligibility Team as part of (and at the same time as) the Eligibility Determination (DEC 3/Prior Notice) whenever Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) is being considered as an area of eligibility. This form must be completed under the following circumstances:

Initial placement in LD

Reevaluation resulting in change of label to LD from another area of identification (e.g., SI)

Change in area of eligibility is considered (e.g., adding reading comprehension)

Reevaluation when new ability and achievement testing are obtained (it is not good practice to use data more than one year old to calculate discrepancies)

The date on the DEC3(a) must be the same as the date on the corresponding DEC 3. The DEC3(a) is to be attached to the DEC 3. A copy of the DEC 3(a) must be given to the parent along with the DEC 3.

This revised DEC 3(a) (effective August 2001) represents changes to the prior version in order to reflect federal law that requires identification in one or more of the seven areas of learning disabilities (e.g., reading comprehension and basic reading but not broad reading). There is also an increased emphasis on documenting information processing difficulties which reflects current research and thought.

Although there is no separate specific section to describe observational data, the team's written report must include "the relevant behavior noted during the observation of the child" and "the relationship of that behavior to the child's academic functioning." (300.543) This information can be included in Sections A, C, and/ or D.

Section A: Information Processing

According to the federal and state definition of SLD, a specific learning disability is an inclusive term used to denote various processing disorders presumed to be intrinsic to an individual. Information processing involves any of the following areas:

Reasoning and Problem-Solving (integration, comparison, synthesis, prioritization)

Phonological Processing (phonemic awareness, rapid naming, sound-symbol relationships, word-finding/word substitution)

Visuospatial Processing (object recognition, spatial organization)

Attention (selective, sustained, shifting)

Memory (encoding, storage association, retrieval, free recall, cued recall recognition)

Executive Functions (response inhibition, shifting, emotional control, task initiation, working memory, organization/planning (including time management), organization of materials, monitoring of self, monitoring of task, and/or monitoring of feedback from others)

Processing Speed (reading rate, fluency, automaticity)

Directions for DEC 3(a)/Prior Notice – page 2

Section A: Information Processing - Continued

1. The following are examples of information processing difficulties that may interfere with acquiring knowledge:
 - Inability to focus attention or avoid distraction (e.g., student is looking around the room while remainder of class is doing desk work)
 - Inability to hold information in working memory (e.g., student is unable to recall information that was just presented)
 - Impaired ability to differentiate sounds and match letters with sounds when reading (e.g., when reading grade-level material aloud, student often omits or substitutes sounds within words or adds sounds that are not present)
2. The following are examples of information processing difficulties that may interfere with organizing, storing, or retrieving knowledge:
 - Impaired ability to sustain attention. (e.g., student must be frequently redirected to task)
 - Impaired ability to shift attention from one topic to another (e.g., student asks question about reading assignment several minutes after class has moved on to doing math)
 - Difficulty differentiating between important information and nonessential details (e.g., student cannot identify main idea in a paragraph or summarize information presented)
 - Difficulty organizing information and materials (e.g., student struggles to independently put together parts to produce a complete project)
 - Inconsistent ability to accurately recall learned information (e.g., student cannot recall math facts that were known the day before)
3. The following are examples of information processing difficulties that may interfere with expressing or demonstrating knowledge of information learned:
 - Confusion of order of sounds within words (e.g., student says “donimoes” for dominoes or “aminals” for animals)
 - Weaknesses in spatial organization of written material (e.g., student’s handwriting is inappropriately large, messy, or difficult to read)
 - Slow processing speed interferes with timely completion of work (e.g., student is unable to complete tests in normal allotted time)

Section A allows the team to determine if there is evidence of a processing difficulty. The team considers each of the three items (#1-2-3) related to processing difficulties. If a processing difficulty is not found, document this by writing “none found.” If a processing difficulty is found, describe the learning behaviors associated with that processing difficulty. Sources of evidence of a processing difficulty include, but are not limited to, observations of the student engaged in learning, data from evaluations, outcomes from focused interventions, and work samples.

Optional

Directions for DEC 3(a)/Prior Notice – page 3

Section B: Ability-Achievement Discrepancy

Only reliable and validated tests that provide an accurate evaluation of a student's ability and/or achievement levels may be used for discrepancy determination in this section.

Write the name of the general ability instrument and the ability standard score (e.g., Full Scale IQ, General Cognitive Abilities, Broad Cognitive Abilities, etc.) in this section. When there is a Verbal/Performance IQ discrepancy of at least 20 points on the Wechsler scale, the higher scale IQ may be used to determine the ability/achievement discrepancy if evidence is documented that the higher score accurately reflects the student's intellectual functioning. Because of the importance of the intellectual assessment to the eligibility determination, group intelligence tests, unjustified prorated scores or extrapolated scores, and abbreviated forms shall not be used.

The student must be evaluated in each of the seven areas in which there is a suspected disability. For example, if basic reading and written expression are the areas of concern, then the areas of oral expression, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation and mathematics reasoning would not need to be evaluated although nothing prohibits an examiner from also evaluating these areas.

In making a discrepancy determination between ability and achievement in one or more of the seven areas of specific learning disability:

- a. use achievement tests which yield composite or cluster age-based standard scores in each of the area(s) of suspected disability (preferred practice), or
- b. if not using an achievement test that yields a composite or cluster, use two or more measures that each yield an age-based standard score in the area of suspected disability (each of which needs to be used to document a substantial discrepancy).

A single achievement subtest score may not be used to determine ability/achievement discrepancy. At least two subtests must be used to determine the discrepancy. The subtests administered should be designed to assess the specific areas being evaluated. Thus, broad reading and math scores should not be used to determine a discrepancy in basic reading, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation and mathematics reasoning.

If the two achievement subtests used do not yield a composite/cluster score, the discrepancy between the ability score and each subtest score should yield a substantial (i.e. 15 or more points) discrepancy.

Record the composite or cluster achievement test results for each area evaluated and calculate the discrepancy between ability and achievement. If two achievement measures are used for discrepancy determination, the name of the test, the results and each discrepancy must be documented on the DEC 3a.

For the areas of oral expression, listening comprehension and written expression, broad composite or cluster scores may be used for the discrepancy determination.

Directions for DEC 3(a)/Prior Notice – page 4

Section C: Alternative Discrepancy

If the team determines that the standardized assessment data do not accurately reflect a substantial discrepancy, place a check mark at C and complete the DEC 3(a)-alt/Prior Notice. Any time an alternative discrepancy is used there must be compelling documentable justification. This process therefore should be used sparingly and should reflect substantial thought, deliberation, and collection of supporting data. In completing the form consider the following:

1. The team must provide evidence why the data collected are not judged to be valid or to accurately reflect the student's ability and/or achievement. Examples might include prior IQ scores that were consistently higher, evaluation data documenting processing disorders which negatively impact performance on cognitive measures, documented emotional, attentional, or behavioral issues that interfere with test performance.
2. Additional data and/or evidence used for both 1 and 3 are included here or attached.
3. Evidence that data are not valid or accurately reflective of the student alone is not sufficient to identify a student as having a learning disability. In this section, the team must also present a credible case that the student has a learning disability. For example, the student might have documented severe processing deficits that result in decreased performance on the IQ tests as well as inability to learn reading in school even after appropriate interventions.

Section D: Substantial Learning Difficulties

The evidence may address observational data, grades, learning rate, basic skills for learning and concept development. Appropriate interventions should reflect interventions designed to address the Focus of Concern (i.e., RE-1).

Section E: Other Impacting Factors

These factors may exist concomitantly with a Specific Learning Disability. However, if the team determines that a factor is the primary cause of the student's disability, the student may not be identified as having SLD.

Section F: SLD Eligibility

Check each SLD area that the student meets eligibility criteria. Each member of the LD Eligibility Team indicates whether he/she agrees or disagrees on the DEC 3. If the student is not found to be eligible in any area, check () Not Eligible.