



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Bureau of Postsecondary and Adult Education Division of Adult Education Policy

Subject: Special Needs Student Assessment
Number: D.120
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POLICY STATEMENT

Alternative assessments must be used with students designated as “special needs” to measure basic education skill levels.

PURPOSE

Some agencies serve a limited number of adult learners who require the use of alternative assessment instruments due to intellectual, sensory, or behavioral deficits. For these adult learners, the use of Division of Adult Education -approved assessment instruments would not provide reliable and objective data to determine educational gain as defined by the National Reporting System (NRS).

GUIDANCE

The Division of Adult Education defines Special Needs as adult learners who demonstrate characteristics of one or more of the following classifications: mental retardation, severe emotional illness, brain injury, severe visual impairment, severe hearing impairment, or specific learning disabilities. To designate adult students as “Special Needs”, the agency must secure supporting documentation (see Table 1) for the student file and the “Special Needs” box is checked in the adult maintenance file in e-Data v2. Any learner with a special needs indicator will automatically be entered into the Beginning Literacy ABE Educational Functioning Level (EFL) in e-Data v2 and will not show a learning gain reportable to the NRS.

The option to designate a student as “Special Needs” in e-Data v2 does not waive the need to measure gain. It obligates the program to define learning targets or objectives for instruction, and to periodically measure and document the extent to which those

targets or objectives are met. Learning targets, or objectives, define expected gains or changes in certain skills that a student can demonstrate. It guides instruction that is goal directed and includes objective observation of skill change and measurement of the change that results from instruction. The instructor develops three or more learning targets for the student and documents the student progress at scheduled observation times.

Example: The intended outcome of the learning target could be, “As a result of intensive weekly (half hour) modules, student will reach a level of 90% of safety sign recognition over a four week period”.

In e-Data v2, adult-specific goals are for a single student and are entered on this tab then saved. There is space for set and met dates. Adults designated as “Special Needs” are required to have three to five individual student goals entered in this section with a set date and met date, if goal was attained.

TOOLS

Table 1: Special Needs Student Supporting Documentation

Mental Retardation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Documentation of assignment to Special Education while in school. ➤ Document provided by a locally recognized school or agency serving clients with mental retardation. ➤ Objective test data supporting the diagnosis provided by OVR, local hospital, or other agency.
Severe Emotional Illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Documentation of current mental health treatment for severe psychiatric difficulty. ➤ Documentation of assignment to Special Education while in school. ➤ Document provided by a locally recognized school or agency serving clients with severe mental illness. ➤ Objective test data supporting the diagnosis provided by OVR, local hospital, or other agency.
Brain Injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Documentation of head trauma or other type of brain injury provided by medical or rehabilitation personnel. ➤ Documentation of assignment to Special Education while in school. ➤ Document provided by a locally recognized school or agency serving clients with traumatic brain injury. ➤ Objective test data supporting the diagnosis provided by OVR, local hospital, or other agency.
Severe Visual Impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Documentation of current severe visual impairment. ➤ Documentation of assignment to Special Education while in school. ➤ Document of current visual impairment (after correction) provided by a locally recognized school or agency serving

	clients with visual impairment.
Severe Hearing Impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Documentation of current severe hearing impairment. ➤ Documentation of assignment to Special Education while in school. ➤ Document of current hearing impairment (after correction) provided by a locally recognized school or agency serving clients with hearing impairment.
Specific Learning Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Documentation of assignment to Special Education (LD) while in school. ➤ Document of current learning disability (after correction) provided by a locally recognized school or agency serving clients with learning disability.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide specific type of handicap that warrants alternative assessment and objective test data by a certified/licensed professional to support the application.

Note: Contact your Professional Development Consultant if you need assistance in designing learning targets and the alternative assessment tool for individual students.