



Special Needs Student Assessment

*Bureau of Postsecondary and Adult Education
Division of Adult Education Policy*

Subject: **Special Needs Student Assessment**
Number: D.120
Effective: July 1, 2023
Expires: Indefinite
Status: Replaces D.120 issued July 2011

POLICY STATEMENT

Division-funded programs must use alternative assessments with students designated as “special needs” to measure basic education skill levels and educational gain.

PURPOSE

Some agencies serve adult learners who require the use of alternative assessment instruments due to intellectual, sensory, or other disabilities or difficulties. For these individuals, division-approved standardized assessments do not provide reliable and objective data to determine educational gain as defined by the National Reporting System (NRS).

GUIDANCE

For the purposes of this policy and federal reporting, the Division of Adult Education designates as “special needs” adult learners who demonstrate characteristics of one or more of the following classifications: intellectual disability, severe emotional illness, brain injury, severe visual impairment, severe hearing impairment, or specific learning disabilities, and who cannot be appropriately assessed with standardized assessments. To designate adult students as “special needs”, agencies must have supporting documentation (see Table 1) in the student file and check the “Special Needs” box on the adult maintenance page in eData. For reporting purposes, learners designated as special needs are placed in ABE Level 1 Educational Functioning Level (EFL) and do not show learning gains reportable to the NRS.

The option to designate a student as “Special Needs” in eData 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 must develop three or more learning targets for the student and document student progress at scheduled observation times.

Example learning target: As a result of intensive weekly (half hour) modules, student will reach a level of 90 percent of safety sign recognition over a four week period.

For adults designated as “special needs,” agencies must enter three to five individual student goals in eData with a set date and met date, if goal was attained.

TOOLS

Table 1: Special Needs Student Supporting Documentation

Intellectual Disability	<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 intellectual disabilities. • Objective test data supporting the diagnosis provided by Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (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 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.