

ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Special Education Services
ASSIST Funding Support Plan for
II. AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (ASD) EVALUATIONS

Introduction

Due to local education agency (LEA) Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team decisions regarding eligibility for special education services, students suspected of having a disability in the area of Autism may benefit from educational diagnostic evaluations in the area of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The 2019 Alabama Child Count lists 8,794 students qualifying under the disability area of Autism.

Autism means a developmental disability that significantly affects verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction generally evident before age three (3) that adversely affects educational performance. This includes other pervasive developmental disorders. Students suspected of having a disability in the area of an ASD require extensive evaluations performed by qualified personnel trained in the area of Autism evaluations. These evaluations may be costly for LEAs.

The ASD Evaluation Plan

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) Special Education Services (SES) will reserve funding from Other State-Level Activities to support evaluations for a specific student who is suspected of having a disability in the area of Autism and is in need of an educational diagnostic evaluation for an ASD. All services must be provided in accordance with 20 U.S.C. 1400, et.seq.,(P.L. 108-446) IDEA, Part B, and the *Alabama Administrative Code* governing evaluations to children with suspected disabilities. Services requested will be monitored by the ALSDE.

Evaluation Criteria

1. LEAs must adhere to following the minimum required evaluative components outlined in the *Alabama Administrative Code* 290-8-9-.03(1) for Autism.
2. ASD Diagnostic Evaluations must be completed by a medical doctor, clinical psychiatrist, school psychologist or other qualified person (i.e., psychometrist) trained in the area of Autism evaluations.
3. LEAs Should Consider the Following Guidelines for Evaluators in Case Preparation:
 - Schedule all parts of the evaluation with the LEA.
 - Conduct a parent interview.
 - Conduct an interview with school personnel who interacts with the child;
 - Observe the child in both a structured and unstructured school environment or natural setting;
 - Disseminate ASD rating scales to the parent and the appropriate school personnel;
 - Administer the appropriate Autism educational diagnostic evaluations to the child suspected of a disability in the area of Autism and complete the scoring of all assessments;
 - Provide consultation feedback to both the family and the LEA;
 - Provide a written diagnostic summary to the LEA that includes summative information of the family history, interviews and observations conducted, and provide analysis of the ASD rating scale assessment information and Autism assessment results with interpretive data;
 - Provide the report to the LEA within 21 days of the evaluation.

Criteria for LEA Participation:

An LEA is eligible to complete an ASSIST funding application for an ASD evaluation on behalf of any child, ages 3-21, who is suspected of having a disability in the area of Autism and may benefit from educational diagnostic evaluations in the area of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

Criteria for LEA Use of the Application Funds for ASSIST, II. ASD Evaluations:

Consistent with evaluation requirements of IDEA (34 CFR §300.300 through 300.311), the costs associated with a costly evaluation are only those costs associated with determination of eligibility.

An LEA receiving funds under the application for ASSIST, II. ASD Evaluations must adhere to the following regarding use of funds:

1. The LEA may not use the application for ASSIST funding, II. ASD Evaluations for placements that are determined inconsistent with 34 CFR §300.114-118.
2. All eligibility criteria for Autism must be clearly identified on the child's *Notice and Eligibility Decision Regarding Special Education Services* form.
3. Allowable expenditures include, but are not limited to:
 - Specially trained evaluators as outlined in the *Alabama Administrative Code* (290-8-9.03(1)(c)(4) that are specifically trained in the area of Autism evaluations.
 - Contracted services specific for the child with a suspected disability in the area of Autism.
4. The application for ASSIST funding, II. ASD Evaluations is used only to provide the ASD Evaluation documented in the application for a specific child suspected of having a disability in the area of Autism that exceeds the average cost of typical evaluations. ALSDE SES reimbursement per evaluation, per child, including any travel cost incurred, may not exceed \$2,000.00.
5. If an ASD Evaluator requires travel costs, it is the responsibility of the LEA to pay costs using the LEAs rates, rules, and regulations, or the State's rates, rules, and regulations regarding travel. It will be the responsibility of the LEA to determine and account for travel costs and to negotiate for services rendered. Any transportation costs not specific to the ASD evaluation is considered an unallowable expense.
6. An LEA submitting a claim under this provision of IDEA shall be prepared to provide supporting documentation related to the evaluation of the specific student suspected of having a disability in the area of an ASD.

Documentation:

The LEA may also be required to submit supporting documents and have available for review in the statewide electronic portal the current *Notice and Eligibility Decision Regarding Special Education Services* form relating to the submitted application.

Application for ASSIST Funding, II. ASD Evaluations Awards Status Timelines, Procedures, and Notification:

The procedural timelines for the application for ASSIST funding, II. ASD Evaluations are as follows:

1. An LEA may submit multiple student applications for students suspected of having a disability in the area of Autism that may benefit from educational diagnostic evaluations in the area of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in the LEA's jurisdiction. **MAXIMUM REIBURSEMENT PER EVALUATION, PER CHILD, INCLUDING ANY TRAVEL COST INCURRED** is \$2,000.00.
2. The application for ASSIST funding, II. ASD Evaluations cannot be used for expenses incurred for the identified evaluations in prior years or funded by an alternate funding source.
3. All applications received will be reviewed by staff of the ALSDE within 15 days to determine if the unique qualities of the child(ren) related to occurrence, intensity of, and diversity of services are in excess of the typical high-needs child with a suspected disability in the area of Autism. An award notification will be sent via email to the LEA after an approval of the application is granted.

Please complete and return the application for ASSIST funding via email to:

speced@alsde.edu

ATTENTION FISCAL TEAM