

## **1501: DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY**

Eligibility for SoonerStart early intervention services is determined by a developmental evaluation, documentation of an automatic qualifying condition (**Appendix O**), or informed clinical opinion which includes review of existing information. The multidisciplinary evaluation team determines eligibility upon completion of the evaluation or review of the existing information which forms the basis of an automatic qualifying condition or informed clinical opinion. The Prior Written Notice and Consent for Evaluation (EdPlan) must be signed by the parent before eligibility is determined by evaluation, clinical opinion, review of existing data and/or automatic qualifying condition.

### **Evaluation/Re-evaluation**

The multidisciplinary evaluation team consists of person(s) representing two or more separate disciplines or professions. Parental consent is required prior to the administration of any evaluation. Evaluations are scheduled at the closest SoonerStart office to the family's home to be able to evaluate and serve a greater number of children and families. Exceptions to the evaluation location may be made for infants and toddlers who are medically fragile or if the family lacks transportation or the cost of transportation would limit the family's access to the service.

SoonerStart uses nondiscriminatory procedures for evaluation of the children and families which insure, at a minimum, that:

- tests and other evaluation materials, and procedures are administered in the native language of the child or other mode of communication, unless this is clearly not feasible;
- any evaluation procedures and materials used are selected and administered so as not to be racially or culturally discriminatory; and
- no single procedure is used as the sole criterion for determining a child's eligibility.

Evaluation/Re-evaluation procedures must include:

- administering one norm-referenced evaluation instrument across all areas of development as well as administering a second tool that can be norm or criterion-referenced. Oklahoma utilizes the Battelle Developmental Inventory – 2 (BDI-2) as the norm-referenced evaluation instrument for all eligibility evaluations.
- taking the child's history (including interviewing the parent);
- identifying the child's level of functioning in each of the developmental areas;
- gathering information from other sources such as family members, other caregivers, medical providers, social workers, and educators, if necessary, to understand the full scope of the child's unique strengths and needs; and
- reviewing medical, educational, and other pertinent records, existing or requested. Testing in the five developmental domains completed by outside agencies may be used for eligibility determination if the results are not older than 6 months.

### **Informed Clinical Opinion**

Informed clinical opinion is an integral part of all eligibility determinations. It provides a necessary safeguard against determination of eligibility based upon isolated information or test scores alone.

Part C federal regulations require the use of informed clinical opinion as an independent basis for eligibility determination when standardized measures fail to show an eligible percentage of developmental delay. Informed clinical opinion requires the qualified personnel who conducted the evaluation to determine a child's eligibility. However, if the child exhibits qualifying developmental delays based on the evaluation, informed clinical opinion cannot be used to determine that the child is ineligible.

Informed clinical opinion must include a review of existing information in addition to the standardized testing completed by the multidisciplinary evaluation team. Any pertinent records regarding current health status and medical history, functional abilities, as well as any developmental evaluations and assessments from other sources must be considered in eligibility determination.

Informed clinical opinion is meant to qualify children when the testing tool does not recognize the true sense of the child's delay. In Oklahoma, informed clinical opinion may not be used to qualify children considered "at risk" or children that would "benefit" from early intervention services. Children identified as "at risk" should be referred to the Child Guidance program or other programs in the area.

The multidisciplinary team must document the basis of their recommendation that the infant or toddler is or remains eligible for SoonerStart services in EdPlan on the **Multidisciplinary Evaluation and Child Assessment Team Summary form, (OK-SS IFSP MECATS)** which is found under the "Evaluations" and "MECATS" tabs. Both sections must be completed.

### **Automatic Qualifying Condition**

If an infant/toddler enters the program with medical records confirming a diagnosis of an automatic qualifying condition or syndrome (**Appendix O**), the multidisciplinary team should determine eligibility and complete the Oklahoma Family Interview (OFI) and IFSP.

If a review of the medical records confirms a diagnosis of an automatic qualifying condition or syndrome, then a BDI-2 should not be completed as part of the evaluation process.

### **Review of Existing Information**

If an infant/toddler enters the program with standardized testing completed in all five developmental domains, the multidisciplinary team may use this information to determine eligibility if the testing is not more than six (6) months old. A BDI-2 is not required to determine eligibility in this instance. A MECATS should be completed at the initial IFSP meeting by the Resource Coordinator and the assigned service provider documenting the existing testing information.

If an infant/toddler enters the program with standardized testing completed in only some of the five developmental domains, the multidisciplinary team may use this information to determine eligibility if the testing is not more than six (6) months old and indicates scores that meet SoonerStart's eligibility

requirements. However, a BDI must be completed in the other developmental domains not included in the existing testing information by an evaluator of another discipline, if possible. The Resource Coordinator and the SoonerStart evaluator will complete a MECATS documenting the SoonerStart BDI scores and the existing testing information. The RC and the evaluator will both sign the MECATS form.

Any standardized testing from any outside agency should be considered for eligibility determination in these instances.