

POLICY 9

INCLUSION FUNDING STANDARDS FOR SEVERELY HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

Adopted by Superintendents' Council 4/96

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SONOMA COUNTY SELPA
INCLUSION FUNDING STANDARDS
FOR SEVERELY HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

Severely Handicapped Level of Funding

To be considered severely handicapped and eligible for the use of SH funding for districts to provide an Inclusion Program, a student must be functioning at or below the levels described in the following sections. Current testing is required within the last year prior to referral date, with the exception of preschoolers, who must have testing within the last 6 months. Students may qualify by meeting #1 only. If they do not qualify under #1, they may qualify by meeting the additional criteria listed in section #2. Students not meeting these criteria will not be eligible for funding at the severely handicapped funding level.

1. Cognitive - Three or more standard deviations below the mean on a standardized test (or less than 60% of chronological age if non-standardized tests are used). (See Appendix for further clarifying information.)
 - If a performance cognitive ability measure is used by the psychologist, standardized language assessment needs to be included (within the last year or within 6 months if student is a preschooler).

2. Adaptive Social - Three or more standard deviations below the mean on a standardized adaptive behavior scale (or less than 60% of chronological age if non-standardized tests are used) for 2 out of 3 of the following:
 - Communication
 - Daily Living Skills
 - Socialization

The Adaptive Behavior scale must be administered in such a way as to provide a reliable assessment.

- Scale administered with one educator and one caregiver informant, or
- Other Steering Committee agreed upon process

In the event of a disagreement, an observation may also be requested to provide additional information.

Screening Committee Function

The Screening Committee will make referral recommendations to districts regarding each referral's "severely handicapped" funding status. The committee has the option to make

exceptions in unique student situations. The committee shall meet annually in mid-April or as determined by the Steering Committee.

The Screening Committee will be composed of two Steering Committee members (non-referring members), two SELPA staff and one SCOE administrator. A majority vote will be required for Inclusion eligibility at the “severely handicapped” funding level.

Funding Referral Timelines

- The Inclusion SH Funding referral process occurs between January and April of each school year.
- Exceptions to the timeline must be agreed to by the current program operator and the student’s home school district program.
- When a student whose current IEP placement is “full inclusion” moves to Sonoma County from another county or state, the student’s new resident district has an obligation to continue to provide inclusion services to that student. The student’s district may refer the student for a severely handicapped level of funding at the next referral cycle.

APPENDIX

Standards Clarification for Cognitive Scores for Inclusion SH Funding Eligibility

Whenever possible, a standard score should be used from a recognized ability test to determine the “three or more standard deviations below the mean” cognitive criterion. These tests are researched, normed, valid and reliable. However, in cases where parents expressly forbid standardized tests, or they are inappropriate for the child due to multiple disabilities or legal limitations (e.g., black students), one can use the mental age (MA) as a percentage (%) of chronological age (CA) method.

Percentage of CA is figured as follows: $(MA \div CA) \times 100 = \%$. This is called a “ratio IQ” and is approximately equivalent to a standard score of ability tests that have a mean of 100. The standard deviation on most ability tests with a mean of 100 is either 15 or 16. This means that three standard deviations below the mean is a standard score of 52 to 55 [$100 - (16 \times 3)$] or [$100 - (15 \times 3)$]. Thus, the intended Severely Handicapped (SH) range is actually 52-55%.

Figuring a “percentage of chronological age (% of CA)” score requires age scores from a test or combination of tests, but these can be determined from most developmental or other tests (even academic tests usually have age scores); it does not require a standardized test. (Developmental scales are often used at the preschool level, for

example; preschool eligibility has in the past been based on developmental age [DA] as a % of CA cut-off: age scores have been compared against a 50% or 75% cut-off eligibility score for special education.) Age scores can compute to percentage scores and vice versa. Examples:

A 10-year-old functioning at the 6-year level (6/10) is at 60% of CA.

An 8-year-old functioning at the 4-year level (4/8 or 1/2) is at 50% of CA.

An 8-year-old functioning at the 6-year level (6/8 or 3/4) is at 75% of CA.

An 8-year-old functioning at the 5-year level (5/8) is at 62.5% of CA.

A 9-year-old functioning at the 6-year level (6/9 or 2/3) is at 67% of CA.

These last two would fall between two and three standard deviations below the mean or in the old “Educable Mentally Retarded/EMR” range, not in the Severely Handicapped (SH) range, and would not be considered SH for funding purposes. Charts can be constructed to determine the % of CA based on various MA’s compared with various CA’s in order to assist staff in determining if students meet criteria. To be accurate, months should be used for both MA and CA computations rather than years. Convert both the developmental age and the chronological age (usually listed in years and months) into total months; then divide the CA by the MA and multiply by 100 to get the %. *Note that test score ages must be compared with the chronological age of the child at the time test was given, not the chronological age when one is making the referral.*

This “ratio IQ” is not judged to be a valid method to determine ability past the age of about 16. (That is, it is not true that a 30 year old person with a ratio IQ of 50 is functioning at the 15 year old level or that a 30 year old person functioning at about the 15 year old level has an IQ of 50.) There appears to be a “cognitive ceiling” reached in the moderately to severely developmentally delayed person (SH range cognitively) such that the gap between mental age and chronological age grows wider as the person gains in chronological age, starting around age 12 and becoming mathematically invalid after about age 16. Fortunately, virtually all students functioning in the SH range are identified and reconfirmed as SH before the age of 12, so their IQ’s or % of CA will not change appreciably (not enough to reclassify them as something other than SH). Students referred from preschool should be retested prior to Inclusion referral to confirm their SH funding eligibility, particularly if cognitive changes from initial assessment are suspected.