



Missouri Eligibility Criteria for Speech or Language Impairment

Speech or Language Impairment Definition

“Speech or Language Impairment” means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, language impairment, or voice impairment that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.

A. Criteria for Initial Determination of Eligibility - Language

A language impairment is present when:

- 1) the child consistently exhibits inappropriate use in any of the structures of language (e.g., morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics) as measured by language sampling or other clinical tasks;
- 2) the child’s language functioning is significantly below the child’s abilities as measured by two (2) or more standardized language assessments. Significantly below is defined as two (2) standard deviations below the mean for children three (3) to five (5) years of age but not eligible for kindergarten, and 1.5 standard deviation below cognitive ability for children who are kindergarten age eligible and older;
- 3) the language impairment adversely affects the child’s educational performance; and,
- 4) the language impairment is not a result of dialectal differences or second language influence.

Professional Judgment

A child may also be deemed eligible if the evaluation documents through formal and informal assessment that a language impairment is present even though the standard scores do not meet the criteria in A above. In such cases, sufficient data must be presented in the evaluation report to document the existence of the language impairment.

B. Criteria for Determination of Initial Eligibility - Sound System Disorder

A Sound System Disorder, which includes articulation and/or phonology, is present when:

- 1) the student exhibits a delay of correct sound production based on state designated normative data. The child’s sound system is significantly delayed based on a single word test and/or a sentence/phrase repetition task and a connected speech sample with consideration given to the type of error recorded (substitutions, omissions, distortions, and/or additions). These errors may be described as single sound errors or errors in phonological patterns or multiple errors in the child’s speech that compromise intelligibility and/or listener perception even though the recorded errors are considered within normal developmental guidelines;
- 2) the Sound System Disorder adversely affects the child's educational performance; and,
- 3) the sound system disorder is not a result of dialectal differences or second language influence.

Sufficient data is present in the evaluation report to document the existence of a disorder due to multiple errors in the sound system which compromise the child’s intelligibility and/or the listener’s perception even though the recorded errors are considered within normal developmental guidelines (professional judgment).



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C. Criteria for Initial Determination of Eligibility - Fluency

A fluency impairment is present when:

- 1) the child consistently exhibits one or more of the following symptomatic behaviors of dysfluency:
 - sound, syllabic, or word repetition;
 - prolongations of sounds, syllables, or words;
 - blockages; or,
 - hesitations;
- 2) the child's fluency is significantly below the norm as measured by speech sampling in a variety of contexts. A significant discrepancy is defined as five (5) or more dysfluencies per minute or a ten (10) percent dysfluency rate and distracting to the listener; and,
- 3) the fluency impairment adversely affects the child's educational performance

Professional Judgment

A child may also be deemed eligible if the evaluation documents through formal and informal assessment that a fluency impairment is present even though the criterion in C above is not met. In such cases, sufficient data must be presented in the evaluation report to document the existence of the fluency impairment.

D. Criteria for Initial Determination of Eligibility - Voice

A voice impairment is present when:

- 1) the child consistently exhibits deviations in one or more of the parameters of voice: pitch, quality, or volume;
- 2) the child's voice is discrepant from the norm as related to his/her age, sex, and culture and is distracting to the listener;
- 3) the voice impairment is not the result of a temporary problem such as: normal voice changes, allergies, colds, or other such conditions; and,
- 4) the voice impairment adversely affects the child's educational performance.

Missouri Eligibility Criteria can be found in the Missouri State Plan for Special Education, Regulation III- Identification and evaluation; <http://dese.mo.gov/governmental-affairs/dese-administrative-rules/incorporated-reference-materials/IDEAPartB-2014>