

Young Children with Disabilities - Significant Developmental Delay (SDD)

The term significant developmental delay refers to a delay in a child's development in adaptive behavior, cognition, communication, motor development or social development to the extent that, if not provided with special intervention, it may adversely affect his/her educational performance in age-appropriate activities. The term does not apply to children who are experiencing a slight or temporary lag in one or more areas of development, or a delay which is primarily due to environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage or lack of experience in age appropriate activities. The SDD eligibility may be used for children from ages three through seven, and in no instance later than the end of the school year in which the child turns eight. (refer to 34 CFR 300.7(b)(1) and (2))

Eligibility

1. Initial eligibility must be established, and an IEP in place, on or before the child's 5th birthday. SDD eligibility is determined by assessing children in each of the five skill areas of adaptive development, cognition, communication, physical development (gross and fine motor), and social/emotional development. Any child, ages three through five, who scores at least 2 standard deviations below the mean in one or more of the five areas, or 1½ standard deviations below the mean in two or more areas shall meet eligibility for SDD.

The application of professional judgment is a **critical** element at every stage of eligibility determination: as test instruments are selected, during the evaluation process, in the analysis of evaluation results, as well as the analysis of error patterns on standardized and teacher made tests, etc. In summary, the application of professional judgment is a critical part of the entire eligibility process.

2. To continue eligibility, students must have their eligibility reviewed at the triennial date, at which time they must score 2 standard deviations below the mean in at least one area to continue eligibility.
3. All five skill areas shall be assessed using at least one formal assessment. In those areas in which a significant delay is suspected, at least one additional formal assessment must be utilized to determine the extent of the delay. All formal assessments must be age appropriate, and all scores must be given in standard deviations.
4. Children, ages three through seven, may be found eligible for special education services under the SDD or a categorical eligibility. For students eligible under SDD with suspected hearing, visual, or orthopedic impairments, a complete evaluation must be obtained to determine if the student also meets eligibility criteria for deaf/hard of hearing, visual impairments, or orthopedic impairments.

Placement and Service Delivery

1. Preschool-aged students meeting eligibility criteria as SDD and needing special education services may receive those services in a variety of placement options, as determined by the student's IEP/Placement Committee and participation by other agencies, such as, but not limited to:
 - o Preschool facility-based intervention programs
 - o Head Start Programs
 - o Georgia Pre-kindergarten Programs
 - o Private early care and education programs
 - o Home and community-based programs
2. School-aged students with SDD shall be served by any appropriately certified teacher in any education program designed to meet the needs of the student, as specified in the student's IEP/Placement Committee minutes.

APPENDIX H - SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY (AGES THREE THROUGH FIVE) (SDD).

Definition.

The term significant developmental delay refers to a delay in a child's development in adaptive behavior, cognition, communication, motor development or social development to the extent that, if not provided with special intervention, it may adversely affect his/her educational performance in age-appropriate activities. The term does not apply to children who are experiencing a slight or temporary lag in one or more areas of development, or a delay which is primarily due to environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage or lack of experience in age appropriate activities. The SDD eligibility may be used for children from ages three through five, and in no instance later than the end of the school year in which the child turns six. (refer to 34 CFR 300.7(b)(1) and (2))

Eligibility.

(1) Initial eligibility must be established, and an IEP in place, on or before the child's 5th birthday. SDD eligibility is determined by assessing children in each of the five skill areas of adaptive development, cognition, communication, physical development (gross and fine motor), and social/emotional development. Any child, ages three through five, who scores at least 2 standard deviations below the mean in one or more of the five areas, or 1 ½ standard deviations below the mean in two or more areas shall meet eligibility for SDD. The application of **professional judgment** is a critical element at every stage of eligibility determination: as test instruments are selected, during the evaluation process, in the analysis of evaluation results, as well as the analysis of error patterns on standardized and teacher made tests, etc. In summary, the application of professional judgement is a critical part of the entire eligibility process.

(2) To continue eligibility, students must have their eligibility reviewed at the triennial date, at which time they must score 2 standard deviations below the mean in at least one area to continue eligibility.

(3) All five skill areas shall be assessed using at least one formal assessment. In those areas in which a significant delay is suspected, at least one additional formal assessment must be utilized to determine the extent of the delay. All formal assessments must be age appropriate, and all scores must be given in standard deviations.

(4) Children, ages three through five, may be found eligible for special education services under the SDD or a categorical eligibility. For students eligible under SDD with suspected hearing, visual, or orthopedic impairments, a complete evaluation must be obtained to determine if the student also meets eligibility criteria for deaf/hard of hearing, visual impairments, or orthopedic impairments.

Placement and Service Delivery.

(1) Preschool-aged students meeting eligibility criteria as SDD and needing special education services may receive those services in a variety of placement options, as determined by the student's IEP/Placement Committee and participation by other agencies, such as, but not limited to:

- (a) Preschool facility-based intervention programs
- (b) Head Start Programs
- (c) Georgia Prekindergarten Programs
- (d) Private early care and education programs
- (e) Home and community-based programs

(2) School-aged students with SDD shall be served by any appropriately certified teacher in any education program designed to meet the needs of the student, as specified in the student's IEP/Placement Committee minutes.

SPECIAL PROVISION: The age range will remain three through five for one year.

During this year local school systems will be identified to serve as pilot programs to collect data on the program impact and the financial impact of expanding the age range to age seven. This Rule will be automatically revised after one year to expand the SDD age range through age seven, unless the Board determines that the pilot study results do not support such a change.