

FAQs: SI with Intellectual Disability

1. Do I need to report standard scores from norm referenced tests to establish eligibility?

ANSWER: It depends on the child. In some cases you can administer a formal protocol and get relevant data about that child's functioning. In other cases, you may attempt formal testing and find the child is unresponsive or does not have the cognitive ability to follow test protocol. You may deem other measures such as a criterion referenced tests or informal data from observation and caretaker interviews more informative and appropriate for describing and analyzing the child's level of functioning.

2. Do I have to follow the test protocol in order to report information gained from the administration of a standardized test?

ANSWER: You must follow the published protocol for standardized tests in order to obtain and report valid standard scores. However, in evaluating students with ID it is sometimes useful to alter the test protocol in an effort to observe behaviors and measure abilities in a functional manner. If you attempt a standardized test and find the student is unable to follow the protocol but can demonstrate the skill with modifications, it is appropriate to continue with the test for anecdotal data. You will not be able to score the protocol and you must accurately describe your modifications and results in narrative form.

3. Can I use a standardized test that is normed for children younger than the student I am testing?

ANSWER: Yes. However, you will be unable to obtain valid standardized scores and you must indicate in your report that the test used was not normed for the age of the child you are testing. Also, be cognizant of the stimulus items and format of the test. Although students with ID may appear to be functioning at the level of a much younger child, it is important that we respect each individual and protect their dignity. Best practice encourages age appropriate materials for children regardless of their cognitive ability. As stated above, you may seek alternative sources of data such as observations, developmental checklists, or caretaker interview.

4. Do I have to address assistive technology as part of my evaluation?

ANSWER: Yes. AT consideration is required by law for every FIE and as part of every annual ARD. The degree to which you address or assess AT depends on the child. In the case of a child who is nonverbal or highly unintelligible augmentative communication should be a consideration at the very least. Depending on the child's level of functioning, experience, and current methods of communication an in depth AAC evaluation may be required. Be cognizant of the students preferred method of response before beginning any evaluation. If a child is already using an AAC device it must available to that student during testing by the SLP and others on the evaluation team.

5. How do I determine the need for direct vs. indirect services?

ANSWER: The decision is made on a case by case basis depending on the educational needs of the child. Remember that when SI is secondary to another disabling condition (in this case ID), speech therapy services function to support access to the special education program. In making your determination consider the student's educational history, present levels of performance, learning style, response to interventions, current goals and objectives, learning environment, expected outcomes, and level of expertise of primary caretakers.