Washington State Association of School Psychologists

Summary of the WSASP Guidance for Special Education Evaluations during the COVID-19 Closure

The Washington State Association of School Psychologists (WSASP) recognizes that in the current unprecedented times, school psychologists need to do our work in different ways. In-person evaluations are not possible, but we can gather data and complete evaluations in flexible ways. Some evaluations will be fairly easy to complete with existing data, some will not be possible to complete until schools reopen, while others may be possible to complete, or at least to start, with some creative problem-solving. Questions to guide our practice are:

- What is best for the student?
- Does the team have means to access all the data needed to complete this evaluation?
- Is the parent or adult student comfortable proceeding with an evaluation during this time?

Evaluation reports need to include discussion of the assessments and review of data that supports the conclusion regarding eligibility including additional information required under WAC 392-172A-03080 for students with specific learning disabilities; In many cases, this does not require individually-administered standardized cognitive or achievement tests. Teacher-collected data, state testing, and review of other records can help answer our questions. Direct observation may not be possible, but school psychologists can use teacher observations or even observations of students in their home environment (for example, video of the student reading to a parent). Behavior ratings can be sent through the publisher's online services; however copying/scanning questionnaires is a violation of copyright. Remote assessments are not recommended unless the school psychologist has the required training and technology on both their side and the student/family side.

The Washington Administrative Code (WAC) requires a comprehensive evaluation in all areas of suspected disability, even those that are not commonly linked to the disability in question. If other team members are not able to complete their parts of the evaluation without in-person assessment, the team may need to complete a partial evaluation, recommending needs for services in some areas, while also clearly documenting that a re-evaluation or assessment revision will be needed when schools open and in-person assessment is possible.

Parents/guardians have the right to decline proceeding with evaluations or meetings when in-person assessments and meetings are not possible.

Referrals may be processed and initial evaluations started, if the team has sufficient information to make the required decisions. Even if not all information is available, it may be helpful for the team to gather the available information now, while the student’s current teachers are available, rather than wait until fall when new teachers will need time to get to know the student. Documenting the team’s process and decisions as well as documenting the meeting platform and who attended is critical during this time.

OSPI has noted that “school days” as referred to in our compliance requirements refer to any days when instruction was provided to all students. Initial evaluations and some re-evaluations may need to be extended until schools open.

For further information, please see the WSASP COVID-19 Guidance Document. Additional information and updates will be provided in the WSASP Prior Written Notice e-newsletter.