



Assessment Tip Sheet

ASSESSING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Watch Now!



WHAT IS AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER?

According to the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), an English language learner (ELL) is a student whose primary language is not English, and whose English proficiency or lack thereof provides a barrier to successful learning.¹



WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY ABOUT ASSESSMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Sec. 303.25 (a)(2) clarifies that evaluations and assessments should be conducted in "the language normally used by the child, if determined developmentally appropriate for the child by qualified personnel conducting the evaluation or assessment."

Sections 303.321(a)(5) and 303.321(a)(6) state that all evaluations and assessments of a child must be conducted in the native language of the child, in accordance with the definition of native language in §303.25, unless clearly not feasible to do so.

The Wisconsin Administrative Code - Dept. of Health Services, Chapter 90.08(7)(d)(1)(2) states: Testing instruments and other materials and procedures employed by the EI team shall meet the following requirements: 1. They shall be administered or provided in the child's or family's primary language or other mode of communication. When this is clearly not possible, the circumstances preventing it shall be documented in the child's early intervention record; 2. They may not be racially or culturally discriminatory.

Wisconsin's Birth to 3 Program Operations Guide
See Ch. 6 on Native Language and Evaluations



¹ "English Language Learners" Council for Exceptional Children, accessed on October 2, 2023, <https://exceptionalchildren.org/topics/english-language-learners>

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT ASSESSING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN PART C EARLY INTERVENTION?

In order to be culturally and linguistically responsive to children and families in early intervention:

- Determine if the child's language can be accommodated using a tool that is normed for the child's language and culture.
- Determine if a language interpreter is necessary to meet the language needs of the child to obtain an accurate assessment.
- Use assessment methods and strategies that are appropriate for the child's cultural and linguistic characteristics.
- Use a variety of methods, including observation and interviews, to gather assessment information from multiple sources.
- Use informed clinical opinion regarding cultural and linguistic diversity in addition to assessment results.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING INTERPRETERS IN THE PART C EARLY INTERVENTION ASSESSMENT PROCESS?

- Ensures the ability to communicate effectively with the child and family as part of the team.
- Supports the acquisition and interpretation of multiple sources of information that are culturally and linguistically responsive as part of the evaluation and assessment process.
- Allows for a greater compatibility between a child and family's needs and the provision of services, particularly when language is a barrier.
- Interpreters can serve as a cultural bridge between the family and the program thus increasing culturally responsive assessment practices.

WHAT ARE CONSIDERATIONS WHEN ASSESSING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN PART C EARLY INTERVENTION?

- Planning: What type of planning is needed with the EI team, including an interpreter, before the evaluation or assessment to ensure the efficiency, accuracy and validity of the assessment process?
- Debriefing: How can the EI team, including the interpreter, ensure that time is set aside for debriefing following a visit with a child and family in order to check for understanding?
- Relationships: How can the EI team build relationships with qualified interpreters in order to enhance the understanding and fluidity of the assessment process for both the program and the family?
- Child Development: How can the EI team use authentic assessment practices, including the use of an interpreter, to assist in determining whether a child has a language delay versus a language difference? Has the EI team considered skills or areas of development that are different due to cultural norms and experiences?

Adapted from: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/professional-issues/collaborating-with-interpreters/#collapse_1 and Bilingual Speechie <https://bilingualspeechie.com/blogs/for-slps/working-effectively-with-interpreters>