

Mid-Year Implementation of Updated Procedures for Conducting Special Education Evaluations

Teaching and Learning/Division of Diverse Learners

Purpose

This document is issued to support Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in the consistent and compliant implementation of updated evaluation procedures outlined in the newly released Bulletin 1508. The Louisiana Department of Education recognizes that Bulletin 1508 is being issued during the academic year and provides the following direction to ensure continuity of services, procedural integrity, and compliance with federal and state requirements.

General Implementation Principle

The updated procedures apply prospectively, not retroactively, unless otherwise specified in Bulletin 1508. LEAs are expected to implement the updated procedures in a manner that protects student rights, avoids unnecessary delays, and maintains compliance with evaluation timelines.

Effective Date and Applicability

1. Evaluations Initiated *After* the Bulletin's Effective Date

- Final Rule for the updated Bulletin 1508 was December 20, 2025.
- All new initial evaluations and reevaluations for which parental consent is obtained on or after the bulletin's effective date must fully adhere to the updated procedures.
- LEAs should ensure that staff use revised forms, processes, and documentation aligned with the new requirements.

2. Evaluations Already in Progress at the Time of Release

For evaluations that were initiated before the bulletin's effective date:

- LEAs may complete the evaluation using the procedures in effect at the time consent was obtained, provided that:
 - The evaluation remains compliant with IDEA requirements; and

- No procedural violations are created by continuing under the prior policy.
- LEAs should not restart evaluations solely due to the release of the new bulletin.

Important:

When a multidisciplinary evaluation team determines that the use of updated policies or procedures will support student-centered decision-making without delaying the evaluation process, the team may proceed, provided the rationale is documented and included in the evaluation report.

Reevaluations with Imminent Timelines

- Reevaluations with timelines nearing expiration should be prioritized for timely completion.
- LEAs are encouraged to:
 - Complete these evaluations without interruption; and
 - Transition to updated procedures for future cycles.

Transition Expectations for LEAs

Phase 1: Immediate Actions (First 30-60 Days Post-Release)

LEAs should:

- Disseminate the bulletin to all relevant staff
- Review and identify procedural changes
- Provide interim guidance to evaluation teams
- Begin revising forms and templates

Phase 2: Capacity Building and Alignment (60-90 Days)

LEAs should:

- Conduct targeted training for evaluation personnel
- Align local procedures and electronic systems
- Clarify documentation expectations
- Provide technical assistance to school teams

Phase 3: Full Implementation and Monitoring (Ongoing)

LEAs should:

- Fully implement updated procedures for all new evaluations
- Monitor timelines and procedural fidelity

- Address implementation challenges through coaching and corrective guidance

Documentation Expectations During Transition

LEAs are expected to:

- Clearly document which procedures were applied and why
- Maintain records demonstrating good-faith implementation
- Ensure evaluation reports clearly reflect compliance with applicable policy

Compliance and Monitoring

The Louisiana Department of Education will:

- Apply a reasonable transition lens when reviewing evaluations initiated prior to the effective date.
- Expect full compliance for evaluations initiated after the effective date.
- Provide additional guidance and technical assistance as needed.

Failure to transition procedures within a reasonable timeframe may result in findings of noncompliance.

Key Reminders for Staff

- **Documentation:** Always document which bulletin/procedure is being followed, especially when transitioning a case that had consent but hadn't started.
- **IDEA Timelines:** Regardless of the procedure used, legal timelines for evaluation completion must be strictly adhered to.
- **Hybrid Option:** For "In Progress" evaluations, teams *can* use updated policy if, as determined by the multidisciplinary team, it is in the best interest of the student, and it doesn't cause a delay, but it must be clearly documented.

Key Assurance to Families

LEAs should communicate to families that:

- Students' rights and services will not be interrupted
- Evaluations will be completed within timelines, and
- Updated procedures are intended to strengthen evaluation quality and decision-making.

Summary for LEAs

- Do not stop evaluations already in progress
- Apply new procedures to new consents moving forward
- Document decisions clearly during the transition
- Prioritize timelines and student needs