Eligibility Determination and the Multidisciplinary Evaluation (MDE)

Policy
Every child that is referred to Infant Toddler Early Intervention in Philadelphia County, whose parents give consent, will be offered an Initial multidisciplinary evaluation (MDE) to determine the child’s eligibility for Infant Toddler Early Intervention. Children who receive Early Intervention services will receive an Annual MDE to determine their ongoing eligibility. The parent(s) will participate in the MDE as a member of the team, along with the Service Coordinator and the MDE evaluator(s). The parent is permitted to invite any additional persons to the MDE that they wish. The MDE will be conducted observing County nondiscrimination practices (See Nondiscrimination Practices Policy). The Initial MDE will be conducted by Early Intervention professionals who are independent of services. Both the Initial and Annual MDE will be conducted by qualified personnel and will include all required participants. Diagnostic instruments and standard tests that are used as part of the evaluation are for the purpose and population for which they are valid and reliable.

Procedures
These procedures will be applied to every evaluation completed in Philadelphia County:

- Parental consent for the evaluation will be obtained by the Service Coordinator.
- Evaluations will include the review of the child’s relevant medical, educational and other records.
- The initial evaluation will be completed within 45 days of referral
- Annual evaluations will occur with 364 days of the initial or prior evaluation
- The written Evaluation Report will be given to the parent within 30 calendar days of the evaluation
- Parents who need or request the evaluation in another language will receive a translated version of the Evaluation Report and Individualized Family Service Plan.
- The MDE will be conducted in the child’s native language unless clearly not feasible.
- The information gathered from the child and family assessment, begun by the Service Coordinator at the Initial Visit with the family, will be shared with the MDE team and will be considered along with the overall evaluation of the child and the identification of family concerns and needs.
- For initial MDE’s, as part of the Child Assessment, the Service Coordinator will complete Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT – R/F) for children who are 16 months or older at the time of the MDE will receive a Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT – R/F). This will typically be completed with the family at the Initial Home Visit by the Service Coordinator. (See ASD policy for Annual MDE’s)
- For initial MDE’s, the findings from the MCHAT-R/F and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ – 3) will be discussed at the MDE team meeting and are part of the Child Assessment.
- As part of the Family Assessment, the Service Coordinator will complete the Home and Community Routines assessment at the Initial Home Visit. This information will be shared with the MDE team at the Initial MDE.
- For the initial referral, if child assessment information and results are forwarded by the referral source, then these assessments will be reviewed by the SC and other MDE team members and will not be re-administered.
Eligibility Determination by a Multidisciplinary Evaluation
The Multidisciplinary Evaluation is the process through which children (0-3) are determined eligible for Early Intervention services. Children may be found eligible in one of the following ways:

- A diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in a developmental delay, that is not accompanied by delays in one or more of the developmental areas of cognitive development; physical development including vision and hearing; communication development; social emotional development; and adaptive development.
- Developmental delay in one or more of the developmental areas of cognitive development; physical development including vision and hearing; communication development; social emotional development; and adaptive development as documented by test performance of 1.5 standard deviations below the mean on an accepted or recognized standard test for infants and toddlers or delay of 25% of the infant’s or toddler’s chronological age in one of the developmental areas. The instruments and tests shall be administered in accordance with the recommendations provided by the instrument or test developer, including the guidelines for scoring the instrument.
- Informed Clinical Opinion (ICO) can be used when norm-referenced evaluation instruments do not adequately identify the presence or absence of a developmental delay. ICO makes use of qualitative and quantitative information to assist in forming a determination regarding difficult-to-measure aspects of current developmental status. Informed clinical opinion is used in conjunction with a strong justification statement that includes all of the necessary components to support using ICO to determine eligibility.

As part of the Quarterly Case Review process, where agencies submit a specified number of child records to the Program Analysts, the appropriateness of eligibility determinations are reviewed. The Program Analysts provide feedback and recommend corrective action, as needed.

Initial MDE Sequence of Events
- At the initial Service Coordination home visit the Service Coordinator will review all intake information and gather information that might have been missed at registration.
- The Service Coordinator will explain the evaluation process in a way that the parent/guardian can understand.
- The Service Coordinator will obtain parental consent to conduct relevant screenings and evaluations.
- The Service Coordinator will administer the ASQ to each child for whom an ASQ has not already been completed
- The Service Coordinator will also administer the M-CHAT as appropriate
- The results of the ASQ are shared and the family makes a decision to proceed to MDE or not to continue.
- If the family decides to proceed to an MDE, the Initial Home Visit packet information is discussed. The proper consents are signed by the parent
- After the parent consents, the Service Coordinator contacts the initial MDE provider while in the family home to schedule the MDE.

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The SC works with the family to complete the first three pages of the Evaluation Report (ER) in preparation for the MDE meeting. Additional information can be added to these initial sections of the ER at the MDE meeting.

The Service Coordinator has the capacity to enter the information gathered, including Child and Family Assessment information into the electronic system while in the home, if time permits. The SC schedules the date, time and place for the MDE while in the home with the family. The SC sends a confirmation letter to the family that states the agreed upon date, time and place for the MDE.

The Service Coordinator refers to all information gathered from the Initial Home Visit to complete the first three pages of the Evaluation Report (ER). Additional information can be added to these initial sections of the ER at the MDE meeting.

The Initial MDE Meeting

- The Service Coordinator will contact the family at least the day before the scheduled appointment to confirm that this date is still convenient and to make certain that all information remains the same.
- The Service Coordinator should arrive before or with the team.
- The Service Coordinator and MDE provider should explain purpose of the meeting and how the meeting will be conducted.
- The Service Coordinator and MDE provider should facilitate introductions making sure that each person has said their name and role; including any family members and representatives that are present.
- The Service Coordinator and MDE provider should assure that time is taken to first review all of information pertinent about the child and family that was gathered prior to the MDE before the evaluation begins. If the service coordinator does not initiate this conversation, it is also the responsibility of the provider to make sure that this conversation occurs.

Outcome of the MDE Meeting

- The team should have a thorough discussion of the results of the evaluation by discussing strengths and functioning for each developmental area.
- Team should make sure to explain the results of the evaluation to parents in a way that the parent/guardian can understand and address any parent concerns.
- The Service Coordinator will review the level of care evaluation or reevaluation determination for infants and toddlers who are eligible for the Infant Toddler and Family (ITF) Waiver.

Team Recommendations/Parental Consent/Parents’ Rights

- The team makes a recommendation which is usually a statement that the child is eligible or not eligible for IT EI services. The parent signs the appropriate consent.
- If the child is not eligible for services the parent is informed that the child will be discharged from Service Coordination with information about child development and community resources.
• If the child is not eligible for Early Intervention or the parent declines Early Intervention services and the child meets one of the at-risk tracking categories, then with parent consent, the child will be enrolled in the At-Risk program.

• If the child is eligible for services the team moves forward to write the IFSP.

• Parental requests for an additional or an independent evaluation will be granted at no cost to the family. The County policy on “Parents Request for Independent Evaluation will be followed in these instances.

• At each decision making point in the process, the Parents’ Rights Agreement will be reviewed with the parent/guardian and the SC will obtain a signature to indicate if the parent understands their rights and what they should do if they disagree with any decisions that have been made.

Staff Training on New or Updated Procedures

• Philadelphia Infant Toddler Early Intervention will disseminate information about new or updated procedures to staff within the Infant Toddler Early Intervention community including Early Interventionists and service coordinators. This dissemination will occur through on-line posting of the updated procedure and in-person meetings and presentations.

• As appropriate, Philadelphia Infant Toddler Early Intervention will offer direct training about new or updated procedures to staff within the Infant Toddler Early Intervention community, including Early Interventionists and service coordinators. This training will occur through direct written communication and in-person meetings and presentations. On-line training resources can also be used.