Component **3.0 First Contacts/Evaluation/Assessment for Eligibility**

Authority: IDEA Sections 1431, 1432, 1434, 1435, 1436

34 CFR, Sections 303.21, 303.25, 303.310, 303.111, 303.320, 303.321, 303.322, 303.344, 303,420, 303.421, 303.430

Florida Statutes 391.301, 391.308

Intent: These policies are intended to ensure that a timely, comprehensive multi-disciplinary evaluation to confirm eligibility for early intervention services and a multidisciplinary assessment to determine the child's level of functioning in all the required developmental domains is conducted for infants and toddlers under the age of three referred to Early Steps. These policies ensure identification of the child's unique strengths and needs in each developmental domain and the services appropriate to meet those needs.

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	3.1.0 Eligibility	
	Policy	**Reference/Related Documents**
	3.1.1 A child under the age of three is eligible for Early Steps if he/she meets one of the following eligibility criteria identified in 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.1.4, or 3.1.5.	20 U.S.C. §1432(5)(A) 20 U.S.C. §1434(1) Operations Guide 3.1.1
	3.1.2	34 CFR §303.21(a)(2) Operations Guide 3.1.2

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	A. A child is eligible when the child has an established conditions which falls into one of the following areas: 1. Genetic and Metabolic Disorder, 2. Neurological Disorder, 3. Autism Spectrum Disorder, 4. Severe Attachment Disorder, 5. Sensory Impairment (vision/hearing), 6. Infants who weigh less than 1,200 grams at birth; or 7. Other. B. If the child has an established condition, a written confirmation from a licensed physician of the diagnosis is required to establish eligibility OR In the case of (a) severe attachment disorder or autism spectrum disorder, a healthcare practitioner acting within his/her scope of practice or (b) in case of hearing loss, a licensed audiologist. Written confirmation of the diagnosed condition must be in the child's Early Steps record.	391.308(3)(f), F.S. Established Conditions List
	3.1.3 A. A child is eligible when the child has a developmental delay as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures and informed clinical opinion that exceeds: 1. 1.5 standard deviations below the mean in two or more developmental domains, or 2. 2.0 standard deviations below the mean in one or more developmental domains. B. The developmental domains include: 1. Cognitive, 2. Physical (including vision and hearing), 3. Communication, 4. Social or Emotional, and	20 U.S.C. §1432(4)(C) 20 U.S.C. §1432(5)(A)(i) 20 U.S.C. §1435(a)(1) 34 CFR §303.21(a) 34 CFR §303.111 34 CFR §303.203(c) 34 CFR §303.321(a)(3)(i) 34 CFR §303.321(a)(3)(ii) 391.308(3)(b), F.S. 391.308(3)(c), F.S. 391.308(3)(e), F.S. http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/nnotes28.pdf

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	5. Adaptive. C. A child's medical and other records may be used to establish eligibility based on developmental delay without conducting an evaluation, if the records: 1. Indicate the child's level of functioning meets Florida's eligibility criteria as described in 3.1.3 A above or that the child otherwise meets the criteria set forth by Florida's Policy Handbook and Operations Guide, and 2. Are from within the past 90 days. D. Informed clinical opinion may be used to establish a child's eligibility for Early Steps even when an evaluation instrument does not indicate eligibility; however, in no event may informed clinical opinion be used to deny a child's eligibility for Early Steps when scores on the evaluation instrument(s) meet Early Steps eligibility criteria.	
	3.1.4 No single procedure will be used as the sole criterion for determining a child's eligibility for Early Steps. Procedures must include: A. Taking the child's history (including interviewing the parent), B. Identifying the child's level of functioning in each developmental area, C. Gathering information from other sources such as family members, other caregivers, medical providers, social workers, and educators, if necessary, to understand the full scope of the child's unique strengths and needs, and D. Reviewing medical, educational, or other records.	34 CFR §303.321(b)
	3.1.5 A. A child is eligible based on an at-risk condition if the child has a physical or mental condition known to create a risk of developmental delay.	34 CFR §303.5 34 CFR §303.204 391.308(3)(f), F.S. At-Risk Conditions List

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	B. Written confirmation from a licensed physician is required to establish at-risk eligibility and must be in the child's Early Steps record. C. Services for infants and toddlers with a physical or mental condition known to create a risk of developmental delay will include the following: 1. Individualized family support planning, 2. Service coordination, 3. Developmental surveillance, and 4. Family support.	
	3.1.6 A standard score on an appropriate standardized instrument must be one component of the process to determine eligibility if a child does not have an established conditions or at-risk condition or the child's eligibility is based on medical and other records as outlined in 3.1.3.C.	Policy Handbook 3.5.3
	3.1.7 A. Children moving to Florida who were receiving a Part C service in another state must meet Florida's eligibility criteria to be enrolled in Early Steps. B. When a child and family move within state, the LES should work with the program the family is moving from to ensure necessary information is appropriately transferred.	34 CFR §303.111 Policy Handbook 5.5.5 Operations Guide 3.1.7
	3.1.8 The evaluation and assessment of each child must: A. Be conducted by qualified personnel trained to utilize appropriate methods and procedures, B. Be based on informed clinical opinion that documents use of multiple sources of information, and C. Include a review of pertinent records related to the child's current health status and medical history.	34 CFR §303.321(a)(3)(ii) 34 CFR §303.321(a)(4) Operations Guide 3.1.8

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	3.1.9 Eligibility or ineligibility for Early Steps must be documented on the child's IFSP.	34 CFR §303.344(a) Operations Guide 3.1.9
	3.1.10 If the child is found ineligible for Early Steps, the family must receive a copy of the evaluation results.	Policy Handbook 8.2.1 Policy Handbook 12.3.6 Operations Guide 3.1.10A
	3.1.11 Determination of continuing eligibility must take place during the annual review of the IFSP for children determined eligible due to developmental delay.	34 CFR §303.321(a)(2)(i) 391.308(4)(b), F.S. Operations Guide 3.1.11
	3.2.0 First Contacts	
Policy		**Reference/Related Documents**
	3.2.1 The first contacts process occurs between referral and the initial evaluation/assessment during the first 44 days of the family's involvement with Early Steps.	Operations Guide 3.2.1
	3.2.2 Initial contact must be made with the family within 5 calendar days from the date the referral is received at the LES.	Operations Guide 3.2.2
	3.2.3 The assigned service coordinator who is an ongoing member of the IFSP team is required to have a conversation with the family prior to the day of the initial evaluation/assessment to gather information to prepare for the evaluation and/or assessment and to provide the family with information about Early Steps.	Policy Handbook 4.2.0 Operations Guide 3.2.3
	3.2.4 The first contacts activities must be at times convenient to the family.	Operations Guide 3.2.4
	3.2.5 For each child who is referred for an evaluation, there must be a family assessment that: A. Is voluntary on the part of each family member participating, B. Is conducted by personnel trained to utilize appropriate methods and procedures,	34 CFR §303.321(a)(1)(ii)(B) 34 CFR §303.321(c)(2) Operations Guide 3.2.5

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	C. Is based on information provided by the family through an assessment tool and personal interview, and D. Incorporates the family's description of its resources, priorities, concerns, and everyday routines, activities, and places related to enhancing the child's development.	
	3.2.6 During first contacts, the family must be informed of the availability of and provided the contact information for the local Family Resource Specialist (FRS).	
	3.2.7 A procedure must be in place for the service coordinator to provide IFSP team members with a summary of first contact information, including screening results and the recommendations for the evaluation and assessment team.	Operations Guide 3.2.7
	3.3.0 Developmental Screening	
Policy		**Reference/Related Documents**
	3.3.1 A. Although screening is not required during first contacts, a developmental screening with a recommended instrument may be helpful to the evaluation and assessment team when a child does not have an established condition or obvious developmental delay. B. If the Local Early Steps (LES) chooses to screen a child: 1. The screening must be conducted within 45 days of the date the LES has received the referral, 2. It must provide the parent/guardian notice of its intent to screen and obtain parental consent using the state approved form before conducting the screening procedure,	34 CFR §303.310(a) 34 CFR §303.320(a)(1) 34 CFR §303.420(a)(1) 34 CFR §303.421 34 CFR §303.420(a)(3) 34 CFR §303.320(a)(2) 34 CFR 303.320(a)(3) Policy Handbook 8.4.1 Operations Guide 3.2.1 Operations Guide 3.3.1 Informed Notice and Consent for Screening, Evaluation, Assessment and Follow-Up Review -English Informed Notice and Consent for Screening,

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	3. The parents have the right to request an evaluation at any time during the screening process, 4. If the parent requests and consents to an evaluation at any time during the screening process, an evaluation of the child must be conducted, and 5. Provide a copy of the screening results to the family. C. When the screening indicates the child may have a developmental delay: 1. The parent must be notified in writing of the possible delay using Form 1065, Prior Written Notice, and also be provided the Summary of Procedural Safeguards, and 2. An evaluation and assessment must be conducted after the parent has provided consent. D. When the screening indicates the child is functioning at age level in all five developmental domains: 1. The parent must be notified in writing on the prior written notice form using Form 1065, Prior Written Notice, of the determination and the right to request an evaluation. 2. The parent must be provided the Summary of Procedural Safeguards. 3. An evaluation of the child must be conducted if the parent chooses to pursue one.	Evaluation, Assessment and Follow-Up Review-Spanish Informed Notice and Consent for Screening, Evaluation, Assessment and Follow-Up Review-Creole
	3.3.2. Early Steps does not conduct universal screening.	Operations Guide 3.3.2
	3.3.3 Reserved	

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	3.3.4 When the screening indicates the child may have a developmental delay but the family does not consent to the evaluation, the LES must: A. Document the family's lack of consent to the evaluation in writing. B. Explain to the family that the child will not be able to receive an evaluation, assessment, or services unless consent is given. C. Explain the nature of the evaluation and assessment and other services that would be available if the child were to meet eligibility criteria.	34 CFR §303.420(b) Operations Guide 3.3.4 Informed Notice and Consent for Screening, Evaluation, Assessment and Follow-Up Review -English Informed Notice and Consent for Screening, Evaluation, Assessment and Follow-Up Review-Spanish Informed Notice and Consent for Screening, Evaluation, Assessment and Follow-Up Review-Creole
	3.4.0 Evaluation/Assessment	
	Policy	**Reference/Related Documents**
	3.4.1 Consent for the evaluation and/or assessment must be obtained on the state-approved form before testing occurs.	34 CFR §303.420(a) 34 CFR §303.421(a) Operations Guide 3.4.1 Informed Notice and Consent for Screening, Evaluation, Assessment and Follow-Up Review -English Informed Notice and Consent for Screening, Evaluation, Assessment and Follow-Up Review-Spanish

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		Informed Notice and Consent for Screening, Evaluation, Assessment and Follow-Up Review-Creole
	3.4.2. The family must receive prior written notice of the scheduled date for the evaluation or assessment within a reasonable amount of time prior to it occurring.	34 CFR §303.421 Policy Handbook 8.3.1 Operations Guide 3.4.2
	3.4.3 A. The initial evaluation and the initial assessment must be completed within 45 days of the date the LES has received the referral of the child for determination of IDEA, Part C eligibility unless: 1. The child or parent is unavailable due to exceptional family circumstances that are documented in the child's Early Steps record, or 2. The parent has not provided consent for either the evaluation or assessment despite repeated attempts by the LES to obtain such consent. The attempts must be documented in the child's Early Steps record. B. The initial evaluation/and or initial assessment must still be completed as soon as possible after the documented exceptional circumstances no longer exist or the parent provides consent.	34 CFR §303.310 (a) 34 CFR §303.310 (b) 34 CFR §303.310 (c) 391.301(4)(e), F.S. 391.308(4)(a), F.S. Operations Guide 3.4.3
	3.4.4 For children who are Medicaid eligible, Medicaid requirements for evaluation and assessment must be met.	
	3.4.5 Evaluation and assessments must be: A. Multidisciplinary in nature, B. Conducted in a nondiscriminatory manner,	34 CFR §303.321(a)

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	C. Selected and administered so as not to be racially or culturally discriminatory.	
	3.4.6 A. The evaluation and assessment of the child must be conducted in the native language of the child unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. B. The family assessment, must be conducted in the native language of the family members being assessed, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so.	34 CFR §303.25(a) 34 CFR §303.321(a)(5) 34 CFR §303.321(a)(6) Operations Guide 3.4.6
	3.4.7 The evaluation and/or assessment must include opportunities to observe the child in typical routines/activities.	
	3.4.8 At least two different individuals in two or more separate disciplines appropriate to address the child's presenting condition(s) must be involved in conducting the evaluation/assessment.	
	3.4.9 In the event of exceptional circumstances that make it impossible to complete the initial evaluation and initial assessment within 45 days (e.g., if a child is ill), LES will: A. Document those circumstances. B. Develop and implement an interim IFSP, to the extent appropriate and consistent with 34 CFR §303.345(b)(1) and 34 CFR §303.345(b)(2). C. Complete the screening (if applicable), the initial evaluation, the initial assessments of the child and family and the initial IFSP meeting as soon as possible after the exceptional circumstances no longer exist.	34 CFR §303.310(c) Policy Handbook 5.40
	3.5.0 Evaluation	
	Policy	**Reference/Related Documents**
	3.5.1. Each child referred to Early Steps must have an initial evaluation, unless the child: A. Has an established condition, B. Has an at-risk condition,	391.308(3)(a), F.S. Policy Handbook 3.5.3 Operations Guide 3.5.1

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	C. Has had an evaluation within the past 90 days using one of Florida's recommended evaluation tools or a tool that meets Florida policy as set forth in 3.5.2 below, or D. Has screening results that indicate the child is functioning at an age appropriate level.	
	3.5.2 Any evaluation must determine the child's developmental status in each of the following domains: A. Communication, B. Self-help/adaptive, C. Cognitive, D. Physical (including fine and gross motor and vision and hearing), and E. Social/emotional.	34 CFR §303.21(a)(1) 34 CFR §303.321(b)(3) Operations Guide 3.5.2
	3.5.3 Any evaluation must include the following: A. Administration of an appropriate standardized evaluation instrument; B. Documentation of the child's history (to include interviewing the parent); C. Identification of the child's level of functioning in each developmental area; D. Gathering information from other sources if necessary, such as family members, other caregivers, medical providers and social workers; and E. Review of medical, educational, or other records.	34 CFR §303.321(b) Policy Handbook 3.5.2 Operations Guide 3.5.3
	3.5.4 If the child is determined to not be eligible, the LES must provide the parent with prior written notice, including information about the parent's right to dispute the eligibility determination through dispute resolution mechanisms at Policy 8.1.1	34 CFR §303.322 34 CFR §303.421 34 CFR §303.430 Policy Handbook 8.4.1

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	3.5.5 The results of any evaluation must be documented on the IFSP.	20 U.S.C. §1436(d)(1) 34 CFR §303.344(a) Operations Guide 3.5.5
	3.5.6 Early Steps shall establish statewide uniform protocols and procedures to determine eligibility for developmental evaluation and early intervention services.	391.308(2)(f), F.S.
	3.6.0 Assessment	
Policy		**Reference/Related Documents**
	3.6.1 Children eligible based on an established condition or developmental delay must receive an initial and ongoing assessment to help identify: A. The child's unique strengths and needs and the services appropriate to meet those needs throughout the period of the child's eligibility under Early Steps, and B. The family's resources, priorities and concerns, and the supports and services necessary to enhance the family's capacity to meet the developmental needs of their child with a disability.	34 CFR §303.321(a)(1)(ii) 34 CFR §303.321(a)(3)(i) Operations Guide 3.6.1
	3.6.2 The assessment of each child must include: A. A review of the results of the evaluation, B. Personal observations of the child, and C. Identification of the needs of the child and family.	34 CFR §303.321(c)(1)
	3.6.3 The results of the assessment must be documented on the Individualized Family Support Plan that serves as the assessment report.	Operations Guide 3.6.3 34 CFR §303.344

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