

Section 8.6 Young Children and RTI

This section is dedicated to providing guidance to school districts on “How to apply RTI practices” to young children, not yet school-aged (aged 3-5), who are being referred to the district for Child Find Services.

Why should school districts be concerned with children that are not school-aged?

Under The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), as well as our GaDOE regulations, school districts are required to find children that are disabled, to evaluate them, and to determine eligibility of special education services by the child’s 3rd birthday.

GaDOE regulations typically address children in grades PK-12. Are there regulations that support applying “RTI practices” for preschool-aged children?

Yes, there are two specific state regulations that apply to *all* children suspected of having a disability (ages 3-21yrs.). Those two regulations are:

- The child find rule (**160-4-7-.03**) requires that student referrals be preceded by evidence-based academic or behavioral *interventions*.
- The eligibility rule (**160-4-7-.05**) requires that students not be determined to be a child with a disability if the primary factor is lack of *appropriate instruction*...

When should a school district determine if a child has received “appropriate instruction”?

Determining whether the student received appropriate instruction" should be addressed before or during the evaluation process. If it is determined that the child *has not* received "appropriate instruction," the instruction must be provided **before** eligibility determination.

Will determining “appropriate instruction” delay the evaluation process or deny parental request for an evaluation?

No, it should never delay the evaluation process (60 day timeline) nor shall it deny a parental request for an evaluation.

What are typical examples of documentation of “appropriate instruction” that should be considered for young children?

- Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) from Babies Can’t Wait (BCW)
- Speech, OT, PT reports from private providers
- Medical Consultations from the child’s physician
- Regular early childhood provider report on child’s academic, behavioral, and developmental progress as it relates to the GA Early Learning Standards (GELS)
- Pre K and Head Start reports on child’s academic, behavioral, and developmental progress as it relates to the GA Pre-K Standards or the Head Start Outcomes.
- Work samples, behavior charts/logs,
- Lesson plans, observation reports
- Parent report

Many of the typical examples of “appropriate instruction” appear to be geared toward children in regular early childhood environments like Georgia Pre-K, Head Start, Private Preschool, or Daycare. If the child has been at home and is being referred by the parent/guardian, how is “appropriate instruction” documented?

- School districts should consider obtaining information about "appropriate instruction" and "previous interventions," by *interviewing* the referring parent/guardian on “what they have done or tried, etc”.
- If the parent *has not* provided any instructions or interventions, then the System should provide “appropriate” instructions and/or interventions during the (60 day) evaluation process thru providing the parent with instructions, materials, and examples **or** providing the interventions themselves. Note: parent/guardian typically will assist the school district in providing the prescribed interventions and/or instructions, but *they are not required*. **The Parent/Guardian always reserves the right not to participate.**

Are regular early childhood environments like Georgia Pre-K, Head Start, Private Preschool, or Daycare *required* to conduct RTI before referring a child to the school district for Child Find?

No, they are not required; however, both Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning/Bright From the Start (DECAL) and Georgia Head Start Association support GaDOE’s RTI initiative. Additionally, both have provided guidance to their constituents on best practices for providing Response to Intervention. Georgia Pre-K and Head Start classes housed within school districts should refer to their respective agencies to obtain this guidance.

Is there a GaDOE pyramid model of RTI specifically for young children?

No. School districts should follow the current model that was developed for grades K-12 as guidance for providing tiered intervention strategies. Districts should always remember that use of the pyramid model will vary according to the child’s needs.