

# **Autism Spectrum Disorder NC Policy Changes**

***Approved by the NC State Board of Education: September 5, 2019  
for Implementation January 1, 2020.***

# EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN DIVISION

## Purpose of the Changes:

In order to improve alignment of NC Policies with effective practices, policy changes are needed in the evaluation and identification of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).



# 4<sup>th</sup> Most Prevalent IDEA Classification in NC

- Autism **11.1%**
- Deaf-Blindness
- Deafness
- Developmental Delay
- Hearing Impairment
- Intellectual Disability **8.1%**
- Multiple Disabilities

Orthopedic Impairment

Other Health Impairment **17.5%**

Specific Learning Disability **35.4%**

Speech/Language Impairment **14.1%**

Traumatic Brain Injury

Visual Impairment

Serious Emotional Disability



# The Goal

Community  
Providers

School  
Providers

Consistent  
Identification  
Practices



# Outline:



Federal and State Definition



NC Screenings and Evaluations



NC Eligibility Criteria



# Definition of Autism Spectrum Disorder (Federal and NC)

- A developmental disability that significantly affects verbal communication, nonverbal communication, and social interaction.
  - Adversely affects a child's educational performance.
  - Generally evident before age three.
- Other characteristics are engagement in repetitive activities, restricted interests, resistance to external changes, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.
- ASD does not apply if a child's educational performance is primarily affected by an emotional disability.



# Observable Features of ASD

**Persistent deficits in  
social  
communication and  
interaction**

**Restricted,  
repetitive patterns  
of behavior,  
interests, or  
activities**

**Symptoms present in the early developmental period**



# NC Required Screenings/Evaluations



**ADD**

- Motor screening
- Sensory processing evaluation



**MODIFY**

- Social/developmental history
- Psychological evaluation
- Behavioral assessment related to ASD





# Added Definition: Behavioral Assessment Related to Autism Spectrum Disorder

An assessment **conducted by trained and knowledgeable personnel** using behavior rating tools measuring the range of characteristics associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder, yielding information of the child's functioning across environments. This assessment may also include individually administered instruments that assesses the range of characteristics associated with autism spectrum disorder.












# Added Definition: Sensory Processing Evaluation

Sensory evaluations are performed by occupational therapists. A sensory processing evaluation collects, organizes, and analyzes information specific to how a student's current level of sensory processing impacts occupational performance and participation at school. This information may be gathered through: review of educational and medical records; interviews with the student, teachers, parents, and others; detailed, in-context observations; and, the administration of formal testing instruments, procedures, and techniques. A sensory processing evaluation should include, but is not limited to, as many of the areas listed below as may be appropriate:

- (i) intensity of response to various sensory experiences, including (a) visual stimuli (b) auditory stimuli (c) olfactory stimuli (d) tactile stimuli (e) taste stimuli (f) vestibular stimuli (g) proprioceptive stimuli
- (ii) sensory-motor coordination (a) sensory-motor skills (b) praxis/motor planning skills;



	Hearing screening
	Vision screening
	<i>Motor screen</i>
	Observation across settings, to assess academic and functional skills
	Summary of conference(s) with parents or documentation of attempts to conference with parents
<b>MODIFIED</b>	<i>Social/developmental history; to include an examination of characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder present during the early developmental period</i>
	Educational evaluation
	Adaptive behavior evaluation
<b>MODIFIED</b>	<i>Psychological evaluation; the yielding of an overall intellectual score is not required and should be considered on a case-by-case basis</i>
	Sensory processing evaluation
	Speech-language evaluation which includes, but is not limited to, measures of language semantics and pragmatics
<b>MODIFIED</b>	Behavioral assessment related to Autism Spectrum Disorder:



# Eligibility Decisions

**Prong 1:  
Meets Criteria**

**Prong 2:  
Adverse Effect**

**Prong 3:  
Need for Specially  
Designed  
Instruction**

# Existing Eligibility Criteria for Prong 1

To be determined eligible, a child must demonstrate at least three of the four characteristics listed below:

- (A) Impairment in communication;
- (B) Impairment in social interaction;
- (C) Unusual response to sensory experiences;
- (D) Restricted, repetitive, or stereotypic patterns of behavior, interests, and/or activities.



# New Criteria: Prong 1

## *Social Communication & Interaction*

- (A) Impairment in communication;
- (B) Impairment in social interaction;



**Deficits in all 3**

**Currently **or** by history**

# New Criteria: Prong 1

## *Restricted, Repetitive Patterns of Behavior, Interests, or Activities*

- (C) Unusual response to sensory experiences;
- (D) Restricted, repetitive, or stereotypic patterns of behavior, interests, and/or activities.

**1 or  
more**

Currently **or** by history

Stereotyped or repetitive motor movements, use of objects or speech

Insistence on sameness, inflexible adherence to routines, or ritualized patterns of verbal or nonverbal behavior

Highly restricted, fixated interests that are abnormal in intensity or focus

Atypical responses to sensory input or atypical interests in sensory aspects of the environment

This prong is implied in the definition, but was not explicit in the existing criteria.

## New Criteria: Prong 1

Symptoms **generally** present in the early developmental period, but may not manifest until social demands exceed coping capacities **or may be masked by learned strategies in later life. A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after age three could be identified as having autism spectrum disorder if the criteria in (A) and (B) are satisfied.**





## Prong 2: Adverse Effect

The disability must: (A) Have an adverse effect on educational (**academic and/or functional**) performance.

## Prong 3: Need for Specially Designed Instruction

Specially designed instruction means **adapting**, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child under this part, **the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction-**  
- To address the **unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability**; and To ensure **access** of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children.



# ASD Policy Implementation Timeline

