

What should be the School Nurse's role in Response to Intervention (RtI) and the Special Education Process?

Are there minimum standards of a student health assessment during the RtI process or when being considered for special education services?

The school nurse should be included as a member of the Response to Intervention (RtI) Problem Solving Team to provide input about the needs of students with health issues who have difficulties learning. At minimum, the student's health history should be reviewed along with a current hearing and vision screening to determine if there are any health concerns that may be a barrier to their learning.

There are not any specifically mandated assessments required during the special education evaluation. The *Rules for the Administration of the Exceptional Children's Act* (ECEA Rules) requires that *the initial evaluation is sufficiently comprehensive to appropriately identify all of the child's special education and related services needs, whether or not commonly linked to the disability category in which the child has been classified.* It is up to the multidisciplinary team and qualified personnel to determine what assessments should be done for a particular child according to their needs. This means that the school nurse should be part of the multidisciplinary team and should conduct an assessment that will be thorough enough to insure that the child's related service needs will be met.

Hearing and vision screening are not specifically mentioned in the ECEA Rules but are mandated in Colorado Statute for the school years K,1,2,3,4,5,7,9. It should also be done if there are concerns about a student's vision and/or hearing. Best practice indicates that a current hearing and vision screening should be reviewed and referenced during the RtI process or in a special education evaluation.

What should and should not be included in the IEP?

Again, there are no mandates in Colorado that specify that certain health-related information must or must not be included in a child's IEP. The school nurse must use her professional judgment to determine whether health related information is relevant to the child's educational program and whether individuals who have access to the IEP have legitimate need to know the information. Since the IEP is one of the documents required to be forwarded when a child moves to a new school setting, care should be taken to include adequate information in the document to assure continuity of care in the new setting. School nurses often develop health care plans that are complex and contain information that is not necessary or relevant for teaching and other staff. In those cases, a summary of pertinent health-related information that is inclusive enough to assure that all needs are addressed should be included in the IEP.