



# AUTISM & IEPs: FROM IDENTIFICATION TO INTERVENTION

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# Objectives

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- Differentiate between a medical diagnosis and educational eligibility
- Guide participants through the IEP development process using the 11 considerations, determining appropriate settings, and SMART goals.
- Explore best practices for setting and measuring goals across multiple domains, including social-emotional learning, academics, functional skills, communication, and transitioning.

# What is the difference between a medical diagnosis and a school eligibility determination?

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If my child has one, why do they need the other?

Shouldn't my child get special education for a child with ASD if they have a medical diagnosis?

When should I talk to parents about getting a medical diagnosis if they have an educational eligibility?

# Medical Diagnosis vs. Educational Eligibility

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Purpose  
Context



# Educational evaluation focuses on school service needs

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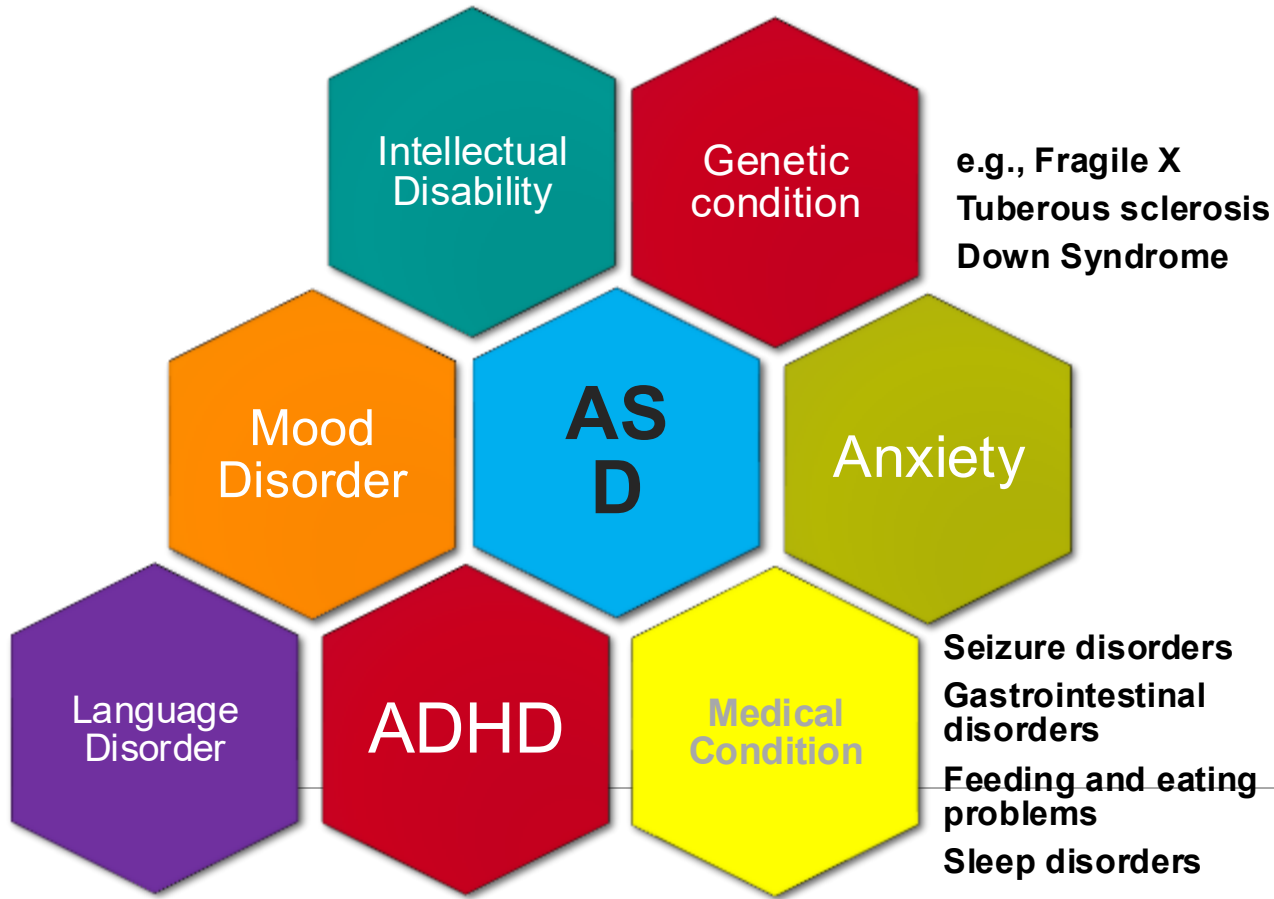
- Educational evaluation = Category of eligibility for services
  - IDEA + state rules and regulations
  - Provide services, collect data, monitor outcomes
  - Criteria and need for specialized instruction:
    - Affects involvement and progress in general curriculum
    - including non-academic activities
    - or other developmentally appropriate activities
  - Results in IEP

# Medical evaluation focusses on specifying clinical criteria

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- Medical evaluation = Diagnosis
  - DSM-5 (or ICD-11)
    - Includes subtypes and specifiers:
      - levels of support
      - With or without accompanying intellectual or language impairment
      - Associated with a known genetic or medical condition or neurodevelopmental, mental, or behavioral problem
      - With catatonia
  - Criteria and Impairment in social, occupational, other important areas
  - May make a child eligible for services or insurance coverage for services (e.g., ABA)
  - Referrals made (healthcare, family, educational)

# Eligibility Category?



Autism	Deaf-blindness	Deafness
Emotional Disturbance	Hearing Impairment, Intellectual Disability	Multiple Disabilities
Orthopedic Impairment	Other Health Impairment	Specific Learning Disability
Speech or Language Impairment	Traumatic Brain Injury	Visual Impairment

## Differential Diagnosis or Comorbidity?

# Parts of an evaluation

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# The 11 Considerations for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Originally developed through Texas Project FIRST to address parent concerns that needs of students with ASD were not being met.

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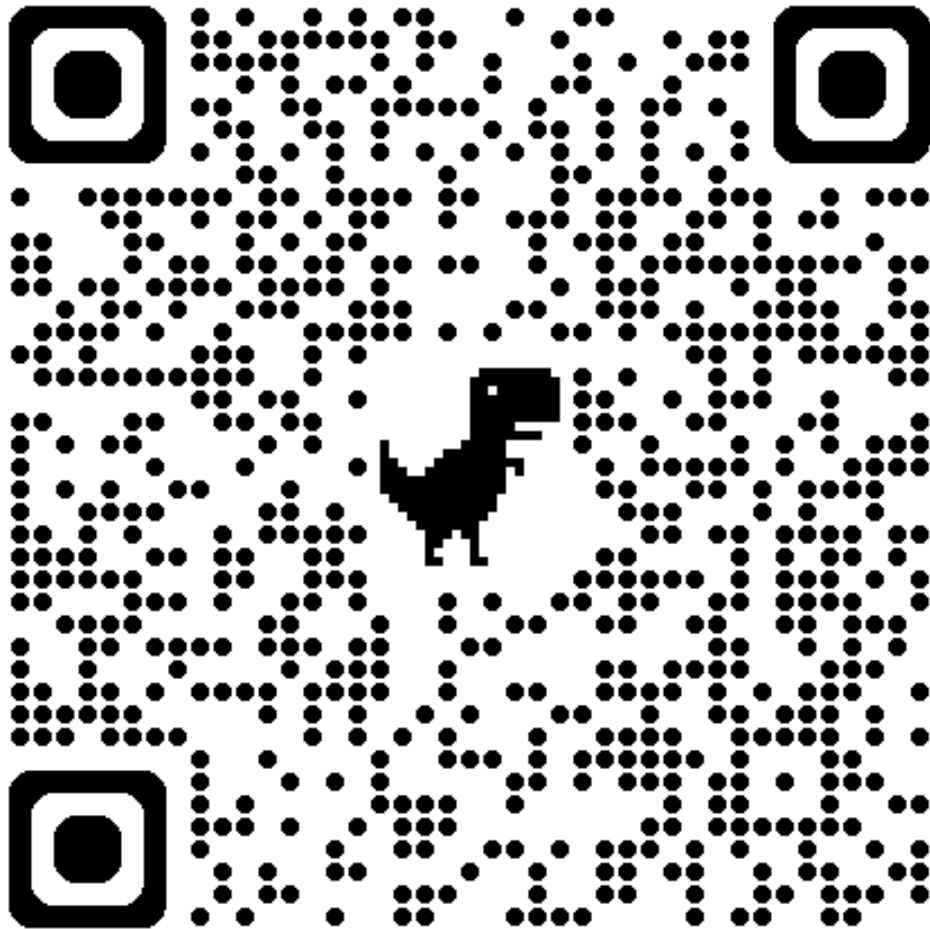
Introduced as guidelines by the New Mexico Public Education Department Director of Special Education

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Adopted into New Mexico Law July 2011 requiring schools to discuss considerations at IEP, indicate what will and will not be provided

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Apply to all students with an educational eligibility of Autism Spectrum Disorder, regardless of needed level of support or academic abilities



# Where to find the 11 Considerations?

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New Mexico

Public Education Department Website

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)  
Information and Training Page

<https://web.ped.nm.gov/bureaus/special-education/asd/>

# Brief Overview

Consideration	Explanation
Extended Educational Programming	programs offered when school is not in session and/or the extension of the school day.
Daily schedules limiting unstructured time and active engagement	dependent on the students individual functioning including short blocks of time or the use of more organized arrangements during unstructured times.
Teaching social/ behavioral skills	teaching in “real world” environment where social/behavioral skills are needed.
Positive Behavior Support Strategies	help students learn new and appropriate behaviors and the prevention of problem behaviors through Behavior Intervention Plan.
Plan for future	Having an end goal in mind and in each grade level build skills to reach long-term goals.

# Brief Overview, cont.

Consideration	Explanation
Parent/ Family Training and Support	providing training and support by personnel with experience in ASD
Staff-to-Student ratio	providing the number of staff members needed in classroom and out of the classroom to provide appropriate identified activities
Communication interventions	language forms and functions that enhance effective communication across settings
Social skills supports	Providing strategies based on social skills assessment/curriculum across settings
Professional Educator/Staff Support	staff have general training about autism and strategies to implement an IEP for students with ASD
Teaching Strategies based on peer-reviewed, and/or research based practices	various teaching strategies, visual supports, augmentative communication, or social skills training.

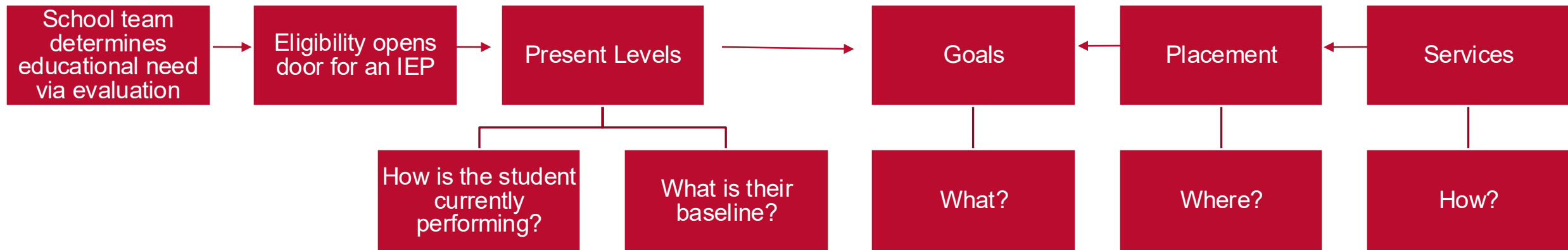
# Quick Discussion (Think-Pair-Share)

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- Which of these are the most often overlooked?
- Which are the hardest to implement?
- What are some ways to reduce barriers to implementation?

# IEP Process

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# Developing SMART and Appropriate Goals

- **Definition:**

Goals are specific skills or behaviors a student is expected to achieve within a set time frame.

- **Purpose:**

They guide instruction, supports, and measure progress.

- **Important for Autism/IDD:**

Helps students gain independence, communication skills, social competence, and academic growth.

## **S.M.A.R.T. stands for:**

- **Specific** — Clearly defined and focused
- **Measurable** — Progress can be tracked
- **Achievable** — Realistic for the student
- **Relevant** — Connected to student's needs and IEP priorities
- **Time-bound** — Has a set end date

# Breaking Down SMART Goals

Component	What It Means	Example for Autism/IDD
Specific	Focus on one skill/behavior	"Request help using AAC device"
Measurable	How will we know it happened?	"4 out of 5 opportunities"
Achievable	Is it realistic with supports?	"Based on current skill level"
Relevant	Related to student's unique needs	"Improves independence"
Time-bound	Deadline to meet goal	"By May 2026"

- Permanent Product Collection
- Frequency/Rate Recording
- Duration Recording
- Latency Recording
- Rubrics and Scoring Guides
- Curriculum-Based Measurements (CBM)
- Work Samples and Portfolios
- Direct Observations
- Self-Monitoring and Student Logs
- Behavioral Data Sheets
- Task Analysis and Step Completion

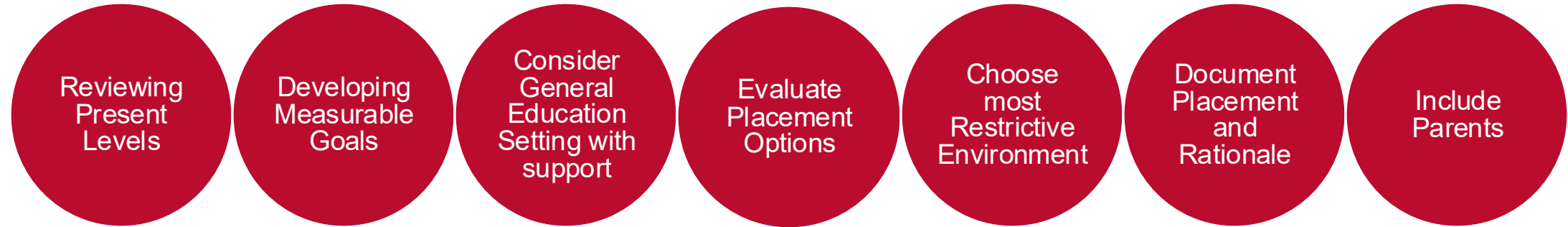
**By** (date), **given** (condition or setting), **the student will** (specific skill/behavior), **with** (measurable criteria, e.g., % accuracy or frequency) **as measured by** (tool or method).



# SMART Goal Checklist

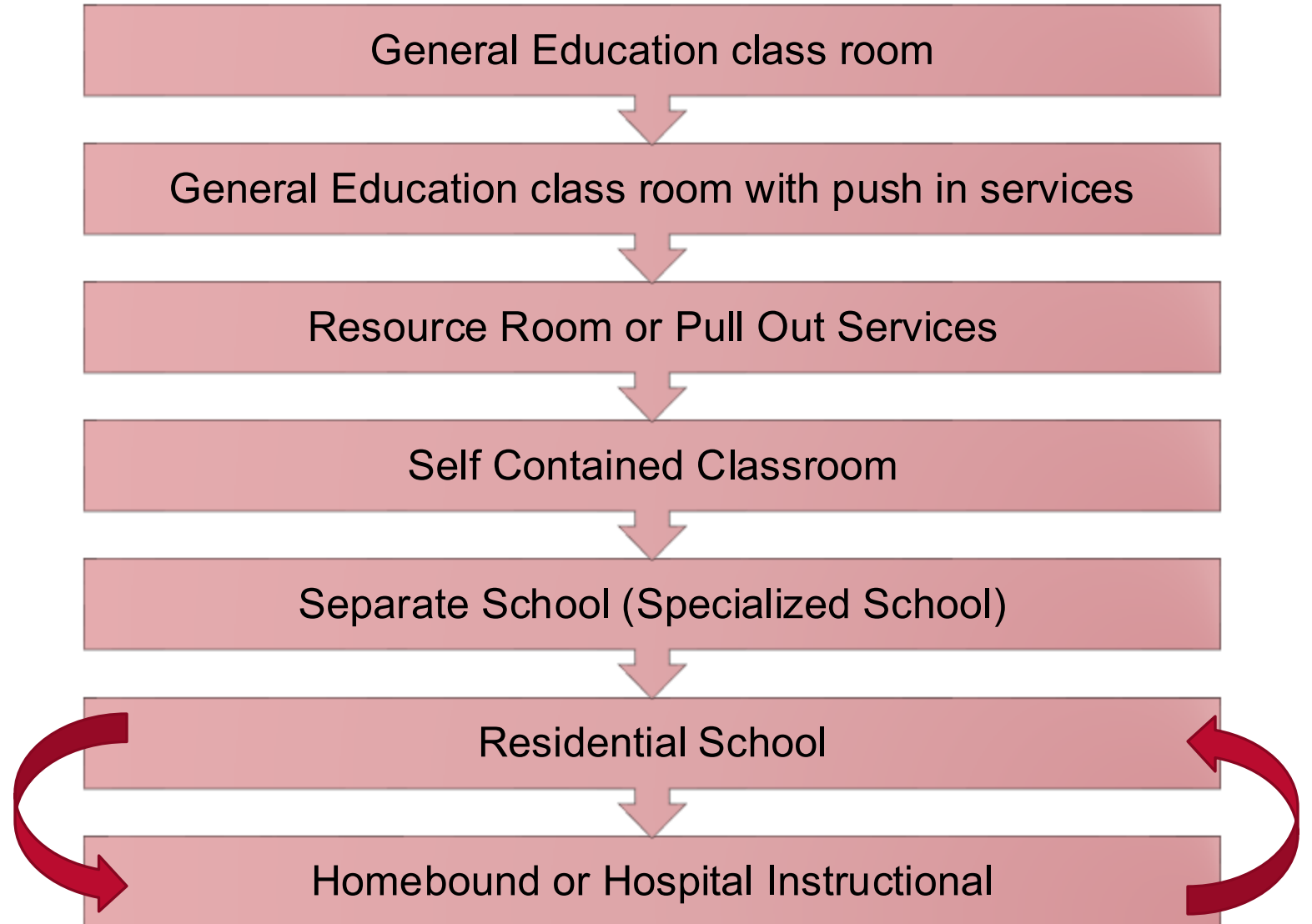
Component	Questions
Specific	<input type="checkbox"/> Does the goal clearly state what the student will do? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the skill or behavior targeted and clearly defined? <input type="checkbox"/> Is vague language (improve, increase) avoided or clarified?
Measurable	<input type="checkbox"/> Can progress be tracked with data or observation? <input type="checkbox"/> Are the criteria for success clearly stated (e.g., 80% accuracy, 4/5 trials)? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there a clear way to measure the outcome (test, rubric, checklist, observation)
Achievable	<input type="checkbox"/> Is the goal realistic based on the student's present levels of performance? <input type="checkbox"/> Are the supports and resources in place to help the student reach this goal? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the goal reflect appropriate challenge without being too easy or too hard?
Relevant	<input type="checkbox"/> Does this goal address a priority need for the student? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the goal connected to academic, social behavioral, or functional development? <input type="checkbox"/> Will this goal help the student in future learning or life context?
Time-bound	<input type="checkbox"/> Is there deadline for achieving the goal (end of the IEP year)? <input type="checkbox"/> Are review dates or checkpoints for monitoring progress included? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the time frame appropriate for the expected progress?
Bonus	<input type="checkbox"/> If another educator read this goal, would they know exactly what to do and how to measure it? Does it a pass the "replicability" test? <input type="checkbox"/> Would the student and their family understand what the goal means and why it matters?

# Determining Placement & Services



1. Placement is considered based on the students needs, not the disability.
2. The IEP drives the placement, not the other way around.
3. The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is a legal requirement.
4. A continuum of alternative placements must be available.
5. Parents are key members of the placement decision.
6. Supplementary aides and services must be considered before more restrictive settings.
7. Placement decisions should be data driven and collaborative.
8. Placement must be regularly reviewed.
9. Schools must provide justification when placement is more restrictive.
10. The goal is to balance access and support.

# Continuum of Educational Settings



# What is Evidence- Based Practice (EBP)?



Scientific Evidence; Research-  
Based Strategies



Professional Experience



Learner Needs/ Values

## Barriers to engaging the evidence base

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Lack of time and opportunities for educators to learn.

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Information about EBP appropriateness is hard to locate and presented in formats that are hard to digest.

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Written descriptions by developers may misrepresent findings.

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Criteria for deeming a practice "evidence-based" varies by institution.



# "Nobody has time for this!"

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- Thankfully, there are resources:
  - o IRIS Center (IRIS)
  - o National Autism Center (NAC)
  - o National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice (NCAEP/AFIRM)

# IRIS Center

The IRIS Center is a national center dedicated to improving education outcomes for all children, especially those with disabilities birth through age twenty-one, through the use of effective evidence-based practices and interventions.

THE IRIS CENTER > RESOURCES > IRIS RESOURCE LOCATOR

**Search Resources for**

▼ Topics

- ☐ Accommodations
- ☐ Assessment (includes Progress Monitoring)
- ☐ Assistive Technology
- ☐ Behavior and Classroom Management
- ☐ Collaboration
- ☐ Content Instruction
- ☐ Differentiated Instruction
- ☐ Disability
- ☐ Early Intervention/Early Childhood
- ☐ Evidence-Based Practices
- ☐ IEPs
- ☐ Juvenile Corrections
- ☐ Learning Strategies
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ MTSS/RTI (includes intensive intervention)
- ☐ Reading, Literacy, Language Arts
- ☐ Related Services
- ☐ School Improvement/Leadership
- ☐ Student Differences
- ☐ Transition
- ☐ Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

## IRIS Resource Locator

SORT BY: **TOPIC** RESOURCE TYPE MODULE ELEMENT

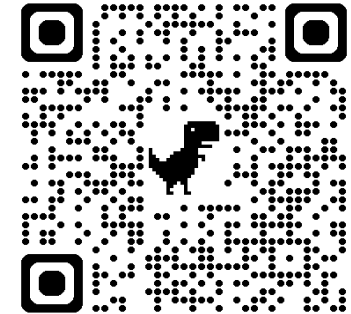
Accommodations (33)	▼
Assessment (includes Progress Monitoring) (34)	▼
Assistive Technology (16)	▼
Behavior and Classroom Management (102)	▼
Collaboration (18)	▼
Content Instruction (30)	▼
Differentiated Instruction (27)	▼
Disability (83)	▼
Early Intervention/Early Childhood (32)	▼
Evidence-Based Practices (6)	▼
IEPs (35)	▼



# May Institute- National Autism Center


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- The National Standards Project (2009) — multi-year project to establish a set of standards for effective, research-validated educational and behavioral interventions for children on the spectrum.
  - The resulting National Standards Report is the most comprehensive analysis available to date about treatments for autistic children and adolescents. It is a single, authoritative source of guidance for parents, caregivers, educators, and service providers as they make informed treatment decisions.
  - In 2015, the center released a new review and analysis of treatments for ASD based on research conducted in the field from 2007 to 2012. This report provides an update to the empirical treatment literature (as published in the National Standards Report in 2009) and includes studies evaluating treatments for adults (22+), which had never before been systematically evaluated.
- Profound Autism: A Parent's Guide (2025).





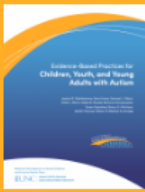
# National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice (NCAEP)



## Bridging Science and Practice

The National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice (NCAEP) is a continuation of the systematic review completed by the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders (NPDC).

[LEARN MORE](#)




## 2020 Evidence-Based Practices Report

**Evidence-Based Practices for Children, Youth, and Young Adults with Autism**

Our new report synthesizes intervention research published between 1990 and 2017. Check out our findings [here](#). Id use an icon instead.

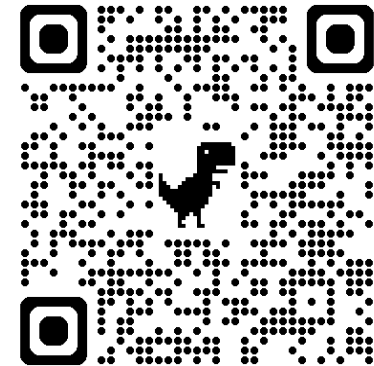
[DOWNLOAD HERE](#)



## Autism Focused Intervention Resources and Modules

The Autism Focused Intervention Resources and Modules (AFIRM) are a free online tool designed to ensure that practitioners and families can USE these practices once they are identified through the review.

[VISIT AFIRM](#)



<https://ncaep.fpg.unc.edu/>

# Autism Focused Intervention Resources and Modules (AFIRM)

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## AFIRM

AFIRM developed 28 evidence-based practice modules based on the 2020 EBP NCAEP report. Select the button below to access the AFIRM modules.

### List of modules include:

- Antecedent-Based Interventions (ABI)
- Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)
- Ayres Sensory Integration® (ASI®)
- Behavioral Momentum Intervention (BMI)
- Cognitive Behavioral/Instructional Strategies (CBIS)
- Differential Reinforcement (DR)
- Direct Instruction (DI)
- Discrete Trial Training (DTT)
- Exercise & Movement (EXM)
- Extinction (EXT)
- Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)
- Functional Communication Training (FCT)
- Modeling (MD)
- Music-Mediated Intervention (MMI)
- Naturalistic Interventions (NI)
- Parent-Implemented Intervention (PII)
- Peer-Based Instruction & Intervention (PBII)
- Prompting (PP)
- Reinforcement (R)
- Response Interruption & Redirection (RIR)
- Self-Management (SM)
- Social Narratives (SN)
- Social Skills Training (SST)
- Task Analysis (TA)
- Technology-Aided Instruction & Intervention (TAII)
- Time Delay (TD)
- Video Modeling (VM)
- Visual Supports (VS)

[Access AFIRM modules](#)



# Resource Investigation and Discussion

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- Explore one or more sites. Click on resources, preview a module or read a brief
- What did you find?
- How might this support application of 11 considerations?