Eligibility and Clinical Opinion:
Important steps & critical team conversations

Steps in Determining Eligibility using Clinical Opinion

1 **An approved EI tool must be attempted during the assessment.**

The report must identify the name of the instrument, and section 6A of the report should describe the accuracy of the tool in capturing information about the child's functioning. See IDHS Approved Tool list, if needed.

2 **An approved instrument was unable to establish eligibility.**

It is determined that the assessment instrument was unable to adequately or accurately assess the child's performance (quality or quantity) to establish eligibility numerically.

3 **Team members discuss eligibility based on clinical opinion.**

The observed atypical performance in any/all domains must demonstrate a 30% delay or greater in that total domain based on clinical opinions of the team members.

4 **The team comes to a consensus.**

Similar to a jury determining a verdict, there must be an agreed upon determination of eligibility. This includes parent input and a thorough discussion of the above-mentioned factors (and questions on the next page.)

5 **The service coordinator documents clinical opinion decision.**

In the data system and case notes, use eligibility code **E03** and enter the percentage of delay as 30% OR the specific percentage the team established. In the clinical opinion section of the report, explain why the tool did not accurately give a delay score.

3 Important Eligibility Questions to Consider

To what degree does this (concern) interfere with the child's ability to participate in activities, routines and interactions within the child's family, community, and other natural environments?

Does this (concern) require ongoing, specialized, therapeutic intervention by a professional to coach the caregivers for progress to be made at this time?

Does this recommendation align with the caregivers' concerns, priorities, and values? And does it align with the principles of Early Intervention within the Illinois EI model?

Other Considerations

What is the impact on child development and participation?

As always, continue to foster meaningful, respectful discussions among your teams and families about how the child's routines and interactions are impacted by their unique challenges. Consider family values and culture.

What exactly is "atypical" development?

It is critical to look at child development, and what factors are contributing to atypical development. Having a discrepancy between two subdomains (for example, expressive and receptive) is not necessarily "atypical".

If there is a difference between two subdomains, the team needs to look at the child's overall functioning in that developmental domain and consider the 3 questions above. Parent concerns need to be revisited, and child outcomes (questions 8, 9 & 10 of the IFSP) should be used to guide your discussions and plans.

Eligibility Codes Used in Illinois:

All codes are from Cornerstone Manual

E01: 30% delay in one or more areas based on total domain score

E02: Diagnosis of condition known to result in developmental delay

E11: At-risk, due to 3 or more risk factors or parent disability

E12: Annual, required for progress

Clinical Opinion Codes:

E03 – Eligible based on clinical opinion of developmental delay

E04 – Eligible based on clinical opinion of medical diagnosis

E05 – Eligible based on clinical opinion of potential risk of developmental delay

E06 – Eligible based on clinical opinion of at-risk conditions

Additional Resources

EITP Evaluation/Assessment and Eligibility resources page

CFC Procedure Manual - **Chapter 9** (details related to eligibility)

Early Intervention (EI) Medical Conditions Resulting in High Probability of Developmental Delay (from IDHS)

Eligibility Infographic from CFC #25 (pdf)

EITP Child Development Resources page – to understand typical and atypical development

- **CDC free resources** are great for sharing with families or to learn more about milestones!

List of approved tools to measure developmental domains (from IDHS)