



**Are educational evaluations and medical evaluations the same?**

**No.** The purpose of an educational evaluation is to determine eligibility for special education services. The purpose of a medical evaluation is to make a diagnosis.

**Can a medical diagnosis be part of the educational evaluation?**

**Yes.** A medical diagnosis is not required prior to conducting an evaluation for special education services. However, if a student already has a medical diagnosis, the school must review any outside evaluations. The purpose of the review is to determine if what is reported in the outside evaluation parallels what is observed in the school setting and/or natural environment. Then, the team must use all information gathered to determine if the student is displaying the educational eligibility criteria for Autism. It is important to note that the key element of an educational classification of Autism is that the disability impacts student learning.

**Can the educational and medical results be different?**

**Yes.** Based on the different criteria that are used, it is possible that a child who has been medically diagnosed with ASD may not be eligible for special education services under a classification of Autism. Similarly, a student who receives special education services under a classification of Autism may not receive a medical diagnosis.

**Can physicians prescribe an IEP or Special Education?**

**No.** The IEP Team, which includes the parents, child, and qualified school professionals, determines whether the child qualifies for special education services, as well as the child's specific educational needs.



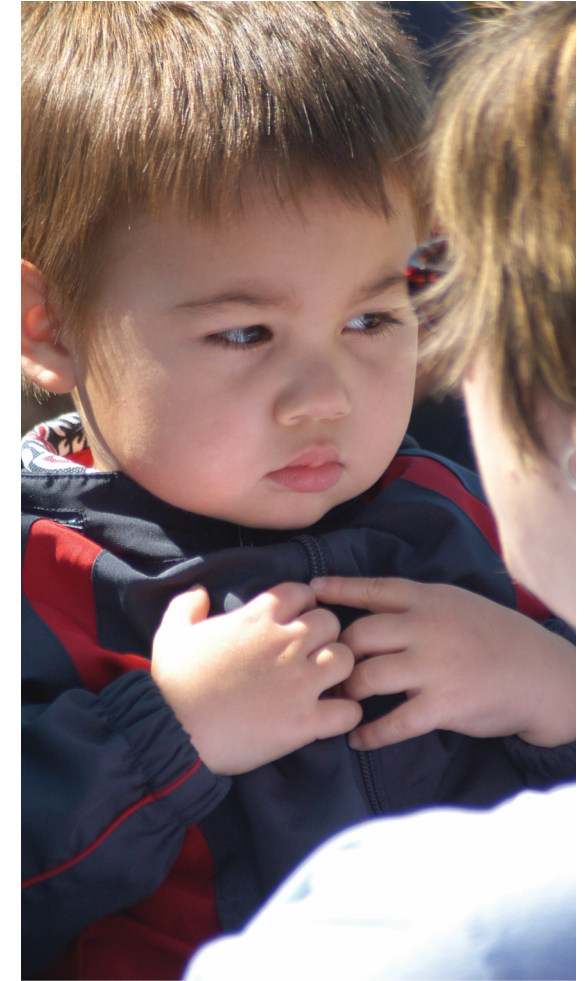
**For More Information:**

**Delaware Department of Education**  
[www.doe.k12.de.us](http://www.doe.k12.de.us)

**Autism Delaware**  
[www.delautism.org](http://www.delautism.org)

**Autism Speaks**  
[www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org)

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
[www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism)



**UNDERSTANDING  
EDUCATIONAL  
ELIGIBILITY AND  
MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS  
OF AUTISM**

What Delaware Parents and  
Providers Need to Know



## What You Need to Know

The differences and similarities between an educational classification and a medical diagnosis of Autism are important to understand. An educational classification of Autism requires that the disability must impact student learning. This is the fundamental distinction between an educational classification of Autism and a medical diagnosis. Therefore, it is possible that a child who has been medically diagnosed with Autism may not be eligible for special education services.

### Understanding the Terms

The term **educational eligibility** is used by schools to determine if a disability “adversely affects a child’s educational performance” under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 34 CFR §300.8 and Delaware Administrative Code 14 DE Admin Code § 925.6.6. Eligibility is determined within 13 educational classifications, one of which is Autism.

The term **medical diagnosis** is used by doctors and health care providers to describe the process of determining which condition explains a person’s symptoms and signs.

***The fundamental distinction between educational eligibility and a medical diagnosis is the impact on student learning.***

## Educational Definition: Educational Eligibility and Classification

In order to determine if a child meets the eligibility criteria for an educational classification of Autism, an evaluation is conducted within the public school setting by a school-based team. The team may consist of the parent, teacher, school psychologist, speech therapist, and others. The school-based team uses the criteria outlined in IDEA and Delaware Administrative Code to determine if a child is eligible for special education services under a classification of Autism. The criteria for an educational classification of Autism is very specific. The following criteria are required:

- Significant impairment in social interaction;
- Impairment in communication and/or
- Repetitive patterns of behavior

In order for a child to be eligible for special education services, the disability must result in an **impact on student learning**.

### Do you need a classification of Autism to receive special educational services?

The **needs of the student** determine what services and supports are necessary for that student regardless of whether the child is eligible under the classification of Autism or any another disability classification.

Sometimes, students who are not found to be eligible for special education services, may qualify to receive accommodations on a 504 plan.

## Medical Definition: Diagnosis

There are no medical tests for diagnosing Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). However, some medical tests may be used to rule out causes of certain symptoms.

A medical evaluation may be completed by one medical provider or by a team of professionals that may include psychologists, neurologists, psychiatrists, and/or developmental pediatricians who are knowledgeable and experienced in diagnosing ASD.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual Fifth Edition (DSM-V) provides specific criteria for a diagnosis of ASD:

- Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts
- Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities
- Symptoms must be present in the early developmental period
- Symptoms cause clinically significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of current functioning
- These disturbances are not better explained by an intellectual disability or global developmental delay

### Why do you need a diagnosis of ASD?

A medical diagnosis can rule out other medical conditions as an explanation for signs and symptoms, can help medical professionals in recommending medical interventions that may be beneficial, and may qualify your child for services that may be covered under insurance.

### Comparing Educational Eligibility and Medical Diagnosis

	Educational Eligibility Under a Classification of Autism	Medical Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder
In what setting is the decision made?	Public school setting	Private setting such as doctor’s office or clinic
Who makes the decision?	School-based team which may include parent, teacher, school psychologist, speech therapist, etc.	A medical professional/s which may include a psychologist, neurologist, psychiatrist, developmental pediatrician, etc.
Where is the criteria found?	Based on federal and state law (IDEA and DE Administrative Code)	DSM-V
What tools are used?	The tools used may include interviews, observations, direct interactions with the child, and/or standardized norm referenced assessments, and evaluations performed previously.	

