

RI Special Education Eligibility Criteria

To be found eligible for special education, a child must be evaluated in accordance with the Rhode Island Regulations Governing the Education of Children with Disabilities and determined to have one of the identified disabilities, including a developmental delay, and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related service.

The disability categories include:

intellectual disability	autism spectrum disorder
hearing impairment	traumatic brain injury
deafness	other health impairment
speech or language impairment	specific learning disability
visual impairment (including blindness)	deaf blindness
emotional disturbance	multiple disabilities
orthopedic impairment	developmental delay for children between 3 and 8 years of age (up to the ninth birthday)

A developmental delay is defined as a twenty-five percent (25 percent) delay and/or score equal to or greater than two standard deviations below the mean in one of the areas of development listed below; or a score equal to or greater than 1.5 standard deviations below the mean in two or more of the following areas:

physical development	social or emotional development
cognitive development	adaptive development
communication development	

The 25 percent delay in one area of development as listed above may be captured by norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced instruments including curriculum-based assessments, or significant atypical behaviors. This delay is usually identified through authentic assessments that measure a child's functioning in everyday environments.

A deficit in academic skills is not required for eligibility, and each of the developmental areas (physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, and adaptive development) carry equal weight during eligibility discussions. For example, a child with social-emotional needs who meets the regulatory criteria for a developmental delay does not need to also present with a deficit in the cognitive domain.