



Guidelines for evaluating children with learning disabilities or developmental delays: A handout for parents

Written by Anne Weiss, Director, Employee Consultation Service (ECS)

If your child is having difficulty keeping up with his or her classmates in reading, math, or writing, your child may have a learning disability. Early identification of learning problems is important so that your child can get help before experiencing repeated failures and developing problems with self-esteem.

Your first step in helping your child is to discuss your concerns with your child's teacher. Let the teacher know how your child feels about school, how long it takes for your child to complete homework assignments, and how discouraged your child becomes when trying to do work that seems too difficult. Children with learning disabilities are sometimes considered lazy or unmotivated and they may try to avoid all schoolwork because learning, without appropriate help, is too discouraging for them.

The teacher may say that your child needs a tutor to keep up with the work or the teacher may say that your child needs a psycho-educational evaluation to determine what assistance is required to help your child.

If the school does not have tutors on staff or diagnosticians who can test your child (or if the school charges additional funds for tutoring or testing), the Department of State provides allowances so you can obtain these services. A brief description of these allowances and how to access them follows:

Supplemental Instruction Allowance (DSSR 276.9)

An allowance of \$3,000 per school year is available if a child requires additional instruction to enter a grade or to remain in the same grade. To obtain this allowance you will need a letter from your child's teacher stating that tutoring is required. Request the allowance from the officer at post who authorizes allowances (administrative or budget and fiscal officer). You do not need to have

contact with the medical officer at post nor with any office in Washington, DC to access this allowance.

Special Needs Education Allowance (DSSR 276.8)

If your child requires additional tutoring or other services, such as speech, occupational, or physical therapy, or if evaluations are needed, your child may be eligible for this allowance. To request this allowance, take the following steps:

1. Get a letter from your child's teacher describing the difficulties your child is having in school and starting the services your child requires. If an evaluation is required, ask the teacher to state whether the evaluation can be done in school or at the post.
2. Gather other information about your child: report cards, Individual Education Plans (IEP), previous evaluations, medical reports, etc. that describe problems your child is having or has had in the past.
3. Go to the Health Unit at post to discuss your child's difficulties, with the nurse or health practitioner or contact the Regional Psychiatrist (RMO/P) or Regional Medical Officer (RMO).
4. Fax or send the information to the Employee Consultation Service (ECS). ECS will review the information and will contact you to discuss the assistance your child needs. ECS will also send a cable to post confirming your child's eligibility for the allowance and will assist in making arrangements for evaluations.

For more information, contact:

Employee Consultation Service (ECS)

SA-1, Room H246

Department of State

Washington, DC

20522-0102

Tel: 202-663-1815 / **Fax:** 202-663-1454

Email: medecs@state.gov

FAQ's about the Special Needs Education Allowance (DSSR 276.8)

Who funds this allowance? Is it MED?

The allowance is post (bureau) funded for DOS employees or agency funded for the other employees. MED funds are not involved.

If my child requires an evaluation in the U. S. for educational reasons or developmental delays, will this be a medevac?

No. The funding for the evaluation (and travel of child and one parent) in the U.S. or another country will be from the Special Needs Education Allowance.

Will receiving the Special Needs Education Allowance affect my child's medical clearance?

Yes. Your child will be given a Class 2 clearance, which means that your child will be cleared for posts which have adequate medical/educational supports. When you bid on your next assignment, it will be necessary for you to determine that your proposed post has the services your child requires. The Office of Overseas Schools and ECS will assist with the process.

Does my child need an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to qualify for services under the allowance?

No. Children who have not attended U.S. public schools, where IEP's are required by law for children with special needs, may not have IEP's. The allowance regulations state that instead of an IEP, an "equivalent prepared by a professional medical or educational expert which delineates the educational services required" will be sufficient.

What services are covered under the allowance?

Generally, the services covered are those a child would receive free of charge in a U.S. public school. The allowance does not cover computer hardware. Except for the initial diagnostic evaluation, the allowance does not cover psychotherapy or counseling. Please, review DSSR 276.8 for services covered and address any specific questions to the Office of Allowances or the Employee Consultation Service.

September 2001