

# Parent Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## About Response to Intervention

### What is RTI?

RTI, or Response to Intervention (RTI),<sup>1</sup> integrates assessment and intervention within a school-wide, multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and reduce behavior problems. In other words, RTI allows schools to monitor and address your child's learning and behavioral needs in real time in order to prevent poor learning outcomes. With RTI, schools identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes, monitor student progress, provide evidence-based interventions, and adjust the intensity and nature of those interventions based on whether students are making progress toward their end-of-year goals or need additional support. In addition, RTI may be used as part of the determination process for identifying students with specific learning disabilities or other disabilities.<sup>2</sup> Learn more about RTI: [http://www.rti4success.org/pdf/rtiessentialcomponents\\_042710.pdf](http://www.rti4success.org/pdf/rtiessentialcomponents_042710.pdf).

### Is there a specific model of RTI?

RTI is a fluid model with components that can be tailored by states, districts, and schools to best address the needs and context of their students and communities. The U.S. Department of Education does

not subscribe to a particular RTI framework, instead describing the core characteristics that underpin all RTI models: (1) students receiving high-quality research-based instruction in their general education setting; (2) continuous monitoring of student performance; (3) all students being screened for academic and behavioral problems; and (4) multiple levels (tiers) of instruction that are progressively more intense, based on the student's response to instruction.<sup>3</sup> These characteristics are reflected in the four essential components of RTI defined by the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI): screening, progress monitoring, a multi-level prevention system, and data-based decision making. How these components are implemented and the structure of the RTI model itself will differ depending on the context of your school, district, or state. Learn more about the essential components of RTI and RTI models: [http://www.rti4success.org/pdf/rtiessentialcomponents\\_042710.pdf](http://www.rti4success.org/pdf/rtiessentialcomponents_042710.pdf).

### May staff at my child's school use RTI as a reason to delay or deny a referral to special education?

RTI cannot be used by your school or district to deny or delay the evaluation of your child or any student for special education. The Child Find provisions of

<sup>1</sup> RTI is also referred to as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTII), Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI), and other terms depending on how schools, districts, and states define their model.

<sup>2</sup> National Center on Response to Intervention (March 2010). *Essential Components of RTI – A Closer Look at Response to Intervention*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, National Center on Response to Intervention.

<sup>3</sup> OSEP. (January, 2011). *A Response to Intervention (RTI) Process Cannot Be Used to Delay-Deny an Evaluation for Eligibility under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* [OSEP memorandum]. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.



Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) require that states ensure that all children with disabilities are identified, located, and evaluated. This includes children who are homeless or wards of the state, and children attending private schools.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, your state and district have an obligation to ensure that an evaluation is not delayed or denied because of implementation of an RTI strategy.<sup>5</sup>

As a parent you have the legal right to ask the school to evaluate your child to determine if he or she is eligible for special education services at any time.<sup>6</sup> If you suspect that your child has a disability, you can write a letter of referral to the school or school district to request an evaluation. Even before you consider referring your child for evaluation, you can play an important role in the process by keeping your child's teacher and principal aware of any problems your child is having and concerns you may have. Again, it is important to reiterate that RTI cannot be used to delay or deny the provision of an evaluation for your child or any other child in the school.

### What is the timeline for a referral?

While IDEA regulations do not state a timeframe for referral, the U.S. Department of Education has a long-standing policy that suggests that the district must seek parental consent within a reasonable period of time after the referral if the district agrees that initial evaluation is needed. Further, a district must conduct the initial evaluation within 60 days of receiving parental consent for evaluation, or earlier depending on state regulations.<sup>7</sup>

### Does the school have to evaluate my child for special education?

While parents, teachers, or others can request an evaluation for your child at any time, your district may respond in different ways.

1. If your district agrees that your child needs to be evaluated, staff must make a reasonable effort to obtain informed parental consent from you before they move forward with the initial evaluation.<sup>8</sup> If you do not provide consent, or you fail to respond, the district may, but is not required to, pursue the initial evaluation of your child<sup>9</sup> by using procedural safeguards, which include procedures for mediation and due process for both school districts and families, when needed.<sup>10</sup> States may also have laws regarding parental consent that must be considered.
2. If your district does not suspect that your child has a disability, it may deny the request for the initial evaluation. When a district denies this request, it must do so in a written notice to you explaining why the district is refusing the request and the basis for the decision. The written notice should explain how you can challenge the decision.

Again, participation or lack of participation in RTI **cannot** be the reason for denying or delaying an initial evaluation.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(3)

<sup>5</sup> OSEP Memorandum, 2011 (above)

<sup>6</sup> 34 CFR 300.301(b)

<sup>7</sup> 34 CFR 300.301(c)

<sup>8</sup> 34 C.F.R. 300.506, 300.507-516

<sup>9</sup> 34 CFR 300.300(a) (3.i)

<sup>10</sup> 34 CFR 300.E



## Does RTI replace comprehensive evaluation when a disability is suspected?

An RTI process does not replace the need for a comprehensive evaluation when a disability is suspected. A district may not use one single measure or assessment as the sole reason, so the RTI process by itself is not sufficient for determining whether your child has a disability. Multiple tools and strategies are necessary.<sup>12</sup> Results of an RTI process may be one component of the information reviewed as part of the evaluation, and how it is used is determined by state law. Check with your state's department of education to learn more about the laws in your state.

## How does RTI fit into a comprehensive evaluation?

The use of RTI data as part of a comprehensive evaluation can ensure that children suspected of having a learning disability are not struggling as a result of inappropriate instruction in reading or math. As part of the process, the evaluation team must consider whether data show that the child had been provided appropriate instruction in regular education settings delivered by qualified personnel, and the child's response to quality instruction must be documented, with repeated formal assessments of student progress, which should be also shared with parents.<sup>13</sup>

Screening and progress monitoring data collected during the RTI process can be helpful sources of information. Screening provides information about the achievement of all students and can help you, your child's teachers, and administrators to determine whether the instructional program is successful for most students; it also allows the team to compare your child's performance in relation to peers. Progress monitoring data collected and graphed on a regular basis provide repeated formal information about your

child's achievement and response over time. It is important to emphasize that data from the RTI process can be a piece of the comprehensive evaluation for your child, but cannot be the sole source of information.

## How does the school find out my student needs extra help in reading or mathematics?

Within an RTI model, struggling students, or those that might need extra help in reading or mathematics, are identified through a two-stage screening process. Screening provides an unbiased, validated, systematic process for identifying students who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes to ensure that students do not fall through the cracks. In the first stage, universal screening, your child's teacher administers a brief assessment to all students in the class. This is typically done three times per year, using brief, valid, and reliable assessments. If your child scores below a specified cut score on the universal screen, your child's teacher will conduct a second stage of screening to more accurately determine if your child is truly at risk for poor learning outcomes. This second stage involves additional, more in-depth testing or short-term progress monitoring to confirm your child's risk status.

## How do I know if my child is making progress?

Within an RTI model, your child's teacher uses progress monitoring—short, valid, and reliable assessments—at regular intervals (e.g., weekly, every two weeks, or monthly) to check your child's progress. Progress monitoring data allow teachers to see if your child is making adequate progress toward their end-of-year goals, or to determine if they need to make an instructional change in order to better support your child. Teachers should share progress

<sup>11</sup>OSEP Memorandum, 2011 (above)

<sup>12</sup>34 CFR 300.304(b)

<sup>13</sup>34 CFR 300.309(b)



monitoring data with you on a regular basis. They may provide you with graphs that show how your child is doing, set up a time to discuss your child's progress, or involve you on decision-making teams. IDEA supports the sharing of data with parents, by including as part of the evaluation "data-based documentation of repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals, reflecting formal assessment of student progress during instruction, which was provided to the child's parents."<sup>14</sup>

### **Is tertiary prevention or Tier 3 the same as special education?**

In the Center's RTI framework, tertiary prevention is not the same as special education. According to the Center, the third level of the RTI prevention framework is the most intensive of the three levels of prevention, and is individualized to target each student's area(s) of need. This is also commonly known as Tier 3 in a three-tiered RTI model. Your child may be receiving tertiary prevention or Tier 3 supports, but not be eligible for special education services. Conversely, your child may be receiving special education services across all three of the prevention levels or tiers based on their demonstrated needs, not just within tertiary prevention. Regardless of the prevention level in which your child is receiving supports, the teacher or service provider should be addressing the general education curriculum in a manner that is appropriate for your child.

### **Are students who require more intensive levels of instruction removed from the general education classroom to receive those services?**

Within an RTI framework, the levels refer only to the intensity of the services provided, not where the services are delivered. Your child may receive different levels of intervention within the general education classroom or in a separate location. Services might be

provided by a general education teacher or by another service provider, such as a reading specialist or special education teacher, when appropriate. Decisions about where and who provides more intensive interventions will differ depending on the resources and space available at your school. Schools must carefully consider what approach is the best match for their school and students.

### **Can students move back and forth between levels of the prevention system?**

RTI encourages movement between prevention levels based on student data. Your child may move to more intensive levels of prevention if he or she is not responding to instruction at the current level of intensity, or to a less intensive intervention level if he or she is responding and making adequate progress. Progress monitoring data help your child's teachers to determine whether movement between prevention levels is necessary. If your child is responding to instruction, he or she may move to a less intensive level of prevention, but progress should continue to be monitored in order to ensure that he or she continues to make adequate progress. It is also important to note that your child may require different levels of prevention in different academic areas. For example, more intensive support may be needed in reading comprehension but not in mathematics.

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<sup>14</sup>34 CFR 300.309(b)



## About the National Center on Response to Intervention

Through funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, the American Institutes for Research and researchers from Vanderbilt University and the University of Kansas have established the National Center on Response to Intervention. The Center provides technical assistance to states and districts and builds the capacity of states to assist districts in implementing proven response to intervention frameworks.



**National Center on Response to Intervention**  
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