

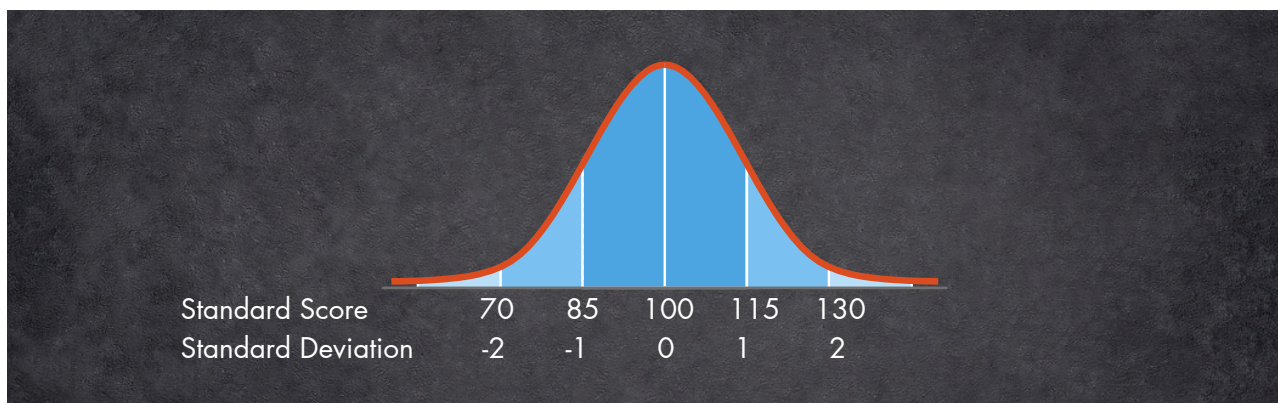
# Assessment Tip Sheet STANDARD SCORES

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## WHAT IS A STANDARD SCORE?

A standard score refers to a statistical measurement used to assess and compare a child's performance in relation to their same-age peers. Standard scores provide a common scale for comparing a child's abilities across different assessments. The most common type of standard score used in special education is a standard deviation. This type of standard score has a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15.<sup>1</sup>



## WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY ABOUT STANDARD SCORE IN THE WI BIRTH TO 3 PROGRAM?

Wisconsin Administrative Code - Dept. of Health Services, Chapter 90.08(5)(a)3 states that:  
(a) A determination of developmental delay shall be based upon the EI team's clinical opinion supported by: 1. A developmental history of the child and other pertinent information about the child obtained from parents and other caregivers; 2. Observations made of the child in his or her daily settings identified by the parent, including how the child interacts with people and familiar toys and other objects in the child's environment; and 3. Except as provided under par. (b), a determination of at least 25% delay in one or more areas of development as measured by a criterion referenced instrument, or a **score of 1.3 or more standard deviation** below the mean in one or more areas of development as measured by a norm-referenced instrument, and interpreted by a qualified professional based on informed clinical opinion.

Wisconsin's Birth to 3 Program Operations Guide  
See Ch. 4 on Eligibility Requirements



<sup>1</sup>Salvia, J., Ysseldyke, J. E., & Bolt, S. (2013). *Assessment in Special and Inclusive Education*. Cengage Learning.

## WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT USING STANDARD SCORES TO DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY FOR THE WISCONSIN BIRTH TO 3 PROGRAM?

In order to determine eligibility for the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program, multiple procedures and sources of information must be used. The eligibility determination process may include completion of an evaluation tool that identifies the child's level of functioning in order to determine if a developmental delay is present. Use of a norm-referenced tool that is capable of producing standard scores is one way to determine developmental delay. A standard score that represents 1.3 or more standard deviations below the mean is the criteria for eligibility based on delay in the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program (see chart below).

Standard Deviation = 15      Mean = 100

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1.3 Standard Deviations = 19.5

$100 - 19.5 = 80.5$

*standard scores can only be reported in whole numbers, therefore a*

**Standard Score of 80 or less meets eligibility criteria**

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING STANDARD SCORES WHEN DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY FOR PART C EARLY INTERVENTION?

- **Confidence in results:** Developers of assessment tools recommend the use of standard scores when determining eligibility for services due to the limitations of age-equivalent scores and the potential for inadequate and misleading results.<sup>2,3</sup>
- **Ability to draw comparisons:** "Because standard scores, standard deviations, and percentile ranks are all derived in relation to a normal distribution, they have a consistent and predictable relationship to one another and provide comparable information about a child's performance relative to the normative sample."<sup>4</sup>
- **Alignment with systems:** Use of standard score and standard deviations for eligibility are common in special education – both in Part C and Part B.

## WHAT ARE CONSIDERATIONS FOR USING STANDARD SCORES IN DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY FOR PART C EARLY INTERVENTION?

- **Selection:** Is the team using a tool or tools that are approved for use for the purpose of evaluation? Is the tool capable of producing a standard score (i.e. norm-referenced)?
- **Use:** How will the standard scores obtained from an evaluation tool be utilized as a part of a comprehensive evaluation and assessment process?
- **Scoring & Interpretation:** Are team members trained in scoring and interpreting results for the selected evaluation tool(s)? What materials or supports are needed to assist team members in accurately scoring and interpreting results?
- **Results:** How will the results be used specifically to determine eligibility? How will results be documented and shared with families and other team members?

<sup>2</sup> Alpern, G.D. (2020). Developmental Profile 4 (DP-4) [Manual]. Torrance, CA: Western Psychological Services

<sup>3</sup> Voress, J.K. & Maddox, T. (2013). Developmental Assessment of Young Children, Second Edition (DAYC-2) [Examiner's Manual]. Austin, TX: PRO-ED, Inc.

<sup>4</sup> Andersson, L. (2004). Appropriate and Inappropriate Interpretation and Use of Test Scores in Early Intervention, Journal of Early Intervention, Vol. 27, No. 1, pg 56.