

Needs Assessment Guidance

Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children

Excerpted from Pages 43-52 of the Non-Regulatory Guidance for the Title I, Part C Education of Migratory Children, updated March 2017

Excerpted from U.S. Department of Education – Office of Migrant Education Quarterly MEP Q&A’s

Statutory Requirements

Title I, Part C, Sections 1304(b) and 1306(a)

Regulatory Requirements

34 CFR 200.83

What is a “need”?

A “need” refers to the gap or discrepancy between a present state (what is) and a desired state (what should be). The need is neither the present nor the future state; it is the gap between them.

Example

| Desired State: What Should Be | Current State: What Is | Need: Gap |
|---|--|--|
| 100% of third grade migrant students use phonics knowledge and word parts to figure out how to pronounce words they do not recognize. | 30% of third grade migrant students use phonics knowledge and word parts to figure out how to pronounce words they do not recognize. | 70% of third grade migrant children must learn to use phonics knowledge and word parts to figure out how to pronounce words they do not recognize. |

What is a “needs assessment”?

A “needs assessment” is a *systematic* assessment and decision-making process that progresses through a defined series of phases to determine needs, examine their nature and causes, and set priorities for future action. A needs assessment:

- Focuses on the *ends* (i.e., outcomes) to be achieved, rather than the *means* (i.e., process). For example, reading achievement is an outcome, whereas reading instruction is a means toward that end.
- Gathers data by means of *established procedures and methods* that are thoughtfully selected to fit the purposes and context of the needs assessment.
- *Sets priorities and determines criteria* for solutions so that planners and managers can make sound decisions.
- *Sets criteria* for determining how best to allocate available money, people, facilities, and other resources.
- Leads to *action* that will *improve* programs, services, organizational structure and operations, or a combination of these elements.

Must districts identify the unique educational needs of all eligible migrant children?

Yes. Sections 1304(b)(1) and 1306(a)(1) of the statute requires the State to ensure that the State and the districts identify and address the unique educational needs of migrant children.

Districts must conduct a needs assessment in order to provide services that will meet the identified needs in accordance with the comprehensive State plan for service delivery.

At the district, a needs assessment determines:

1. the extent of the needs of migrant students in that project area and how those needs relate to the priorities the State has established;
2. how to design local services; and
3. which students should receive services.

Districts identify such critical elements as the specific needs of children by grade levels, the academic areas in which the project should focus, the instructional settings, materials, staffing, and teaching techniques.

What are the "unique educational needs" of migrant children?

The "unique educational needs" of migrant children, as defined in 34 CFR 200.83(a)(2), are those educational and educationally related needs that:

1. result from the migrant lifestyle, and
2. must be met in order for migrant children to participate effectively in school.

Alaska has identified four needs: academic support in reading & math, high school graduation support, school readiness skills, and support services. These needs should be the focus of the district program's design and interventions.

Must the State ensure that the needs assessment procedures of the districts are congruent with the State's needs assessment procedures?

Yes. Because the State's comprehensive State plan for service delivery is the basis for all uses of MEP funds in the State, the State and districts must jointly ensure that needs assessment procedures at the district level align with those at the State level. They also must jointly ensure that local projects focus on the unmet needs of migrant children who have "priority for services" before serving other migrant children.

Should states and districts use student demographic and assessment data to help identify the unique educational needs of migrant children?

Yes. Student demographic and assessment data are key data sources that districts should use to construct a local profile of migrant children as compared to non-migrant children and/or other appropriate comparison groups.

These data are particularly useful if they are disaggregated by:

1. priority for services,
2. grade level, and
3. project area (where the number of students served is sufficiently large for the data to be reliable).

What are the benefits of conducting a needs assessment?

Districts cannot reasonably design the MEP or determine the grade levels and instructional areas on which individual projects should focus without information on the unique educational needs of all migrant eligible children identified in the district.

At the district level, needs assessment determines:

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2. how to design local services; and
3. which students should receive services.

Districts identify such critical elements as the specific needs of children by grade levels, the academic areas in which the project should focus, the instructional settings, materials, staffing, and teaching techniques.