

Using Updated AEPS®-3 Cutoff Scores to Determine Eligibility for IDEA Services

The AEPS-3 Test is a curriculum-based assessment designed to yield a comprehensive, detailed picture of children’s development. This provides the basis for developing learning goals and outcomes, linking them to everyday routines and activities, selecting teaching and intervention content, and monitoring progress toward selected goals and outcomes over time. The AEPS-3 Test has a set of *empirically derived cutoff scores* that can be used to: a) determine children’s eligibility for early intervention/early childhood special education (EI/ECSE) services, or b) corroborate children’s eligibility for services (Bricker et al., 2022; Toland et al., 2022).

Using curriculum-based assessments such as the AEPS-3 Test to determine or corroborate eligibility is supported by Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices because these measures offer detailed and valid information about children’s developmental status. Unlike norm-referenced standardized tests, results are directly relevant and applicable to formulating IFSPs and IEPs and subsequent teaching and intervention content.

Development of valid AEPS-3 Test cutoff scores has been and will continue to be *iterative*. Since publication of AEPS-3, a second round of field test data expanded the sample size at targeted age intervals, with the most substantial increases for children under the age of two. However, the sample size in the 0–6 month age interval remains small. Additional data have resulted in adjusted cutoff scores that are generally higher across most areas of AEPS-3. The Gross Motor, Social-Communication, and Cognitive areas have increases to cutoff scores in all or all but one age interval. AEPS-3 developers continue to collect and analyze field test data to increase the number of children at all age intervals and ensure that the cutoff scores are as accurate and useful as possible.

Guidelines for Using AEPS-3 Cutoff Scores

There are three essential considerations to keep in mind as you use the adjusted AEPS-3 cutoff scores to determine or corroborate a child’s eligibility for services:

Use multiple sources of information. It is critical to collect information about a child from multiple sources to ensure you gather an authentic, accurate, and comprehensive picture of a child’s development. We recommend that you pair AEPS-3 Test results interpretation with informed clinical opinion and/or information collected via other informal or formal assessments in the eligibility decision-making process.

Involve parents and other caregivers. Individuals who provide care for the child should be involved in eligibility determination or corroboration. Caregivers may share information useful to score AEPS-3 Test items, assist with completing the assessment, or help summarize information and interpret results. You can use a completed AEPS-3 Family Report or Family Assessment of Child Skills to understand a child’s daily routine, family priorities and concerns, and family perspectives on the child’s current level of development.

Confirm state requirements. Eligibility requirements differ across states, provinces, and territories. Many require administration of a standardized norm-referenced test as well as data gathered from other sources. You can use the AEPS-3 Test as a stand-alone measure for determining eligibility if your state guidelines permit: 1) any valid and reliable instrument/method, or 2) informed clinical opinion as a primary method of eligibility determination.

Updated AEPS-3 Test Cutoff Scores and Classification Accuracy

Adjusted cutoff scores were developed using the 1.96 conditional standard errors below the age-group mean (N = 974) approach with all AEPS-3 Test goals. Eligibility classification accuracy was computed with the two scores at or below 1.96 conditional standard errors below the age-group mean rule. Table 1 contains the adjusted cutoff scores, and Table 2 provides the classification accuracy results.

Table 1. AEPS-3 Test adjusted cutoff scores by developmental area at 6-month age intervals (v2.12.22)*

Age interval	Fine Motor	Gross Motor	Adaptive	Social-Emotional	Social-Communication	Cognitive	Literacy	Math
0–6	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0
7–12	2	8	1	2	1	1	0	0
13–18	6	13	3	5	2	3	0	0
19–24	8	16	6	10	2	8	3	0
25–30	10	18	7	13	4	9	3	0
31–36	10	20	14	19	6	16	7	1
37–42	12	21	18	24	12	21	14	4
43–48	12	21	19	25	15	21	14	4
49–54	13	22	22	27	21	25	15	7
55–60	13	23	23	29	21	27	20	8
61–66	13	24	23	29	22	27	21	11
67–72	13	25	25	31	25	30	21	14

*Note: Scores at or below the cutoff are flagged for service eligibility within a given area or domain. Cutoff scores for the 0–6 month age interval should be viewed with caution because the sample size was small and some children were classified as eligible even if they were not eligible, based on analyses.

Table 2. Eligibility classification accuracy by 6-month age intervals**

Age interval	Sensitivity	Specificity	False Positive	False Negative	Accuracy	Over Identification	Under Identification
0–6	100	11	89	0	24	76	0
7–12	80	25	75	20	43	50	7
13–18	88	37	63	12	52	45	3
19–24	89	47	53	11	62	35	4
25–30	83	58	42	17	71	20	9
31–36	94	77	23	6	89	7	4
37–42	97	52	48	3	72	27	1
43–48	81	63	37	19	74	15	12
49–54	80	58	42	20	72	15	12
55–60	66	64	36	34	66	13	21
61–66	68	62	38	32	65	21	14
67–72	74	66	34	26	69	19	11

**Note: All percentages are rounded to the nearest integer.

AEPS-3 adjusted cutoff scores presented in Table 1 reflect the most recent analysis based on the addition of data for children at different age intervals. AEPS-3 developers are continuing field testing to increase the number of children per age interval. Subsequent adjustments to AEPS-3 cutoff scores may be forthcoming. Updates will be posted at www.aepsinteractive.com and shared in the AEPS-3 newsletter.

References

Bricker, D. & Johnson, J. J. (Eds.). (2022). *AEPS-3 Volume 2: Assessment*. In D. Bricker, C. Dionne, J. Grisham, J. J. Johnson, M. Macy, K. Slentz, & M. Waddell, *Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System for Infants and Children, Third Edition (AEPS-3)*. Brookes Publishing Co.

Toland, M., Grisham, J., Waddell, M., Crawford, R., & Dueber, D. (2022). Scale evaluation and eligibility determination of a field test version of the Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System, Third Edition. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 42*(2), 150–161. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121420981712>