Guiding Questions:
When Considering Educational
Identification of Autism Spectrum Disorder

<u>EDUCATIONAL DEFINITION OF AUTISM</u>:   Autism means a developmental disability significantly affecting <u>verbal and nonverbal communication</u> and <u>social interaction,</u> generally evident before age 3 that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in <u>repetitive activities</u> and <u>stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.</u> The term does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance, as defined by Ohio rules.

Please note that the educational definition of autism specifically identifies several defining characteristics that must be present to confirm eligibility for services. If a student has received a diagnosis from an outside source that does not automatically make the student eligible for educational services. It is the responsibility of the school district to confirm the presence of the defining characteristics and their adverse affect on educational performance.

The Key Questions are <u>not</u> standardized; they do not provide a score. Many of the traditional assessment tools, provide helpful information, but **<u>do not</u>** necessarily assess characteristics which are most closely associated with autism spectrum disorder. The Key Questions are designed to help:
1. Collect information specifically related to autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
2. Frame and focus the observations done as a part of the ETR
3. More clearly define the "adverse effect"
4. Guide the writing of individual assessment reports and the team summary
5. Guide the IEP team in isolating significant/relevant educational needs specially associated with ASD
6. Guide the development of educationally relevant IEP goals and objectives.

The Key Questions can be particularly helpful when composing the team summary. The Key Questions can help:
1. Organize the information collected. When the team summary is being written the person(s) writing the summary can review the key questions in each of the areas.   As each area (communication, social interaction, repetitive activities, etc) and its corresponding questions are reviewed, integrate the information that was collected from the instruments used as a part of the evaluation process.
2. Assure the summary is comprehensive by double checking whether or not the summary contains information related to all of the key questions
3. Assure that the summary reflects multiple viewpoints. When an answer to a particular question is written into the summary, the answer reflects the collection of data obtained through multiple assessment tools/procedures which may have been conducted by more than one team member. (for example, it is NOT just the speech therapist reporting on communication or just the occupational therapist reporting on motor/sensori-motor)

Guiding Questions:
Autism Spectrum Disorder

Key Questions: Communication

Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

___ 1. What is the form of the student's communication?
(<u>Examples:</u> verbal, vocalizations, written, signs, gestures, motoric, pictures, echolalic, assistive devices)
Note mean length of utterance.

___ 2. What is the function of the student's communication?
(Examples: request, get attention, protest, comment, give information, and seek information express feelings, ask for help, greetings)

___ 3. What is the content of the student's communication?
(Examples: vocabulary, semantic categories, objects, actions, persons, locations)

___ 4. What is the context of the student's communication?
(Examples: communication partners, location, activity)

___ 5. Does the student exhibit any of the following characteristics?
__ delayed or immediate echolalia
__perservations
__unusual tone of voice (sing/song, monotone)
__highly formal language or pedantic speech

___ 6. Does the child have a functional communication system (How well do others understand this student)?
(Examples: verbal communication and non-verbal communication)

___ 7. What is the student's comprehension of other's communication?
a. Does the student understand spoken directions given individually and in a group setting? (describe length and complexity)

b. Does the student understand spoken questions presented individually and in a group setting? (note type of questions; who, what, where, when, why, how, yes/no)

    c. Does the student comprehend non-literal language? (metaphors, idioms, proverbs, puns)

    d. Does the student understand non-verbal communication? (gestures, facial expression, body language)

    e. Does the student understand another's perspective?

___ 8. Does the student initiate, respond to, and/or maintain on-topic social conversations with others?

Key Questions: Social / Emotional

Social-Emotional: social understanding, social skills, social flexibility and self control

Note: with all of the social-emotional questions, consider any differences between performances in structured versus non-structured settings.

__ 1. How does the student interact with familiar **adults**? Unfamiliar **adults**?
(Examples: seems unaware of other people, withdrawn, avoiding interaction, greeting, turn taking, sharing cooperation, watching other people, more interested in things/topics than people, inappropriate response to situations)

__ 2. How does the student interact with familiar **peers**? Unfamiliar **peers**?
(Examples: seems unaware of other people, withdrawn, avoiding interaction, greeting, turn taking, sharing cooperation, watching other people, more interested in things/topics than people, inappropriate response to situations)

___ 3. Does the student establish joint attention to a topic, object, individual or action?
(Examples: looks toward a place another student/peer is gazing; points to place where another student/peer is gazing; points with intent)

___ 4. What is the nature and focus of the student's play?
(Examples: solitary, parallel, cooperative, imaginative)

___ 5. Does the student identify and make sense of social information?
(Examples: social norms, rules, body language, compliance, desire to please, take another's perspective)

___ 6. How does the student respond to and share feelings and emotions?

___ 7. How does the student monitor, manage, and react to stress/anxiety?
     Are there particular situations that cause stress/anxiety?

___ 8. How does the student act in loosely structured situations?
     (Examples: making choices, free time, breaks, weekends, etc.)

___ 9. Is the student is able to calm him/herself when stressed?

Key Questions: Repetitive Activities / Stereotyped Movements

___ 1. Does the student exhibit any repetitive and/or stereotypical behaviors?
     Describe the behavior, including frequency and duration.
     Describe the context (environment, activity, persons)

___ 2. What is the function of the repetitive and/or stereotyped behavior?

___ 3. What factors help the student to stop or modify an episode of repetitive and/or
     stereotyped behaviors?

Key Questions: Flexibility/Resistance to Change

 ___ 1. Describe how the student reacts when the routine is changed or interrupted. (Examples: a
     change in daily schedule; furniture is moved; clothing changes are needed; new food is
     introduced; toy options are changed

Key Questions: Unusual Responses to Sensory Stimuli

___1. Does the student exhibit atypical responses (seeking, avoidance) to visual stimulation?
     movement, smell, taste, sound or touch?

___ 2. Is the student physically rough with people and objects? (Examples: hugging, jumping,
     bouncing, tackling, etc.)

___ 3. Does the student exhibit balance and coordination typical of his/her age?

Key Questions: Cognitive

___1. What are the student's cognitive traits related to attention? (Example: over selective, flexible) Consider the question in a variety of settings (Examples: alone; with peers; structured group; unstructured time; adult directed vs. student choice; relevant vs. extraneous information; rigid vs. flexible)

___2. What are the student's cognitive traits related to perception? (Examples: visual, auditory)

___3. What are the student's cognitive traits related to processing? (Examples: concrete vs. abstract; literal vs. inferential; part to whole vs. whole to part)

___4. What are the student's cognitive traits related to memory? (Examples: rote, recall)

___5. Does the student demonstrate any unique skills in advance of his/her years?

___6. How well does the student organize and manage their "stuff" (the tangibles in their life)?

___7. How well does the student organize their "life" (time and routines)?

Key Questions:Achievement

___1. What is the student's academic performance compared to grade-level peers?

___2. To what extent does the student retain, maintain and/or generalize learned information?

Key Questions: Behavior

___1. Does the student's mood change quickly, sometimes for no apparent reason? Describe.

___ 2. Does the student ever display self injurious behavior such as biting or hitting? Describe.

___ 3. Does the student display other behaviors such as hitting, biting, kicking, throwing, and screaming? Describe.

___4. Has there been a Functional Behavioral Assessment completed on this student?

___ 5. Is there an active behavior plan in place?

Key Questions: Adaptive Behavior

___ 1. Does the student exhibit eating, dressing, toileting and personal hygiene skills
        similar to chronological peers?

___ 2. Are there significant safety concerns for this student?

General

___1. Is the student's academic performance adversely affected?

___2. Is the student's social/emotional/behavioral performance adversely affected?

___3. Describe the current academic supports/services, level of supervision in place.

___4. Describe the accommodations of instruction that are currently in place to address the needs
     of this student.

___5. Describe the modifications to the curriculum currently in place for this student.

Background
Has the student been referred for medical evaluation? What do the results indicate?
Has the student been medically diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder?
How long has the team suspected autism spectrum disorder as an educational identification under
        IDEIA guidelines?
Has the team used other assessments/rating forms designed to aid in the identification of
        individuals with autism? If so, what were the results?
What intervening services has or is the student currently receiving in either the school or private
setting?

Participating Team Members:

Signature   **Title**   **Date**

_____ _____ _____

_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____