

This response was prepared for Representative Kulp, Chair of the Wisconsin Study Committee on Identification and Management of Dyslexia

Your Question:

You requested an overview of state dyslexia policies and specific state dyslexia policy examples. Additionally, you asked how states approached forming their dyslexia policy through legislation.

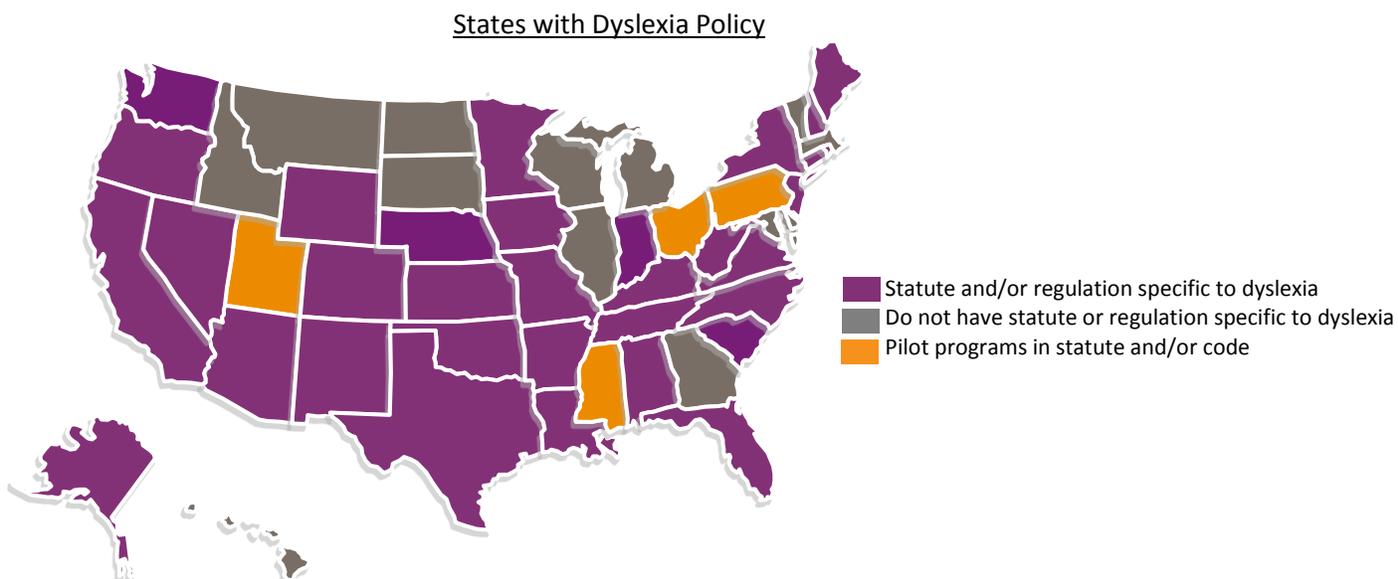
Our Response:

States have taken varying approaches to identify and support students who are demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia. In a scan of state statute and code, two trends in state dyslexia policy emerged: federal law compliance and identification/support.

All states actively comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirements to provide educational services and support for students with learning disabilities, including dyslexia. In addition to complying with IDEA requirements, the majority of states have a policy in place that addresses identification and support for students who are demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia before providing special education services.

State Dyslexia Policy

States have adopted a range of policy tools to address early identification of and support for students with dyslexia in their state. At least 37 states have dyslexia policy in statute or code that focuses on early identification of and support for students demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia. States with dyslexia policy generally focus on students in grades K-3 in the following nine policy areas.



Screening

At least **21 states** have statute or code that address screening of students between kindergarten and third grade. Some states have elected to outline in policy what the screener should evaluate, the type of screener, and the frequency of screening, while other states have chosen to leave these components to the discretion of the state department of education and school districts.

- What screeners assess- Some states explicitly state in policy the skills assessed in the screener.
 - [Arkansas](#) and [Maine](#) assess six skills in their state screening instrument including phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol recognition, alphabetic knowledge, decoding skills, rapid naming skills, and encoding skills.
- Types of screeners- In the states that require students screening there are three approaches to selecting a screening instrument:
 - *State designated screener*- [Arkansas](#) requires the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills assessment be used by all schools to screen students for characteristics of dyslexia. [Connecticut](#) uses the state reading assessment to screen students for dyslexia.
 - *Districts select from a state list of screeners*- [Louisiana](#) requires that districts select from a list of screeners approved by the state department of education.¹
 - *Teacher observation*- [Maine](#) requires that a teacher observe and actively screen their students for indicators of dyslexia and then use a screening instrument to determine if the student is demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia.
- Frequency of screening- states have concentrated their policy on screening students between kindergarten and third grade. The frequency of screening across grades and over the course of the year varies from state to state. Generally, in states that require students to be screened the student is screened once during the year.
 - [New Hampshire](#) requires that all students be screened for characteristics of dyslexia upon entry into kindergarten or first grade depending on when they first enter school.

Intervention

Generally, states outline general guidelines, goals, and objectives in their intervention policy. At least 17 states address dyslexia intervention in their statute or code. Examples include:

- [Indiana](#) and [Nevada](#), among other states, require the use of a response to intervention framework.² States that do not explicitly call for the use of response to intervention frameworks tend to define intervention by requiring evidence-based interventions broadly.
- [Rhode Island](#) focuses its intervention policy on students who are not demonstrating proficiency in reading, including students demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia.
- [Alabama](#) requires an individualized approach to using a response to intervention framework. A student's Problem Solving Team, consisting of teachers, administrators, specialists, and the student's parent, are required to examine the data from the student's screener and other evidence to develop an instructional plan for the student.

Parental involvement

At least **12 states** include parental notification and involvement as part of their state's dyslexia policy. The extent of involvement ranges from notification to providing materials and engaging them in the intervention process.

- The majority of states require parents to be notified if their child demonstrates characteristics of dyslexia on a required screener.

¹ La. Admin Code. tit. 28, Pt XXXV, § 1305

² Indiana IC 20-35.5-2-7, Nevada NRS 388.441

- [Tennessee](#) and [Washington](#) require that parents be provided with materials to support their child’s learning and development through the intervention process.
- In states where a response to intervention framework is required in the intervention process, the parent must give consent.

State and district dyslexia specialists

To support schools and districts in carrying out screening and intervention as well as support the professional development of teachers in dyslexia intervention, states have established dyslexia specialists at the state, district and school level. At least **eight states** have established a dyslexia specialist at the state or school level in statute or code.

- *State Dyslexia Specialist-* [Minnesota](#) requires the state department of public instruction to have a state dyslexia specialist who provides districts with technical assistance for dyslexia and related disorders. They serve as the primary source of information and support for schools in addressing student needs as they relate to dyslexia. Additionally, they are tasked with increasing professional awareness of dyslexia.
- *School Dyslexia Specialist-* [Virginia](#) requires that each school employ a reading specialist who is tasked with providing literacy and dyslexia supports.³ Specific to dyslexia, the specialist is tasked with supporting teachers as they develop appropriate instruction and supports for a student who is demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia.

The qualifications for the dyslexia specialist are not necessarily laid out in policy, and states may leave the requirements for the position to the discretion of the department of education. For example, [Indiana](#) requires that the dyslexia specialist is trained in screening, identification, and treatment of dyslexia, but state policy does not provide additional details on specific credentials or requirements to hold the position.⁴

Professional development

To support teachers in providing screenings and intervention services, some states have elected to provide professional development for teachers. In addition to technical support, states have used professional development to raise awareness of dyslexia among teachers and administrators.

- At least **22 states** have required professional development specific to dyslexia be offered to teachers by the state agency or district. Of the 22 states, six require that teachers complete professional development in topics specific to dyslexia.
- [Florida](#) requires districts to offer professional development in dyslexia whereas [Texas](#) requires that teachers of students with dyslexia actively engage in dyslexia specific professional development.
- As part of the role out of their state’s dyslexia policy, [Indiana](#) will require teachers to complete professional development in dyslexia screening and intervention before the start of the 2019-2020 school year.

Teacher Preparation

Similar to professional development, states have adopted policies to provide pre-service teachers with instruction relating to dyslexia. State policy relating to teacher preparation has concentrated on raising awareness of signs of dyslexia as well as on providing teachers with foundational knowledge of screening for and the support of students with dyslexia. At least **13 states** have outlined teacher preparation requirements in state policy.

- [Indiana](#) requires that teacher preparation programs must include content on identifying students’ learning needs based on their demonstrated characteristics of dyslexia.
- [Arkansas](#) requires that preservice teachers receive instruction in the identification of students with dyslexia.

Task forces and councils

³ VA Code Ann. § 22.1-253.13:2

⁴ Indiana IC 20-35.5-6-1

To evaluate the state of dyslexia or monitor the implementation of dyslexia policy within a state, at least **seven states** have active task forces and councils in policy focusing on dyslexia.

- Since 2016 [Tennessee](#) has had a dyslexia specific advisory council in place. The council must submit a report annually that identifies the number of students provided dyslexia intervention services, information about the accommodations provided to those students, and an overview of the specific interventions provided. Here is a link to the council's [2016-2017 annual report](#).
- [Washington](#) established a Dyslexia Advisory Council to support and help shape the implementation of its state dyslexia policy. The council must advise the department of education on screening, intervention, and parent engagement best practices.

Reporting, monitoring, and accountability

Outside of advisory council reports, states also may require reporting on the process of screening, intervening, and support provided. The responsibility of reporting can fall to the districts or the state department of education. At least **eight states** have reporting on dyslexia in state policy.

- Each year [Kentucky](#) requires that school districts report to the state department of education on a range of topics relating to dyslexia in their schools, including the number of K-3 students identified as demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia, the tools used to identify students, and the number of students participating in intervention services.

State resource guides

We are aware of **17 states** with resource guides specific to dyslexia. Of the 17, 11 states require the guide in state policy. State policy frequently provides loose guidance as to whom the resource should support and who should create the document. Frequently, content of the guide is left to the discretion of the state department or whoever is tasked with drafting the guide.

- [Minnesota](#): The guidebook, created by a commissioner in collaboration with an advisory committee, is frequently referenced by other states. The guidebook includes a comprehensive overview of dyslexia, as well as the role of schools, communities, and parents, in support students with dyslexia.
- [New Hampshire](#): The guidebook serves as a resource guide for teachers as well as a compliance guide to support teachers and school administrators in carrying out the state's dyslexia policy. The state statute requires that the state reading and dyslexia specialist frequently update the resource guide in consultation with dyslexia experts.

State Dyslexia Legislation

States have crafted their state dyslexia policy using various combinations of the nine policy areas. While some states have adopted six or more of the policy components, others have focused on one or two specific areas to support the identification of and the support for students demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia. The concentration of policy areas within a state does not correlate to the effectiveness of the policy or the state's ability to support students with characteristics of dyslexia. Also, it should not be assumed that states that do not have dyslexia specific are not taking action to support students demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia.

