

Chapter 10 - Services

Services are the backbone of the IEP, they are what everything else is built around. Goals are taught and reviewed through services. Weaknesses are addressed through services. The amount of time specialists spend working with your child are determined through services. Academic settings are outlined in the services that your child receives. While all parts of the IEP are important, the services page must be reviewed especially, since what is written here will drive every other aspect of the IEP.

Services refer to any aspect of your child's education that occurs outside of the typical general education experience. If your child has a specific learning disability that requires a modified curriculum, then the services will specify what adapted educational program they will take part in and how much of their day will be spent there. If they require speech assistance, or have a muscular issue that requires occupational therapy, that will be identified in the services, and the amount of time and how often your child receives that service will be written here.

Duration and frequency are part of services, and indicate how often (frequency) and for how long during each session (duration) your child will receive that service. For example, your child might receive speech and language support services for 30 minutes a session (duration) once a week (frequency). The questions below will help you clarify what services your child receives, why those services are necessary, and how those services are accessed and used by your child during the school day.

Focus Questions:

- 1) What academic services does my child have?
- 2) What support services does my child have?
- 3) What transition services does my child have?
- 4) Are transportation services accurate and clear?
- 5) How much time is spent on each service?
- 6) What timeframe is used to implement the service?
- 7) Where are the services implemented?
- 8) What needs do each service support?
- 9) Do services reflect all the time that my child spends outside of general education classes?

10) Is there a clear plan for implementation of each service?

1) What academic services does my child have?

Classroom based services are academic services. If your child has a significant academic disability they might need an academic class at a slower pace or working on lower level standards. These classes are taught by special education teachers, have smaller class sizes, will often have an aide to support the classroom, and tend to have less homework. If your child requires this type of learning environment then he or she will have this service. Almost every student with an IEP will have at least one class that supports their needs. The more academically skilled students might just need a study skills or academic support class to be successful. Students with more barriers might need specialized instruction in academics to be able to access the standards and demonstrate mastery. Students with significant barriers might need full day programs that address academics, living skills, social communication, and emotional support.

You should know each of the classes your child has that are outside of general education, what barrier your child has that requires that class, and what skills your child will be working on in that class.

2) What support services does my child have?

Support services can refer to any service outside of academic instruction that helps the student access curriculum and be a part of his or her school. Generally speaking, support services are provided individually or in small groups, and work to improve areas of a student's abilities that relate to their school life. Speech and language services are common, supporting students with communication issues. Counseling services for students with emotional concerns are also common. Students with autism or developmental delays might have support services to assist with social skills. Occupational therapy and adapted physical education might be utilized by students with muscular issues. These are the most often seen, but any service that is not classroom based is a support service.

These services are the ones that need to be managed a little more closely. Academic services tend to take care of themselves since they occur in the classroom on a daily basis. Support services are usually not daily, and sometimes might only occur every month or two. Make sure you are aware of all the support services your child receives and ask the questions below about implementation and time in order to understand when the services are being accessed, how they are being accessed, and what benefits they are providing your child.

3) What transition services does my child have?

These are support services that relate to preparing your child for the next step in their academic and vocational life. In elementary school these will be minimal, with a focus on what the student needs to do to move on to junior high. In junior high the

students might start to do some basic career exploration and learn basic job finding skills, in addition to preparing for high school. In high school this gets more complicated, which is why your child will now have a complete transition plan included in the IEP. The focus will be on graduation, post-secondary schooling, and the job market. For students with more severe barriers this might also focus on independent living and community access. Services might include special classes, assistance with job hunting, access to programs to assist with job skills (interviewing, resumes, etc.), career counseling, or assistance enrolling at local post secondary schools (vocational or college). These services are explored in greater detail in Chapter 15: Transition.

4) Are transportation services accurate and clear?

If your child receives transportation services you need to be sure that they are listed accurately. They might appear here or on another page of the IEP. Is your child being picked up at your door or at a near by location convenient for your neighborhood? What are the pick up and drop off times? Is there assistance on the bus to handle any issues that arise or is that handled by the bus driver? Is there a plan in place for alternate schedules, such as minimum days? There might not be space enough to write this in the transportation area, so have it written into the meeting notes. There should be no confusion about how your child gets to and from school.

5) How much time is spent on each service?

Most services will be very clear about this, listing the amount of time and indicating that it is daily. Pull out services might be listed as minutes per month or year, so you will need to follow up as to how that will be implemented (30 minutes a week? 60 minutes every two weeks?). Also, for services that are not daily you will want to ask how the teacher or service provider records and tracks these sessions. That way should your child indicate during the IEP year that no one is pulling them out to implement a service you know who to ask about the schedule, and can request to see it if you have any doubts. If any service is listed as being implemented on an "as needed" basis, you should ask what has to happen for the case manager or provider to feel that the service is now needed, and who will make sure that everyone involved understands the criteria.

6) What timeframe is used to implement the service?

Classroom and other usual services will be implemented daily or weekly and once the IEP team has establishing how those services will be implemented you can be fairly certain there will be no issues. Services that are more unique, such as those related to transition or social skills, are usually not implemented on a regularly scheduled basis and can be an issue. If a service is like this, or if the service requires other tasks to be completed before it can be implemented, you should get a time frame for when this services will be implemented. It might not be specific (it could be "in the next three months" or "by the start of next semester") but you should have something to go by. If the time frame is almost up and you have not heard from the school or your child that

the service is in place, you need to contact the case manager and see what is causing the delay. Everyone forgets things, and complicated IEPs with multiple services are particularly challenging, so sometimes a reminder is needed.

7) Where are the services implemented?

Are the services able to be implemented in the classroom, or will they take place elsewhere? Most academic services will take place in a classroom. Depending on the academic level of your child that might mean the general education classroom or a specialized classroom environment that focuses on the educational concerns of your child. Support services, such as speech or occupational therapy, might include some classroom components, but will most likely include a pull-out part where your child works one on one with a specialist. Depending on the issue, this is very important, since more severe issues will require very focused intervention that cannot be best implemented in a classroom setting.

You will need to address implementation on a service by service basis. As a team, determine how each service can be best implemented based on your child's needs in that area. For a service that requires more broad interventions, a classroom is a very appropriate place to access that service. If your child has more severe needs, or has a particular issue that requires very focused effort to improve (such as a specific speech or social issue), then a pull-out program would be best, with generalizing in the classroom once the skill has reached a proficient level on a one to one basis.

8) What needs do each service support?

Your child might have few or many needs. They could be academic, social, emotional, occupational, transitional, or behavioral. Each of the previous categories have sub-categories, especially academic, and each of these needs should be addressed by your child's services. If your child has academic barriers, what service is in place to support that? If your child needs assistance in handling social situations, what service provides for that? Each area of need should have a service that supports improvement and growth in that area. Some times a service will address more than one need (speech services for example might cover both speech needs as well as social needs through communication). Every area of need for your child should have a service that supports improvement in that area.

Sometimes your child has many needs and they cannot all be addressed at the same time. This is especially true for students with severe disabilities. If that is the case then you want to focus on what is the most severe issue and work from there. You should make sure that the most severe needs are addressed first, and supports are in place for lesser needs that can be implemented as your child improves in the more severe areas.

9) Do services reflect all the time that my child spends outside of general education classes?

The law requires that students be in the least restrictive environment. The least of these is general education, and it becomes more restrictive from there (see Chapter 11: Educational Setting for more on least restrictive environment). All the time spent outside of general education must be accounted for and justified in the IEP. The services section, in conjunction with the educational setting section, is where all the time spent outside of general education is accounted for. Legally speaking, this section is the most important part of the IEP since it outlines what services your child will receive, the amount of time he or she will receive them, and where they will be received.

The services listed on the services page need to be accurate, since it will be the guide that all service providers use to arrange services. If there is a mistake in the time allotted for a service it could effect the implementation of that service. For example, if in a speech service the case manager listed service time as 30 minutes monthly instead of weekly, then when the speech therapist checks the services to arrange appointments for the year that is all that will be scheduled. Even if the speech therapist was at the IEP, they will not remember specifics since they handle caseloads of 50 to a 100 students at a time, and often have speech assistants who work with the students in their place. This can easily happen if the services are not accurate. It will get caught eventually, but missed time can never really be brought back. Cramming for a test might help some, but it is no replacement for consistent review over the course of months. Support services are the same way. Double- or even triple-check services before signing the IEP to make sure they are accurate.

10) Is there a clear plan for implementation of each service?

If your child only has academic services then this is a straightforward answer, since they will be served in the classroom. With additional services, and more intensive services, this becomes an issue. Additionally, if your child has significant learning barriers and is in a school where greater or full inclusion is practiced, this is vitally important. You need to know exactly how your child's teachers, support staff, and case manager are going to make sure that that your child's potential progress is being fulfilled. That means knowing in specific terms when your child will be accessing services, how those services will work with the academic teacher to improve overall learning, and what form those services will take during the school day. There are many ways to implement a service, and some schools are doing some very creative and success things with how they support children. You just need to be aware of how this will affect your child on a daily basis.