

## Related Services for Students with Disabilities - Questions and Answers

### What is meant by the term “related services”?

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), “related services” are a wide array of supportive services provided to children with disabilities to assist them in benefiting from special education. Specifically, the IDEA defines related services as transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services necessary for a child with a disability to benefit from special education. The need for related services is typically considered during the student’s admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee meeting as the committee reviews and discusses the student’s evaluation and assessment data. Related services include, but are not limited to:

- Audiology services
- School health services (including assistance with health-related needs during the school day, e.g. catheterization)
- Counseling services
- Medical services (only to diagnose or evaluate a student’s disability)
- Social work services in school
- Speech-language therapy\*
- Occupational therapy
- Transportation
- Orientation and mobility services
- Parent counseling and training
- Physical therapy
- Psychological services
- Recreation
- Rehabilitation counseling services
- Interpreting Services

\*In Texas, speech-language therapy is considered an instructional service. This means it can be a stand-alone service as well as a supportive service.

### Is a student with a disability who needs only a related service but no special education eligible for related services under the IDEA?

No. A student with a disability who only needs a related service and not special education is not eligible under the IDEA, and hence is not eligible to receive related services.

### How is a student’s need for related services determined?

Each student’s need for related services, like the need for special education, is determined by the student’s ARD committee as part of the individualized education program (IEP) process.

### What is meant by frequency, location, and duration of a related service?

Each IEP requires a statement of the “projected date for the beginning of the services” and the “anticipated frequency, location, and duration” of services that will be provided. **Frequency** refers to how often a related service will be provided, such as 30 minutes once a week. **Location** refers to the physical site at which the related service is to be provided. **Duration** refers to how long the district will continue providing the related service, such as for a six-week period, a semester, or for the duration of the school year. The U.S. Department of Education has previously instructed that: “the amount of services to be provided must be stated in the IEP so that the level of the agency’s commitment of resources will be clear to parents and other IEP team members.”

### **How often should a student receive a related service?**

ARD committees determine the frequency, location, and duration of related services based on a student's individual needs. If a service is delivered less than daily, it should be defined using a weekly reference (1 hour a week; 30 minutes every two weeks). If a term is used in the IEP to define frequency of service, the term must be defined in the IEP (example: unit = 15 minutes).

### **Can related services be determined based on a particular disability category?**

No. An ARD committee is responsible for determining appropriate educational services, including related services, based on the individual educational needs of a student. A policy of determining related services based on a disability category would be inconsistent with state and federal requirements that services be based on individual needs.

### **Are parents involved in the provision of related services?**

Parents participate in the determination of appropriate related services through the ARD committee decision-making process. Schools should provide timely and informative related service progress reports to parents, teachers, and other school personnel on a regular basis. Schools should also offer parents opportunities to discuss the provision of related services with the related service provider. Progress reports must explain the student's progress toward annual IEP goals.

### **How should a school handle the provision of a related service when a student is repeatedly absent?**

Schools are required to provide related services consistent with the frequency, location, and duration of services specified in a student's IEP. Schools should consult with a parent when unable to provide a related service due to a student's absence from school. ARD committees should discuss related service options when a student repeatedly fails to receive a related service due to frequent or chronic absences. If a student's performance becomes negatively impacted due to frequent absences, an ARD committee should address the schedule of delivery of services and consider the appropriateness of compensatory services.

### **Do parents have to pay for the related services a child receives?**

No. School districts may not charge parents of eligible students with disabilities for the costs of related services that have been included in the child's IEP. Just as special and regular education must be provided to an eligible student with a disability at no cost to the parent or guardian, related services must be provided at no cost when the IEP team has determined that such services are required and those services are included in the student's IEP.

### **How are related services delivered?**

A school district must ensure that all of the related services specified in the student's IEP are provided, including the amount specified. The district usually decides how the services listed in the IEP will be delivered to the student. For example, the district may provide the services through its own personnel resources, or it may contract with another public or private agency, which then provides the services. Contracted service providers must meet the same standards for credentialing and training as public agency service providers.

### **What are direct services?**

*Direct services* usually refer to hands-on, face-to-face interactions between the related services professional and the student. These interactions can take place in a variety of settings, such as the classroom, gym, health office, resource room, counseling office, or playground. Typically, the related service professional analyzes student responses and uses specific techniques to develop or improve particular skills. The professional will also typically:

- monitor the student's performance within the educational setting so that adjustments can be made to improve student performance, as needed, and
- consult with teachers, administrators and parents on an ongoing basis, so that relevant strategies can be carried out through indirect means (see below) at other times.

### **What are indirect services?**

*Indirect services* may involve teaching, consulting with, and/or directly supervising other personnel (including paraprofessionals and parents) so that they can carry out therapeutically-appropriate activities. For example, a school psychologist might train teachers and other educators how to implement a program included in a student's IEP to decrease the child's problem behaviors. Similarly, a physical therapist may serve as a consultant to a teacher and provide expertise to solve problems regarding a student's access to instruction.