

The following document was developed to answer questions the Texas Education Agency has received about related services for students with disabilities. As we receive more questions, this document will be updated.

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, insulin shots and glucose checks for diabetes management, etc.)
- 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. If the student is suspected of having a disability under Section 504, the LEA may then make a referral for consideration of eligibility, services, and accommodations.

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.

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 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 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.

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

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." Each IEP must include the frequency, duration, and location of the services to be provided. ARD committees should review all IEPs to be sure that the LEA's commitment of resources is clear.

| Frequency | Duration | Location |
|--|--|--|
| <p>How often will the service be provided (daily, weekly)? If a service is provided less than daily then the conditions for the provision of the services must be clearly specified within ARD documents using a weekly reference</p> | <p>How long will the services be provided? The beginning and ending dates must be specified. How long will each session be (15 minutes, 30 minutes)? If a term (e.g., 1 class period) is used in the IEP to define the duration of service, the term must be defined in the IEP (e.g., 1 class period = 50 minutes).</p> | <p>Where will the services be provided? Select the general education classroom or another setting such as a special education resource classroom, or both wherever services will be provided.</p> |

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 on how to implement a program included in a student's IEP to decrease the child's challenging 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.

Can students being served under Section 504 receive related services and support?

Yes. Students served under Section 504 may be provided related services based on an individual student's needs. All related services under the IDEA are available for eligible students served under Section 504. The Section 504 committee determines and documents which related services are necessary for FAPE under Section 504. All decisions should be made based on a preponderance of data.