

Related Services

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines related services

Related services means transportation and any other developmental, corrective or other supportive services that a child needs to benefit from special education. Some children need related services in order to meet the goals in their Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Related services may include:

- Early identification and assessment of disabilities in children
- Speech-language pathology and audiology services
- Interpreting services
- Psychological services
- Physical and occupational therapy
- Recreation, including therapeutic recreation
- Social work services
- School health services
- School nurse services
- Counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling
- Orientation and mobility services
- Medical services (only to diagnose or evaluate a child's disability)

Related services are not limited to the ones outlined above. If a service is necessary for the child to benefit from his or her special education program, the service must be provided, even if it is not included in this list.

Who provides related services?

Qualified professionals may provide related services in the area of their expertise. Paraprofessionals and assistants who are trained and supervised in accordance with state law or policy may also assist in providing related services.

Who decides which related services are right for a child?

A child's Individualized Education Program

(IEP) team decides which related services are necessary. Parents are important members of this team. The team gathers information from evaluation, and uses this information to determine a child's needs. The IEP team will talk about a child's needs and decide whether a related service is needed to help the child meet his or her IEP goals. Qualified related service providers may be important members of the IEP team.

How are related services written into the IEP?

The IEP team will write goals for each related service, such as occupational therapy, that a child needs. The IEP will describe:

- the type of related service that will be provided; and
- how often, how long and where that service will be delivered

Related services may be provided in group or individual settings. This depends on a child's needs. They may be provided in the regular education classroom or in a separate setting. Related services support special education in the least restrictive environment. They may be provided in all educational settings.

Who pays for related services?

Related services must be provided at no cost to a child's family. The school may ask for parent consent to bill other *private agencies*, such as a parent's private insurance, for related services. However, the school needs the written consent of parents to do this. The child must receive the related services in his or her IEP, whether or not parents give consent to use their private benefits.

Schools may not require parents to incur any out-of-pocket expense, such as a deductible or co-payment, if parents agree to use their private insurance.

The school may bill Medicaid or other *public insurance* for the related services a child receives in school. The school district needs parental consent to release any personally identifiable



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information from the child’s educational record. This includes information about the kinds of services the child receives in school.

Schools may not require parents to enroll in a public benefits or insurance program in order to receive related services. Schools may not use a child’s benefits under a public benefit or insurance program if it would:

- decrease the child’s lifetime coverage;
- result in the family paying for services that would otherwise be covered;
- increase premiums; or
- lead to discontinuation of coverage or risk loss of disability for Medicaid home and community-based waiver programs.

For more information about schools billing insurance companies to pay for related services, see the ALLIANCE ACTION Sheet: “Third Party Payments,” available through the ALLIANCE National Center.

What if the related services in a child’s IEP are not being provided because there are staff shortages?

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The school district must provide the related services in the child’s IEP. The district may contract with providers outside the school district if there are personnel shortages in the school.