

FACT SHEET



SECTION ON

PEDIATRICS

AMERICAN PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

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American
Physical Therapy
Association

The Science of Healing. The Art of Caring

Providing Physical Therapy in Schools Under IDEA 2004

Physical Therapy and IDEA

The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law, with state education agency oversight, that supports the provision of public education for all children—regardless of the nature or severity of their disability. Part B of IDEA mandates the education of children, 3-21 years old, who have a disability that interferes with their educational performance and their ability to benefit from their educational program.

IDEA Implementation

- Implementation of IDEA, Part B, is the responsibility of each local education agency or school district.
- Children with disabilities are entitled to a free, appropriate public education.
- Special education and related services are provided, as necessary, to meet the unique needs of each child.
- “Special education” means specialized instruction linked to a measurable annual goal. Students taking an alternate assessment should have benchmarks or short-term objectives.
- Special education and related services are to be provided in the least-restrictive environment.
- IDEA—in conjunction with such other legislative mandates as the Americans With Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals With Disabilities Act—provides appropriate school-based services for children.

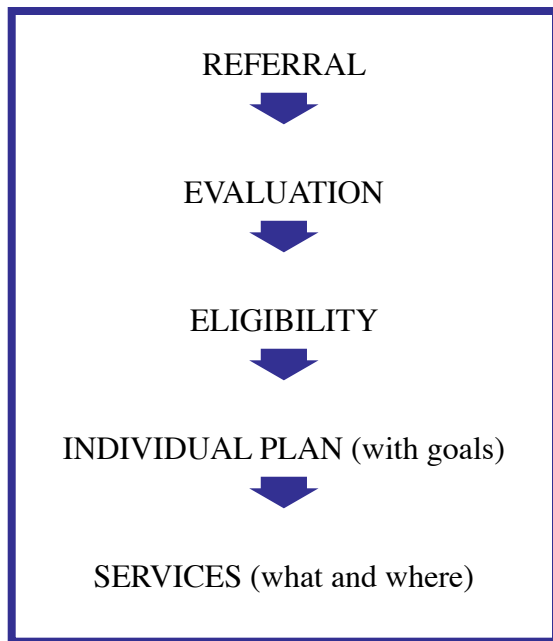
Physical Therapy: A Related Service

- Physical therapy is one of the related services under Part B of IDEA.
- Physical therapy is provided to support the student’s individualized education program (IEP).
- Physical therapists work collaboratively with a student’s IEP team and participate in screening, evaluation, program planning, and intervention.
- As a member of the IEP team, physical therapists design and implement physical therapy interventions—including teaching and training of family and education personnel and measurement and documentation of progress—to help the student achieve his/her IEP goal.
- Physical therapists assist students in accessing school environments and benefiting from their educational program.
- Physical therapists may be hired through the school district, an intermediate unit, or a contract with an outside agency or private practice.

How Can Your Child Receive Pediatric Physical Therapy?

- The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a process of planning and decision-making that becomes a written document for each student.
- Parents are an integral part of the IEP process and must be notified of their rights, including the right to due process.
- IDEA defines the components of the IEP process, including referral, evaluation, reevaluation, eligibility determination for special education, creation of measurable goals, and identification of services needed to meet a student's goals (see figure below).

Figure 1. The IEP Process



The IEP Team

- The IEP team (Figure 2) is multidisciplinary and includes the parent (or family), student, and (when indicated) the physical therapist.
- The team identifies the student's needs and sets measurable goals.
- The team identifies the resources, including physical therapy, needed to meet a goal.
- The team determines the frequency and duration, location, and specific criteria of all services, including the physical therapy service.

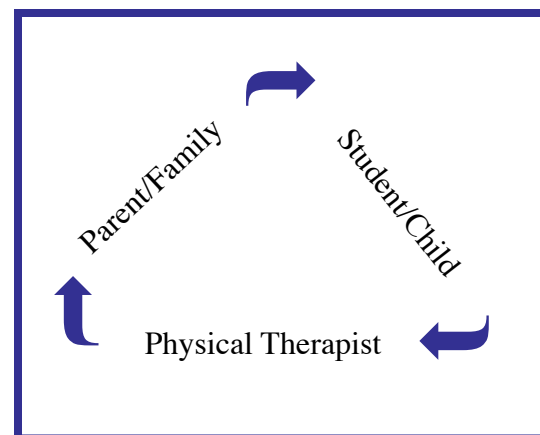
Funding for Physical Therapy

- Under IDEA, special education and related services must be provided at no cost (direct or indirect) to the parent (or family).
- IDEA 2004 lists Medicaid as a funding source to be accessed prior to funding by state or local educational resources for allowable medical services delivered at school. Reimbursement procedures and policies are set individually by each state and can differ significantly.
- Local education agencies (school districts) may access other funding sources.
- Third-party funding that requires copayments, decreases the lifetime maximum amount, or results in the loss of other services cannot be accessed without voluntary, informed parental (or familial) permission.

Licensure and Practice

- Each state has laws governing the licensure and practice of physical therapy.
- State education agencies also may require additional certification for employees working in schools.
- In states that do not have direct access laws, physical therapists will be required to obtain a prescription from the child's physician prior to the evaluation and/or intervention.

Figure 2. The IEP Team



IDEA Resources

PTs working in schools must be aware of many legislative and regulatory provisions related to IDEA. APTA's Section on Pediatrics recommends the following resources for further information:

- David KS, McEwen IR. The individuals with disabilities education act: roles of physical therapists in educational environments. In: Damiano D, ed. *Topics in Physical Therapy: Pediatrics*. Alexandria, VA: American Physical Therapy Association; 2001:3-1-3-16.
- Effgen SK. The educational environment. In: Campbell SK, ed. *Physical Therapy for Children*. 3rd ed. Philadelphia, PA: WB Saunders Co; 2006:955-982.
- Effgen SK, McEwen I. Review of selected physical therapy interventions for school-age children with disabilities. (COPSSE Document Number OP-4). Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education; 2007. <http://www.coe.ufl.edu/copsse>.
- McEwen IR. *Providing Physical Therapy Services Under Parts B & C of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. Alexandria, VA: Section on Pediatrics, American Physical Therapy Association; 2008.
- Rapport MJ. Laws that shape therapy services in educational environments. *Phys Occup Ther Pediatr*. 1995;(2):5-32.
- Office of Special Education Programs: www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/index.html?src=mr
- APTA Open Door: www.apta.org/opendoor
- APTA Hooked on Evidence: www.hookedonevidence.org
- US Department of Education: Building the Legacy—IDEA 2004: idea.ed.gov
- National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY): www.nichcy.org
- IDEA Partnership: www.ideapartnership.org
- The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center: www.nectac.org
- National Early Childhood Transition Center: www.ihdi.uky.edu/nectc
- National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE): www.nasdse.org

For More Information:

If you have additional questions, would like to order additional copies of this fact sheet, or would like to join the Section on Pediatrics, please contact the Executive Office of the Section on Pediatrics of the American Physical Therapy Association at: APTA Section on Pediatrics, 1111 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314, peditrics@apta.org, www.pediatricapta.org.

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