

Educational Environments for Children Ages 3 through 5

March 2007

What were the changes made by OSEP?

In order to further align IDEA with NCLB, changes have been made on how states will be reporting educational environments. Revisions have been made to more accurately reflect the extent of children's participation in regular education.

Therefore, data collection has shifted from an emphasis on *where the child receives their special education services* to an emphasis on the *percentage of time the child spends with typically-developing age peers*.

What does this mean for IEP teams?

The IEP team must still document the discussion on LRE and where service delivery is being *considered* and where services *will be* delivered. In addition, teams must now have a discussion with families about other early childhood settings in which their child spends time.

These are 2 different conversations:

1. How much time during the day does the child spend in educational environments with typically developing peers?
2. Where are services going to be delivered?

How does a team determine the percentage of time a child spends with typically-developing peers

1. First, the IEP team considers whether the child is spending any part of his/her day in a regular early childhood program. Regular early childhood program is defined as a program that includes **at least 50% nondisabled children**. Regular early childhood programs include, but are not limited to:

- District preschool programs **with at least 50% nondisabled peers**
- Private preschools
- Group child care **

** Group child care is defined as a non-residential setting where the other children in care are not related to one another. Group child care is not the same as in-home babysitters, nannies, caregivers, au pairs, or the home of a neighborhood babysitter or a relative providing childcare.

**** Attendance at an early childhood program need not be funded by IDEA, Part B funds. ****

2. If the child does not attend a regular early childhood program, the next factor to consider is whether the child attends a special education program. A special education setting is defined as a program that includes less than 50% nondisabled children. A special education setting includes, but is not limited to:

- Special education classrooms in
 - Regular school buildings
 - Trailers or portables
 - Child care facilities

- Hospital facilities
- Other community-based settings
- Separate schools; and
- Residential facilities

3. Next, the team calculates the percentage of time the child spends with typically-developing peers. The **numerator** for the calculation is *the total number of hours the child spends in any/all **regular** early childhood program(s)*. The **denominator** for the calculation is *the total number of hours the child spends in any/all regular early childhood programs **PLUS** any time the child spends receiving special education outside of a regular early childhood program*. The result is multiplied by 100.

For example:

Scenario 1

The child attends a district regular early childhood program for 6 hours a week (2 days a week at 3 hours each day), and receives all his special education services within the classroom. This child is not enrolled in any other child care program.

Calculation

$$\frac{\text{Hrs in Reg EC}}{\text{Hrs in Reg EC plus hrs receiving spec ed}} = \frac{6}{6} = 1.0 = 100\%$$

Setting: The child spends at least 80% of the time in the regular early childhood program.

Scenario 2

The child attends a district regular early childhood program for 6 hours a week (2 days a week at 3 hours each day), is pulled out of the district classroom for 2 hours each week to receive special education services. This child is not enrolled in any other child care program.

Calculation

(The 2 hours of pull out services is subtracted from the 6 hours in the early childhood program making the total number of hours in the regular early childhood program 4 hours.)

$$\frac{\text{Hrs in Reg EC}}{\text{Hrs in Reg EC plus hrs receiving spec ed}} = \frac{4}{6} = 0.66 = 66\%$$

Setting: The child spends 40% -79% of the time in the regular early childhood program.

Scenario 3

The child attends a district regular early childhood program for 6 hours a week (2 days a week at 3 hours each day), and attends a child care program for 24 hours a week (4 days a week at 6 hours). He is pulled out of the regular early childhood classroom for 3 hours each week to receive special education services.

Calculation

(The 3 hours of pull out services is subtracted from the 30 hours total of a regular early childhood program, making the total number of hours in a regular early childhood program 27 hours.)

$$\frac{\text{Hrs in Reg EC}}{\text{Hrs in Reg EC plus hrs receiving spec ed}} = \frac{27}{30} = 0.9 = 90\%$$

Setting: The child spends at least 80% of the time in the regular early childhood program.

Scenario 4

The child attends a child care program for 30 hours a week (5 days a week at 5 hours), and is brought to the school to receive special education services by a service provider for 2 hours each week.

Calculation

$$\frac{\text{Hrs in Reg EC}}{\text{Hrs in Reg EC plus hrs receiving spec ed}} = \frac{30}{32} = .93 = 93\%$$

Result

The child spends at least 80% of the time in the regular early childhood program.

What does OSEP consider to be a standard school day for a preschool-aged child?

OSEP has determined that, for the purposes of this data collection, a standard school day for children ages 3 through 5 will be capped at a maximum of 8 hours per day Monday through Friday. If the child is in an early childhood program for longer than 8 hours per day, the amount of hours should be capped and the percentage should be calculated as if the child was only in a program for 8 hours per day.

Definitions of other settings

Separate School

A public or private day school designed specifically for children with disabilities.

Residential Facility

A publicly or privately operated residential school or a residential medical facility (seen as an inpatient).

Home

Principle residence of the child's family or caregiver(s).

Service Provider Location

A service provider who provides services in:

- Private clinicians' office
- Clinicians' office located in a school building or child care setting
- Hospital facility on an outpatient basis