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## **SPECIAL EDUCATION:** How Do I Get Related Services for My Child?

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Your school district must provide related services to your child if they are necessary for your child to benefit from special education. Related services include, but are not limited to:

- transportation
- attendants for personal health care needs
- interpreters for children with hearing impairments
- occupational therapy
- physical therapy
- speech therapy
- readers for children with visual impairments
- nursing services
- psychology services
- aides
- assistive technologies

If you are having difficulty getting a related service that your child needs to benefit from special education, follow the steps below.

### **Request the Service**

**Contact your special education coordinator.** Talk with your school's special education coordinator. Ask the coordinator to help you through the process of determining whether a related service is necessary for your child. The process would include determining if the service is necessary through an assessment or evaluation, discussing your child's need for the service at an IEP meeting, and writing the service on the IEP.

**Put your request in writing.** If your special education coordinator does not respond to your request, send a follow-up letter requesting that the school make a determination about related services for your child. The following is a sample letter:



*Date (include month, day and year)*

*Name of Your Child's Special Education Coordinator*

*Name of School District*

*Street Address*

*City, State, ZIP Code*

*Dear (name of Special Education Coordinator),*

*I am writing to request (specify related service you want) for (child's name). These services are necessary for (child) because he/she needs them in order to benefit from his/her education. (Explain why the services are necessary).*

*I am requesting an IEP meeting to discuss the need for (specify related service) for (child's name). I am requesting that (names of related service person) attend this meeting because his/her/their input will be necessary for the team to make a decision about (related service) for (child's name).*

*I can arrange to meet with you and the other members of the IEP team on (list days you are available) between (give a range of time, such as between 2 and 4 p.m.) Please let me know what time would be best for you.*

*I look forward to hearing from you within five school days of the date you receive this letter. My daytime telephone number is (give your phone number). Thank you for your help.*

Sincerely,

Your Name

Street Address

City, State, ZIP Code

Daytime telephone number

cc: specialists or other staff

## **Provide Support for Your Request**

Ask that the school assess whether a specific related service is necessary. Your school district is required to determine your child's need for special education services. If your school has not already assessed your child for the related service you want, ask for an assessment of your child.

Determine if a more detailed assessment is necessary. You may have information from your child's physician or other sources that your child's assessment needs to include information not usually assessed by the school. For example, a child with autism may have sensory issues related to noise in the classroom. A sensory assessment can be provided by an occupational therapist with special expertise. However, a sensory assessment is not a routine part of an occupational therapy evaluation. In this case, a parent can make a request for a sensory integration assessment to determine whether occupational therapy services are required to address a sensory issue.

Provide information to the school from independent evaluators. Your school should consider any information you can provide which supports your request for a related

service. Examples of this type of information can include an evaluation from a private speech therapist that recommends school speech therapy, or a prescription from a physician that orders physical therapy services in school.

You should discuss with your independent evaluator that school-related services have to be provided only if they are necessary for your child to benefit from his education. The evaluator should consider this when making recommendations for related services in the school setting. It might be necessary for an independent evaluator to observe your child in school to make a recommendation for services. You should contact your special education coordinator if you want to schedule an observation.

Ask your private therapist/evaluator to communicate with your school. Ask your child's private therapist or evaluator to contact your school to discuss any recommendations. It can be more persuasive for the person making the recommendation to talk with your school than to simply mail the evaluation recommendations to your school.

### **Ask for an IEP Meeting**

The decision about the provision of related services should be made by your child's IEP team during an IEP meeting. You should ask the school personnel responsible for the provision of the specific related service you are requesting to participate in the meeting.

Ask your private therapist/evaluator to participate in the IEP meeting. It is helpful to the IEP team if your child's therapist/evaluator can participate in your child's IEP meeting. This participation allows a full exchange of information and time for questions and answers. Sometimes therapists/evaluators cannot travel to a meeting due to scheduling issues. If your therapist/evaluator cannot participate at the meeting ask them to participate in the meeting by speaker or conference telephone. This participation should be scheduled well in advance, and arrangements for a conference telephone should be made. Your special education coordinator can help you with this.

Write agreed-upon services on the IEP. If the team reaches agreement about the need for a related service, the services should be written on the IEP. The IEP should clearly specify the type of service provided, how much will be provided (hours per week/month), and intensity of the service (service provided one-on-one, in group settings, or consultation). For example, if Kristin's IEP team determines that she needs speech therapy services her IEP might read: "60 minutes of individual speech therapy per week, and 20 minutes per month consultation." This means that Kristin will meet individually with her speech therapist for a minimum of one hour per week, and the speech therapist will have 20 minutes per month to provide consultation services to staff working with Kristin.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED RELATED SERVICES QUESTIONS**

### **How do I get an aide for my child?**

Review the information in this article. In addition to seeking support from experts/evaluators outside of your school, you should discuss your request for an aide with the classroom teacher. Because the classroom teacher knows how your child

functions daily in school, the teacher may support your request for an aide if it is really necessary for your child. If the teacher supports your request, ask the teacher to explain the need for an aide to the IEP team.

For more information on getting an aide for your child refer to the Related Services section of the Wrightslaw Web site, [www.wrightslaw.com/info/relsvc.index.htm](http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/relsvc.index.htm).

### **How do I get transportation for my child?**

Review the information in this article. Transportation should be provided to your child as a related service if it is necessary because of your child's disability. Examples of children who would need transportation include children with physical disabilities that prevent them from walking, or children with mental disabilities that prevent them from getting to school safely without transportation. Your child's physician, psychologist or physical therapist can provide information to your school about your child's need for transportation. If your child needs transportation, it must be written on your child's IEP.

Transportation can be provided in different ways. Your child can ride a regular school bus or a specialized school bus with support services, such as a bus aide. Your child may be transported by a school van, or by a private transportation company. Your school may ask you to transport your child if transportation is difficult for the school. You may agree to transport your child, but you do not have to provide transportation. If you do transport your child, the school district must reimburse you for mileage expenses. Any agreement for parental transportation must be written on the IEP.

### **How do I get school health services for my child?**

Follow the steps outlined in this handout. Ask your child's physician to determine the health services your child needs for school. Most commonly, school health services are provided by a nurse. If you are having difficulty getting necessary nursing services in school, ask your child's doctor to contact your school. If they are necessary, nursing services must be provided to your child at no cost to you. If your child needs nursing services, a nursing plan of care should be developed and should be referenced in your child's IEP. The nursing plan should clearly identify what nursing services are provided to your child, who will provide them, and who is paying for the service.

Unless you agree otherwise, your school is obligated to provide necessary school health services without cost to you. Your school can ask you to pay for all or part of the school health service your child needs. You can agree to use Medicaid, private insurance, or other available sources of funding but only if using this funding will not reduce your benefits or create a cost to you. It is your decision whether or not to use these resources.

### **What if I cannot get this issue resolved?**

If these suggestions do not work to resolve your concerns, you can do a number of additional things that may work. Your options include:

- Seek an independent educational evaluation.
- Seek the assistance of an advocate to help you resolve the issue. Refer to the

Special Education Resources for contact information: [disabilityrightsohio.org/faq-special-education-other-resources](https://disabilityrightsohio.org/faq-special-education-other-resources)

- Contact the Ohio Department of Education for assistance or to file a complaint. Refer to the Special Education Resources for contact information: [disabilityrightsohio.org/faq-special-education-other-resources](https://disabilityrightsohio.org/faq-special-education-other-resources)
- Ask for an administrative review with your school's superintendent.
- Pursue formal mediation and/or a due process hearing.
- Seek the assistance of an attorney to help you resolve the issue. Refer to the Special Education Resources for contact information: [disabilityrightsohio.org/faq-special-education-other-resources](https://disabilityrightsohio.org/faq-special-education-other-resources)