

Related Services

One aspect of New Mexico state and federal laws which confuses many parents is the requirement that school districts provide necessary "related services" to children who have disabilities. What are related services and how do you know if your child is entitled to receive them?

What are related services?

Related services are an important part of your child's total educational program. Related services can include evaluative, supportive, developmental, and corrective services. Related services are not necessarily instructional services, but are services your child needs to meet the educational goals in his or her individualized educational plan. Surgically implanted medical devices are not related services.

Some Related Services:

- Special Transportation
- Speech and Language Services
- Audiological Services
- Psychological Services
- Physical Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Recreational Therapy
- Medical and Psychiatric Diagnostic Services
- Counseling Services
- Orientation and Mobility Services
- Social Work Services
- Adaptive Equipment
- Visual Training
- School Health Services
- Assistive Technology
- Interpreter Services
- Braille
- Other

How can I request related services for my child?

The related services which your child needs will be determined at the IEP meeting. If you believe your child needs related services, be sure to request them at the IEP meeting. If you believe these services or other services not on the list may become necessary for your child to benefit from his program at a later time, you may request another IEP meeting to consider adding the service to your child's program. Often an evaluation and recommendations from a professional in a given area will be the key to whether the IEP team will approve of putting the services in the child's IEP.

How can I be sure my child receives the appropriate Related Services?

Be sure that the IEP states how Related Services are to be provided to your child:

Direct or Indirect -The therapist may speak with the teacher rather than directly work with your child.

Certified Therapist -Some therapists may be certified in a particular approach you want used with your child.

Individual or Group -Your child may not get as much individualized attention in a group, but may be more motivated or have more natural interaction with peers in a *group*.

Amount of Time- Make sure that the time allotted with your child is enough to meet the needs addressed in the evaluations.

Medical versus Educational Related Services-A child may have a total need of 3 hours of physical therapy a week, but 2 of those hours primarily address "medical issues" and may be provided and paid for by medical insurance rather than the school.

Remember that the schools in New Mexico do not have to provide for maximum benefit to your child. However, schools **must** provide an appropriate program that provides an educational benefit to your child. In the IEP meeting, you must show that your child will not receive an appropriate program without the related service and that the related service will help your child benefit from his educational program.

Answering the following questions may help you demonstrate that your child needs a related service:

1. Will your child lose the benefit of their educational program if s/he does not receive the related service?
2. Will your child's ability to learn new material be harmed if s/he does not receive the related service?
3. Is there a possibility that your child could lose necessary skills if s/he does not receive the related service?
4. Has a professional informed you that a related service would help your child benefit from their educational program?
5. Have you seen your child receive more educational benefit from his or her program when your child receives a related service?
6. Do you have reports or evaluations from professionals that recommend a related service for your child?

Specific examples of your child's progress or lost educational benefit will help you be successful in your request for related services for your child.

When requesting the kind of related services your child needs at your child's IEP meeting, make sure the request is put in the Prior Written Notice portion of the IEP.

If the school is talking about removing the related service and you are trying to maintain the service, put the request in the prior Written Notice portion of the IEP. Discuss how to remove the service might be therapeutically harmful and devastating.

When a student is suspended from a related service, such as the bus or transportation, the suspension must be counted in the number of days a school may suspend a child from school (10 school days throughout the school year including days suspended from related services) before the suspensions are considered a change of placement or long term suspension.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Disability Rights New Mexico (DRNM) (Formerly Protection and Advocacy System)(505) 256-3100 or 1-800-432-4682

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