



Therapies, Transportation, and More: Related Services under IDEA in the School Setting

Presented by Family Matters Parent Training & Information Center (FMPTIC)

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)

Legal Disclaimer

Family Matters Parent Training and Information Center (FMPTIC) is funded in whole or in part through a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), under Part D of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The contents of this presentation were developed under that federal grant. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and readers should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer, Dr. Anna Macedonia.

The information shared in this presentation is intended for general educational purposes only and reflects federal law (IDEA and its implementing regulations at 34 CFR Part 300), guidance from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), and rules of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), including 23 Illinois Administrative Code Part 226, as of the date of this presentation. Laws, regulations, and agency guidance may change over time.

Nothing in this presentation constitutes legal advice. Every child's situation is unique. Families are encouraged to consult their child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, their local school district, the Illinois State Board of Education, or a qualified special education attorney for guidance specific to their child's circumstances.

Your Parent Training & Information Center

The Role of a PTI

- Authorized under IDEA Part D and funded by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)
- Family Matters is Illinois's only federally funded PTIC, serving families statewide
- Helps families understand their rights and take part as equal members of the IEP team
- Serves families of children with disabilities, birth to age 26, at no cost

1-866-436-7842

www.fmptic.org •



1:1 Educational Support Coaching

Individual help with IEPs, 504 plans, and school concerns



IEP Reviews & Meeting Preparation

Walking through the IEP, including related services, and planning your questions



Workshops & Webinars

Free family and professional trainings, plus our self-paced COMPASS course



Early Childhood to Adulthood

Support at each transition: early intervention, preschool, and life after high school



Resolving Disagreements

Collaborative problem-solving and Illinois dispute resolution options



Spanish-Language Support

Bilingual coaching, Recursos en español, and Spanish-language trainings

Today's Roadmap:

- **Defining Related Services:** What the law says, and why the definition matters.
- **Federal & Illinois Rules:** IDEA, 34 CFR Part 300, and ISBE's 23 Ill. Adm. Code 226.
- **Related Services in the IEP:** Where to find them and what must be included.
- **Real Examples:** Related services in action for real students.
- **Questions to Ask:** How to advocate confidently at IEP meetings.
- **Barriers & Solutions:** Common roadblocks families face, and how to move past them.

Learning Objectives

- Define “related services” under IDEA and explain how Illinois incorporates that definition into state rules.
- Identify the range of related services IDEA recognizes and understand that the list is not exhaustive.
- Locate where related services must be documented in your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- Explain why related services are essential, not optional extras, to a student's ability to access and benefit from special education.
- Recognize common barriers families face in securing related services and apply practical strategies and questions to overcome them.
- Identify the dispute resolution options available in Illinois when related services are denied, reduced, or not delivered as written.

What Are “Related Services”?

*“**Related services** means transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education.”*

— 34 CFR § 300.34(a) (IDEA implementing regulations)

- **In plain language:** Related services are the extra supports, like speech therapy, counseling, or transportation, that help a child actually access and benefit from their special education instruction.
- **Key phrase:** “Required to assist a child... to benefit from special education” the service must be necessary, not simply helpful in general.

Why Related Services Matter

- **They remove barriers to learning:** A child who cannot yet communicate, move, or self-regulate cannot fully access instruction and related services help close that gap.
- **They are part of FAPE, not an add-on:** **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)** includes related services when a child needs them; they are a legal entitlement, not a courtesy.
- **They make progress on IEP goals possible:** A student cannot make meaningful progress on academic or functional goals if an underlying need, like sensory regulation or mobility, goes unaddressed.
- **They support the whole child and family:** From parent counseling and training to social work services, related services can extend support to the family system, not just the student.

The Legal Foundation: Federal Law

- **IDEA (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.):** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act guarantees a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to eligible children with disabilities.
- **34 CFR Part 300:** The U.S. Department of Education's implementing regulations. Section 300.34 defines related services; Section 300.320 governs IEP content.
- **FAPE Requirement (34 CFR 300.101–103):** Establishes that special education and related services must be provided at no cost to families.
- **OSEP Oversight:** The Office of Special Education Programs, within the U.S. Department of Education, monitors state compliance and issues guidance to states, including Illinois.

How Illinois Implements IDEA

23 Illinois Administrative Code Part 226 — Special Education

This is the Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) special education rule set. It applies IDEA's requirements to Illinois school districts and adds Illinois-specific procedures. Section 226.75 directly adopts the federal definitions of “disability” and “related services” found at 34 CFR 300.8 and 300.34.

- **Same list, statewide:** Illinois does not shorten or alter IDEA's list of related services - the same federal categories and standard apply in every district.
- **IEP content rule:** 23 Ill. Adm. Code 226.220 requires each IEP to conform to 34 CFR 300.320, plus additional Illinois requirements (e.g., linguistic and cultural appropriateness).
- **Age of majority:** For purposes of 34 CFR 300.320(c), Illinois sets the age of majority at 18 - relevant for transition planning and transfer of educational rights.
- **ISBE oversight:** ISBE monitors districts, publishes guidance, and handles state complaints and mediation requests related to special education, including related services disputes.

The Related Services IDEA Names

- **Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology:** Identifying, diagnosing, and treating speech, language, and hearing needs; hearing evaluation and aural rehabilitation.
- **Interpreting Services:** For students who are deaf or hard of hearing, and other interpreting needed for FAPE.
- **Psychological Services:** Testing, interpreting evaluations, consultation, counseling, and support for positive behavior planning.
- **Physical & Occupational Therapy:** Addressing posture, strength, mobility, fine motor, sensory, and daily-living skills in the educational setting.
- **Recreation, Including Therapeutic Recreation:** Assessment of leisure function, recreation programs, and leisure education.
- **Early Identification & Assessment of Disabilities:** A formal plan for identifying a disability as early as possible in a child's life.
- **Counseling Services, Including Rehabilitation Counseling:** Provided by qualified personnel, including career development and preparation for employment.

The Related Services IDEA Names, cont.

- **Orientation & Mobility Services:** Helps students who are blind or have low vision move safely and independently across environments.
- **Medical Services:** For diagnostic or evaluation purposes only - to determine a child's medically related disability and need for special education.
- **School Health & School Nurse Services:** Health services designed to enable a child with a disability to receive FAPE, as described in the IEP.
- **Social Work Services in Schools:** Social/developmental history, individual and group counseling, and mobilizing school and community resources.
- **Parent Counseling & Training:** Helps parents understand their child's needs and acquire skills to support IEP or IFSP implementation at home.
- **Transportation:** Travel to and from school and between schools; travel in and around school buildings; specialized equipment if required.

Good to know: This list is not exhaustive. IDEA also allows other developmental, corrective, or supportive services when required for FAPE and the IEP team decides based on your child's individual, documented needs.

Three Terms Families Often Mix Up

Special Education

Specially designed instruction, provided at no cost, to meet a child's unique needs - the core teaching itself (e.g., specialized reading instruction).

Related Services

Supportive services required to help the child benefit from that instruction (e.g., speech therapy, OT, counseling, transportation).

Supplementary Aids & Services

Supports and services provided in general education settings to enable education alongside nondisabled peers (e.g., a classroom aide, assistive technology, modified materials).

All three work together in one IEP to support a single goal: access to and progress in education.

Where Related Services Live in the IEP

Each child's IEP must contain “a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services... to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child...”

For every related service, the IEP must specify:

- **The Service:** Exactly which related service will be provided (e.g., occupational therapy).
- **Frequency & Duration:** How often and for how long each session will occur (e.g., 30 minutes, twice weekly).
- **Location:** Where the service will be delivered (e.g., general education classroom, therapy room, teletherapy).
- **Start Date & Anticipated Duration:** When services begin and how long they are expected to continue.

How the Need for a Related Service Is Determined

- 1. Comprehensive Evaluation:** The child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability - not just the primary disability category.
- 2. Data Review by the IEP Team:** The team reviews evaluation results, present levels, teacher input, and family input together.
- 3. Individualized Determination:** The team asks: does this child need this specific service to benefit from special education?
- 4. Documented in the IEP:** If needed, the service, frequency, location, and duration are written into the IEP as a binding commitment.

Important: The decision must be based on your child's individual, documented needs - never on staffing availability, budget, or what is “typically” offered for a disability category.

The IEP Team Decides - Together

- **You - the Parent(s):** Equal, essential members of the team. Your knowledge of your child is irreplaceable.
- **Regular Education Teacher:** At least one, if the child is or may be participating in the general education environment. Ideally, the Regular Ed Teacher is familiar with your child and their needs.
- **Special Education Teacher/Provider:** At least one, familiar with specially designed instruction for the child.
- **LEA Representative:** Someone who can commit district resources and knows the general curriculum.

- **Evaluation Interpreter:** Someone who can explain the instructional implications of evaluation results.
- **Related Service Providers:** Invited when appropriate - e.g., the SLP, OT, PT, school psychologist, or social worker.
- **The Student:** Invited when appropriate, and required once transition planning begins.
- **Others With Special Expertise:** Invited at the discretion of the parent or the school district.

We encourage you to bring a support person who is familiar with your child to all educational meetings where decisions are being made. They can help you develop questions, take notes, and provide emotional support.

Related Services in Action - Basics

- **Communicating to Learn:** A student with a speech-language impairment understands grade-level content but struggles to express it. Speech-language therapy, embedded in classroom routines, helps him demonstrate what he knows on tests and in class discussion.
- **Physical Access to Instruction:** A student with a physical disability uses a wheelchair. Physical therapy, specialized transportation, and school health services together allow her to safely access the building, the classroom, and the curriculum.
- **Regulating to Participate:** A student with autism becomes overwhelmed by sensory input and struggles to stay in the classroom. Occupational therapy and social work services build regulation skills so he can remain engaged in instruction.
- **Addressing Anxiety to Attend:** A student with an emotional disability experiences severe anxiety that limits school attendance. School-based counseling services, as a related service, help her build coping skills so she can be present and learn.

Creative Uses of Related Services



Push-In & Co-Taught Services

A speech-language pathologist co-teaches a vocabulary lesson so skills are practiced where they are used.



Support for School Staff

An occupational therapist coaches the teacher on seating, sensory breaks, and handwriting tools.



Parent Counseling & Training

Families learn communication or behavior strategies to use at home, so progress carries over.



Recreation & Extracurriculars

Therapeutic recreation helps a student join an after-school club alongside peers.



Transportation Supports

A bus aide, adapted seating, or a shorter route helps a student arrive calm and ready to learn.



Transition & Community

Orientation and mobility or rehabilitation counseling on a job site or public transit route.



Keep in mind: IDEA's list of related services is not exhaustive. Any support the IEP team finds your child needs to benefit from special education can be written in, with clear frequency, location, and duration.

Key Considerations for Families

- Related services must be necessary for FAPE, not simply beneficial in a general sense. The legal test is whether your child needs the service to benefit from special education.
- Related services are provided at no cost to families when included in the IEP. Schools cannot bill you or your insurance for IEP-listed services without your consent.
- Vague language is a warning sign. “As needed” or “consultation as necessary” is not specific enough; push for clear frequency, duration, and location.
- A related service can be the only special education service a child receives. For example, a child may be found eligible based solely on a need for speech-language therapy.
- Progress on related-service goals should be tracked and reported just like academic goals. Ask how and when you will receive updates. Ask for the data related to the service.
- Outside (private/clinical) therapy and school-based related services can serve different purposes and are not automatically interchangeable. Ask how the two can be coordinated.

Questions to Bring to Your Next IEP Meeting

- What specific need does this related service address, and what data supports that?
- Who will provide this service, and what are their qualifications?
- How often, for how long, and where will the service take place?
- How will progress be measured, and how often will I be updated?

- How does this service connect to my child's annual IEP goals?
- What happens if a session is missed? Will it be made up?
- Can the related service provider attend this meeting or share a written update?
- If I disagree, what are my options for resolving this?

Common Barriers Families Face

- **Provider Shortages:** Statewide shortages of speech-language pathologists, OTs, PTs, and school psychologists can delay or reduce service delivery.
- **Vague IEP Language:** Terms like “as needed” make it difficult to know, or enforce, what a child is actually entitled to receive.
- **Fragmented Communication:** School-based providers and private/clinical therapists often do not communicate, leading to duplicated or conflicting approaches.
- **Confusion About the Process:** Families may not know they can request an evaluation specifically for related-service needs, or how eligibility works.
- **Missed Sessions Without Makeup:** Cancellations due to staff absence, assemblies, or testing can accumulate without a clear plan to make up lost services.

Strategies for Overcoming Barriers

- **Put Requests in Writing:** Emails or dated letters create a paper trail and start legal timelines (like the 60-day evaluation timeline).
- **Request Prior Written Notice:** If a service is denied, changed, or reduced, ask for Prior Written Notice explaining why.
- **Track Missed Sessions:** Keep a simple log of dates and reasons for missed sessions, and ask for a written makeup plan.
- **Invite the Provider's Input:** Ask that the related service provider attend the meeting or submit a written progress report in advance.
- **Know Your Dispute Options:** Understand mediation, state complaints, and due process so you can act quickly and confidently if needed.

When Disagreements Arise: Your Options

- 1. Talk with the IEP Team:** Most concerns are resolved through direct conversation with your child's teachers and providers first. You might consider a Facilitated IEP.
- 2. IEP Facilitation:** Neutral facilitation assistance
- 3. Mediation:** A free, voluntary, facilitated process to reach agreement with the district, available through ISBE.
- 4. State Complaint to ISBE:** File within 1 year of the alleged violation; ISBE generally has 60 days to investigate and issue a decision.
- 5. Due Process Complaint/Hearing:** A formal legal proceeding before an impartial hearing officer when other options do not resolve the dispute.

More on mediation and other options: CADRE, the National Center on Dispute Resolution — cadreworks.org

Progress Monitoring & Accountability

- **Measurable goals:** Related services should connect to measurable annual goals, just like academic goals, so progress can be tracked over time.
- **Regular progress reports:** Providers typically report progress on the same schedule as report cards or IEP progress reports; ask for the specific schedule for each service your child receives.
- **Annual IEP review:** At least once a year, the team reviews whether each related service should continue, increase, decrease, or end - **based on data**, not assumptions.
- **Triennial reevaluation:** At least every three years, a full reevaluation examines whether your child continues to qualify and what related-service needs remain (34 CFR 300.303).
- **You can ask for a review anytime:** Families are not limited to the annual meeting - you can request an IEP review meeting whenever you have data or concerns to discuss.

Related Services & the Transition to Adulthood

Related services can support transition planning, too.

Services such as rehabilitation counseling, orientation and mobility, and counseling services can be provided as part of transition services when they help a student prepare for post-school life, including further education, employment, independent living, or community participation.

- **Age of majority in Illinois:** Most educational decision-making rights transfer to the student at age 18, unless the family has pursued guardianship or the student has designated a parent to continue making decisions.
- **Coordinating with adult agencies:** IEP teams can invite representatives from agencies like the Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) to help plan the handoff from school-based to adult services.
- **Start the conversation early:** Federal law requires transition planning by the IEP in effect when the student turns 16; many Illinois teams begin these conversations even earlier.

Related services are not an extra.

They are the bridge that lets every child access, participate in, and benefit from their education.

As a parent, your knowledge, your questions, and your voice on the IEP team are exactly what make that bridge strong.

Trusted Resources for Families

- **Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE):** Special education rules, procedural safeguards, complaint forms, and parent guides.
www.isbe.net
- **U.S. Dept. of Education / OSEP — IDEA:** The full text of IDEA and 34 CFR Part 300, plus federal guidance letters. www.sites.ed.gov/idea
- **Center for Parent Information & Resources (CPIR):** Plain-language guides on IEPs, related services, and parent rights.
www.parentcenterhub.org
- **Understood.org:** Family-friendly explanations of IEPs, related services, and disability topics. www.understood.org
- **CADRE — Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution:** In-depth information on mediation and other dispute resolution options.
www.cadreworks.org
- **Family Matters PTIC:** Free, individualized support for Illinois families navigating special education. See contact info on the next slide.



Please take a short survey



Thank You

Questions? We're here to help.

Family Matters Parent Training & Information Center

Website: www.fmptic.org • Phone: 1-866-436-7842

Email: info@fmptic.org

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Content is educational in nature and does not constitute legal advice. See slide 2 for the complete disclaimer.