



Related Services

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1) Myth: Speech and Language are the only related services.

FACT: Under both IDEA and the Missouri State Plan for Special Education, related services are supportive services provided to a student in order for the student to gain benefit from their special education. 34 CFR 300.34 defines related services as follows: 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 and includes speech pathology and audiology services, interpreting services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation, early identification and assessment of disabilities in children, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling, orientation and mobility services, and medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes. Related services also include school health services, school nurse services, social work services in schools, and parent counseling and training.

A critical part to note in the above definition is that a related service is a service provided to a student so that they can gain benefit from their special education. If the related service does not assist the child in benefiting from their special education then the service would not be considered a related service under both the Missouri State Plan and IDEA.

2) Myth: Related services do not have to support special education services.

Fact: An IEP team must include a specific service as a related service in the student's IEP only if the service is necessary for the student to gain benefit from special education. IEP teams must determine an educational relevance when deciding what related service(s) may be necessary for the student to receive FAPE. Educational relevance exists when a proposed related service can be explicitly linked with an identified component of the student's IEP and the student will not be able to make progress toward meeting his or her goals and gain benefit from their special education as identified in their IEP without the related service. IEP teams need to keep in mind that an IEP should be reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances; therefore, careful consideration of what related services may be educationally relevant should occur.

3) Myth: You always have to conduct an evaluation in order to add a related service.

Fact: The student's IEP team, as part of the IEP development process, determines which related services are educationally relevant and necessary for the student to gain benefit from their special education. The team will make this determination based on a variety of sources of data. IDEA defines an evaluation as the procedures used to determine if a student has a disability and, if so, the nature and extent of their resulting need for special education and related services. A comprehensive evaluation serves two purposes: identifying students who need specialized instruction and related services because of an IDEA-eligible disability and helping IEP teams identify the student's special education and related services needs in order to write an appropriate IEP. (71 Fed. Reg. 46,548, 2006).

4) Myth: Students need to obtain a qualifying score or meet eligibility in a specific eligibility category in order to receive related services.

Fact: Students who are otherwise eligible for special education through an IEP do not need to meet eligibility or receive a qualifying score to be eligible to receive related services. The IEP team determines what related services the student needs based upon data and evidence that substantiates the fact that the related service is necessary for the student to benefit from their special education services. Related services must be educationally relevant. Scores obtained through the student's evaluation or on specific assessments may inform the IEP team's decision, but there are no set scores a student must receive in order to receive a related service. However, IEP teams must be aware of other factors that impact team decisions. For example, the professional standards that Physical Therapists have to meet for licensure require that they only provide therapy when prescribed by a physician. Therefore, IEP teams can only include physical therapy (PT) when they have physician's order for PT.

5) Myth: The type of related services can be limited to students based on their eligibility category.

Fact: No. The need for related services should be based on the student's individualized needs just like all other components of the student's IEP. The type of related service a student can receive cannot be limited by their identified eligibility category.

6) Myth: Related services must be provided when a parent presents a recommendation/prescription from a doctor for a specific therapy (OT, PT, Speech, etc).

Fact: The IEP team needs to consider the recommendation; however, the team is not required to provide the service unless there is an educational relevancy and because the child will not be able to benefit from their special education without the related service. In making this determination teams should discuss questions such as the ones listed below:

1. Will the absence of the related service impede the student's participation in the general education curriculum and their specific specially designed instruction?
2. Could the purpose for considering a related service be addressed effectively by the classroom teacher and/or paraprofessionals?

7) Myth: Students can have IEPs that only include related services.

Fact: No, a student who only needs a related service and not specialized instruction is not eligible under IDEA. To be eligible under IDEA a student must meet criteria for eligibility under a specific eligibility category AND must need special education and related services as a result of the student's disability. Related services can not stand alone, unless the related service is considered special education. For example, OT and PT can only be related services, however, Speech Therapy and/or Language Therapy could be considered special education instead of a related service, if the student has met eligibility for Speech Impairment or Language Impairment. In some instances, students whose disability affects their participation in school but who do not qualify under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), may be eligible to receive occupational or physical therapy under other federal laws such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.