



Tips for Physical and Occupational Therapists in the School Setting to Promote Physical Education and Physical Activity

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Introduction

This guide is designed to help individuals in the school setting understand that Physical Therapy (PT) and Occupational Therapy (OT) are not substitutes for Physical Education and to increase their knowledge and skills on connecting with the physical education teachers in their schools and district. The Tips for Physical and Occupational Therapists in the School Setting to Promote Physical Education and Physical Activity will describe the reasons behind this to provide guidance on providing appropriate PT/OT services in the school setting and collaboratively working with the physical education teacher.



We have included several pages within the appendix at the end of this document that will help you learn more about Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), Section 504 Plan, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and what the difference between them is and how they are related and used to enhance a child's learning.

Physical Therapy in Schools

IDEA defines physical therapy as “services provided by a qualified physical therapist” [§300.34(c)(9)]. These services address a child's posture, muscle strength, mobility, and organization of movement in educational environments. Physical therapy may be provided to prevent the onset or progression of impairment, functional limitation, disability, or changes in physical function or health resulting from injury, disease, or other causes.

The 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.

Occupational Therapy in Schools

The term occupational therapy (OT) is defined in IDEA at §300.34(c)(6) as follows:

- Means services provided by a qualified occupational therapist; and
- Includes:
 - Improving, developing, or restoring functions impaired or lost through illness, injury, or deprivation.
 - Improving ability to perform tasks for independent functioning if functions are impaired or lost; and
 - Preventing, through early intervention, initial or further impairment or loss of function.

OT services can enhance a child's ability to function in an educational program and may include such services as :

- self-help skills or adaptive living (e.g., eating, dressing)
- functional mobility (e.g., moving safely through school)
- positioning (e.g., sitting appropriately in class)
- sensory-motor processing (e.g., using the senses and muscles)
- fine motor (e.g., writing, cutting) and gross motor performance (e.g., walking, athletic skills)
- life skills training/vocational skills (job training, daily tasks); and
- psychosocial adaptation (coping strategies)

How PT/OT Services are Added to the School Environment

Services can be requested by any member of the IEP team for that student and must be requested during the initial meeting.

- **Begin with Evaluation**
 - IDEA requires an assessment in all areas related to a student's disability.
 - The evaluation must be comprehensive and identify the student's special education and related service's needs: even if they are not related to their disability category in which they have been classified.

Evaluations and assessments are different from district to district and state to state but a parent can request that someone who is trained from outside the district complete the assessment.

- **Determine what related services a student needs.**
 - The IEP Team is responsible for reviewing all the evaluation information and for identifying services related to the students' needs.
 - They must include those services in the IEP.
 - Goals need to be written for services just like for other special education services.
 - The IEP must also specify the following:
 - When will the service begin?
 - How often will it be provided and for what amount of time?
 - Where will it be provided?
- **Make sure related services personnel are on the IEP team or at the IEP meeting.**
 - IDEA does not require that the IEP team include related services personnel; however, if a particular service is going to be discussed, you can ask to have them added to the team or at least invite them to the meeting.
 - IDEA also states that a parent or guardian has the discretion to include an individual in the meeting if that person has a special expertise regarding the student.
- **Do Parents Have to Pay for Related Services Their Child Receives?**
 - School districts may not charge parents of eligible students with disabilities for the costs of

related services that have been included on the child's IEP.

- Related services are provided the same way that special and/or regular education are provided to a student with a disability.

Services are not a substitute for Physical Education

During the 1980s, school-based therapists began to question the pull-out, medically oriented approach. Therapists were learning that removal from the classroom may interfere with the student's learning and socialization process, may not be an effective means to help the student generalize skills, and may limit the therapist's thorough understanding of classroom expectations. New approaches to service delivery began to focus not only on the remediation of deficits, but also on assisting students to function more successfully in their classroom and around the school. The visibility of these new approaches led to increased opportunities for communication among therapists and other educators. Although services in the form of consultation were emerging, the concept of collaboration, especially during the assessment/IEP development process and when providing intervention, was not well understood, or implemented. Here are some tips for providing services properly and effectively that benefit the student.

- Physical Education is a direct service: a service provided directly to the student by a special education teacher (i.e., the physical education teacher)
- Therapy is a related service: a service provided to help the student benefit from special education services
- Physical and Occupational Therapy may not be substituted for physical education because they are not considered special education services.
- Physical Therapist do compliment Adapted Physical Education (APE) as they use their unique expertise in movement and function to promote motor development and participation in everyday routines and activities that are part of their education program.

Working Together Collaboratively

- Physical Education and Physical Therapy complement each other in the areas of muscular strength and endurance as well as mobility and flexibility. This provides a unique opportunity to work together and assist a student with a disability to gain the skills needed to complete the task as independently as possible.
- Physical Therapist may be a valuable resource for physical education teachers in helping provide ideas for inclusion in physical education classes such as activities which are appropriate in the school setting.
- Physical Education and Occupational Therapy complement each other in the areas of sensory needs, managing transitions, and completing life skills which provides a unique opportunity to work together to assist a student with a disability with managing their environment.
- The collaboration should begin during the assessment/evaluation process; using a multidisciplinary team approach that would allow each team member to view the skills that they would like to address and discuss during the observation and testing results.

- The goals for physical education and therapy services may be similar in a student's IEP so developing a student's individual IEP goals collaboratively would be best practice.
- Everyone can discuss how the goals complement each other; each specialist has goals within the IEP that are particular to his or her specialty.
- The goals established by the physical therapists and/or occupational therapists may not be used in lieu of physical education.

Understanding the Importance of Social Interaction through Play

Students actively learn through play as well as build relationships with their peers, siblings, and friends. Students learn through a variety of methods but playing with peers builds self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-acceptance. Action Based Learning allows students to learn and process things in a way that provides the students an opportunity to learn while interacting with peers through activities and hands-on opportunities. Every opportunity to move, play and learn is also an opportunity for a student to develop their social wellness and self-worth. If students are excluded from these opportunities, they can yield to thoughts of less than or unworthy. Physical Therapists and Occupational Therapists can provide a plan that would allow students to participate in play and build up a positive self-view of themselves. Here are some tips you can do:

- Educate parents on the importance of play and physical activity for their child.
- Be sure to include physical activity and physical education goals in a student's IEP/504 plan.
- Provide active play opportunities that can include parents and siblings.

Resources for Parents and/or PT/OTs in School Settings

- Ask the Expert: The Importance of Parent Involvement in Therapy -<https://www.unitedability.org/2017/09/22/ask-expert-importance-parent-involvement-therapy/>
- The Importance of Parental Involvement (And How Teletherapy Can Help) -<https://blog.slpnow.com/the-importance-of-parental-involvement-and-how-teletherapy-can-help/>
- Involving parents in child-centered play therapy - <https://ct.counseling.org/2014/08/involving-parents-in-child-centered-play-therapy/>
- [Parent-Child Interaction Therapy \(PCIT\)](#)
- [SEEKER'S CORNER: Role of School-based Physical Therapy](#)
- [Physical Therapy for Educational Benefit](#)
- [Specifying Related Services in the IEP](#)
- [The IEP Roadmap for Physical Education](#)
- [The Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program \(ADAP\)](#)

References

- <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/a/300.34>
- <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/iep-relatedservices/>
- <https://www.aota.org/-/media/Corporate/Files/AboutOT/Professionals/WhatIsOT/CY/Fact-Sheets/School%20Settings%20fact%20sheet.pdf>
- <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/iep-relatedservices/#ot>
- https://www.nlsec.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_441775/File/Services/OT%20PT/OTPTinEducationalSettings2014.pdf
- <https://www.shapeamerica.org/events/upload/Answering-Frequently-Asked-Questions-About-Adapted-Physical-Education.pdf>
- <https://www.apta.org/>
- <https://www.shapeamerica.org/events/upload/Answering-Frequently-Asked-Questions-About-Adapted-Physical-Education.pdf>
- <https://sites.ed.gov>
- <https://www2.ed.gov>



Appendix A

What is Inclusion?

Inclusion assumes that all children, regardless of ability or disability, have the right to:

- Be respected and appreciated as valuable members of the team
- Fully participate in all team activities
- Interact with peers of all ability levels with opportunities to develop friendships and learn and respect differences

Disability inclusion means understanding the relationship between the way people function and how they participate in society and making sure everybody has the same opportunities to participate in every aspect of life to the best of their abilities and desires.

Guidelines for Disability Inclusion

The [Guidelines for Disability Inclusion in Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Obesity Program Initiatives](#) were developed to assist in the updating of community health programs and policies to be inclusive of the needs of people with disabilities. Schools, as part of the community, can use these same guidelines to promote inclusion within the school setting for children and youth with disabilities. The guidelines are as follows:

- **Objectives Include People with Disabilities:** Program objectives should explicitly and unambiguously state that the target population includes people with a range of different disabilities (cognitive, intellectual, and other developmental disabilities, mobility, visual, hearing, and mental health disabilities).
- **Involvement of People with Disabilities in Development, Implementation and Evaluation:** Program development, implementation, and evaluation should include input from people with a range of different disabilities and their representatives (e.g., community members or other experts with disabilities, potential participants with disabilities and their family members, personal assistants, and caregivers).
- **Program Accessibility:** Programs should be accessible to people with disabilities and other users socially, behaviorally, programmatically, in communication, and in the physical environment.
- **Accommodations for Participants with Disabilities:** Programs should address individual needs of participants with disabilities through accommodations that are specifically tailored to those needs.
- **Outreach and Communication to People with Disabilities:** Programs should use a variety of accessible methods to outreach and promote the program(s) to people with disabilities.
- **Cost Considerations and Feasibility:** Programs should address potential resource implications of inclusion (including staffing, training, equipment, and other resources needed to promote inclusion).
- **Affordability:** Programs should be affordable to people with disabilities and their families, personal assistants, and caregivers.
- **Process Evaluation:** Programs should implement process evaluation (with transparent monitoring, accountability, and quality assurance) that includes feedback from people with disabilities and family members, personal assistants, caregivers or other representatives, and a

process for making changes based on feedback.

- Outcomes Evaluation: Programs should collect outcomes data, using multiple disability appropriate measures.

Appendix B

What are the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is a law that makes available for free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children.

What is an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?

The law requires that students classified as needing special education have an IEP. The school staff has the responsibility to provide special education services that are documented by an IEP team during a meeting to discuss how to address the students' needs. The IEP team includes the student and his or her parents, the student's teachers, a counselor, an administrator, and a special education coordinator or teacher. The IEP has two general purposes:

1. To set reasonable learning goals for a student, and
2. To state the services that the school district will provide for the student.

An IEP is like a map that allows parents to be advocates for their child's education. It also calls for parents to be involved when following this plan. However, trying to understand an IEP and its benefits can be an added responsibility for parents who have a child with a disability. Here are why parents must be involved with an IEP.

What is 504?

Section 504 requires that school districts provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to qualified students in their jurisdictions who have a physical or mental impairment that limits one or more major life activities

What is the difference between an IEP and a 504 Plan?

The processes to develop IEPs (Individualized Education Plan) for students who require specialized instructions are controlled under IDEA. The IDEA process is more involved than that of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and requires documentation of measurable growth. Some students with disabilities do not require specialized instruction. However, equal access to public education and services needs to be guaranteed for those students. A 504 Plan should be written and updated annually to ensure that the student is receiving the most effective accommodations for his/her specific circumstances to ensure their academic success and access to the learning environment that is the most appropriate for them. In some instances, a 504 Plan would address needs for a student with a temporary impairment or in remission so they can continue to participate in physical education while the episode is occurring. Impairments that are episodic in nature are in remission or are ongoing, while temporary impairments exist for a limited time span. For example, an impairment such as a broken leg may be a covered disability under the ADA Amendments Act. The intention of ADA Amendments Act is to make it easier to prove that an impairment is a disability.



NCHPAD



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