

Hartland Consolidated Schools

Snippets from the Office of Special Education

Medical Model vs. Educational Model



What are Related Services?

According to IDEA, related services means “transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education.” 300.34a. These services are available to students who need them in order to receive a Free & Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Related services may include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, social work, or even specialized transportation.

Sometimes physicians recommend therapy for a child however, school districts are not responsible for all services recommended by physicians. There is a difference between a medical model of service delivery and an educational model of service delivery.

Medical Model

The medical model of service delivery originates from the clinical/hospital setting. In that setting, services are recommended by a treating physician based on the child’s diagnosis or an observed delay. Students with mild, moderate, and severe deficits may qualify for a medical service. The need for this service takes all environmental settings into consideration.

A therapist then provides the service to the student in an amount recommended by the physician or allowed under an applicable health insurance plan. Progress is documented, but the service is not typically discontinued until the deficit is eliminated. Therapy provided in a clinical or hospital setting may not be coordinated with the school setting. The goal of this service under a medical model is to eliminate the deficit.

Key Points

- **Related services are not solely dictated by student’s diagnosis.**
- **Related services must address deficits that interfere with student’s ability to benefit from special education.**
- **School districts must focus on the provisions of FAPE.**



Educational Model

The educational model of service delivery in special education is limited to those services that are necessary to provide the student with FAPE. Specifically, services are given only when they are “required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education.” Although schools may consider the deficits of the student in other environments, the focus in an educational model is to enable the student to access his learning environment.

Alternative adaptive skills may be taught so that the student can access the educational program and/or participate with his classmates. Therapies often are provided on a “push-in” basis within the classroom to assist in the use and generalization of taught skills. Deficits that are not associated with the learning environment are not addressed under the educational model.

In addition, related service needs are not dictated by one person but are established through the IEP team. The need of the student is what drives the provision of services; neither a diagnosis nor a health insurance plan should factor in this service delivery decision-making. *71 Fed. Reg. 46,579 (2006).*

Summary

Although a student may have a diagnosis from a physician, the student may or may not be eligible for school-based services. No disability label, specifically, determines what particular services schools should provide; those determinations are individual to the student and are recommended through the collaborative efforts of the IEP team.

- IEP teams must discuss how the deficits affect the student in the learning environment.
- Related services identified in IEP documents will indicate the amount of time and where the service will be provided.
- Parents may pursue other therapies under a medical model. Hartland IEP teams are always happy to share progress information with private providers, given parents have signed a consent form to allowing the release of information.

Sources

Sources for this information include Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Michigan Administration Rules for Special Education (MARSE), LRP Publications, and Legally Speaking: A Staff Training Guide for Communication with Parents and Avoiding Conflicts in Special Education.



Hartland Consolidated Schools & Livingston Educational Service Agency
Department of Special Education ~ Sue Pearson, Ed.S. Director
9525 Highland Road, Howell, MI 48843 810-626-2102

