



**PROTECTION & ADVOCACY**  
FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, INC.

3710 LANDMARK DRIVE, SUITE 208, COLUMBIA, SC 29204  
803-782-0639; FAX 803-790-1946  
TOLL FREE IN SC: 1-866-275-7273 (VOICE) AND 1-866-232-4525 (TTY)  
E-mail: [info@pandasc.org](mailto:info@pandasc.org)  
Website: [www.pandasc.org](http://www.pandasc.org)

## **P&A FACT SHEET**

---

### **--EDUCATION--**

### **LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (LRE)**

*ALSO KNOWN AS: "FULL INCLUSION" OR "MAINSTREAMING"*

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires school districts to ensure:

"...to the **maximum extent appropriate**, children with disabilities,...are educated with children who are not disabled and that special classes, separate schooling, or other **removal of children with disabilities** from the regular educational environment occurs **only** when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services **cannot** be achieved satisfactorily." [20 U.S. Code 1412(5) (B)]

#### ***Children with disabilities should, in most cases:***

- ***Ride the same buses***
- ***Go to the same schools***
- ***Be assigned to the same classrooms***
- ***Participate in the same extracurricular activities as other children in their schools***

#### **Supplementary Aids and Services**

A common fear among parents and educators is that children with disabilities will not learn in regular education programs. *Supplementary aids and services* make it possible for a child to participate in regular school activities. Examples include assistive technology, such as a computer or communication device, an itinerant (visiting) special education teacher, or an individual classroom aid. The need for these devices/services should be discussed in the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

**The IEP team must consider and discuss the following in determining the LRE for each student:**

- How the **nature and severity of the student's disability** affects his/her educational performance (as documented in evaluation data and the student's present levels of performance as documented on the current IEP).

- Whether the **presence of this student** in a regular education classroom **substantially and consistently creates disruption** that adversely affects the educational performance of the other students.
- **Documentation of interventions** that were attempted with the student during the past **twelve (12) months** to accommodate him/her in the regular education environment (this information should be maintained on the "IEP Intervention Documentation" form).
- The **need for supplementary aids and services** that are reasonably calculated to give educational benefit in the regular education environment.
- The **academic, nonacademic, and extracurricular activities** in which the student will participate with **age-appropriate**, students without disabilities.
- Whether the program recommended is as close as possible to the student's home.
- Whether any harmful effect on the student (or on the quality of services) could result from the student being placed in the recommended program.

### **Selecting the Appropriate Placement**

When choosing the LRE option for the student, the IEP team should consider each of the program options available:

- Regular class with supportive services (i.e. itinerant special education teacher visiting the regular classroom/OR one or more periods in special education "resource" classes)
- Self-Contained class (with some participation with non-disabled peers)
- Special school (schools for only students with disabilities)
- Hospital/Medical homebound
- Homebased
- Community Residential Facility
- Other

The IEP Team should also consider community agencies (e.g. Head Start for preschool children).

#### **ADVOCACY TIP:**

The school must **prove** that a particular placement will not benefit the child and/or cannot be done. The IEP team must **give serious consideration to what supplemental aids and services would allow the student to be in a regular class** before deciding that the student needs to be in a separate class or school.

#### **\$\$\$ The school says it will cost too much money for my child to be in regular education!**

A school district may not decide to educate a child with a disability in a special education classroom because it would be more expensive to place the child in a regular class. Also, deciding where a child with a disability will receive an education cannot be made because of convenience for school staff. For instance, it might be simpler and cheaper if all children with orthopedic disabilities went to the same school because only one school would need to be totally accessible. However, that idea, although financially good for the schools, may not be appropriate for the student or acceptable to parents for other reasons.

On the following pages, there is a worksheet to help you determine the most appropriate placement for your child.

## **WORKSHEET:**

Use the following questions to consider the placement decision for your child's education. If you disagree with the school's recommendation, these questions will help you be prepared.

### **IS THIS THE SAME SCHOOL WHERE NEIGHBORHOOD CHILDREN WITHOUT A DISABILITY ATTEND?** If not:

Will attendance at a different school really benefit my child? Educationally? Socially?

Will attendance at another school be for the benefit of my child or the school administration?

Will attendance at a different school significantly increase time on the bus?

Will attendance at a different school significantly decrease my child's opportunity to interact with his or her peers, those with disabilities and those without disabilities?

### **IS THIS THE SAME CLASS MY CHILD WOULD BE IN IF SHE OR HE DID NOT HAVE A DISABILITY?** If not:

Has the same class been tried?

Has the same class been tried with supplementary aids and/or services?

If the child has a behavior problem that might cause undue disruption in the class for the other children, has a good behavior management plan been put in place?

Have the teachers been provided appropriate training about working with a child with disabilities in a regular education classroom?

### **DOES THE NATURE OR SEVERITY OF MY CHILD'S DISABILITY" MAKE IT BETTER FOR HIM/HER TO RECEIVE SOME OR PART OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IN A MORE RESTRICTIVE OR "PULL-OUT" SETTING – SUCH AS A RESOURCE ROOM?** If so:

Is the resource room in the school that the child would regularly attend?

Is the pull-out scheduled for a time which is the least disruptive to the child's regular educational program?

Do the resource room teacher and classroom teacher regularly compare notes about a child's progress and make sure work being done fits together?

Is the pull-out time limited to just those subjects where extra educational assistance is needed?

### **DOES THE "NATURE OR SEVERITY OF THE DISABILITY" MAKE IT BETTER FOR MY CHILD TO RECEIVE HIS OR HER ACADEMIC/EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IN A SEPARATE SETTING?**

If so:

What opportunities will my child have to mix socially with students who do have disabilities?

Is the segregated classroom in the school that my child would normally attend?

Will lunch time be at a segregated table or at a segregated time?

Will there be time to attend classes, such as music or physical education with other students?

What needs to be done so that my child has extracurricular activities, such as field trips or can be in after-school clubs?

**ADVOCACY TIP:**

**BE PREPARED!!!** The IEP team should decide the educational placement of your child with input from you. The **parent is as an equal member** of the IEP team. Remember, school is more than just academics. The social development of your child is equally important!!!

This publication provides legal information, but is not intended to be legal advice. The information was based on the law at the time it was written. As the law may change, please contact P&A for updates.

This publication is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Administration on Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration), and by the U.S. Department of Education (Rehabilitation Services Administration). It does not necessarily represent the official views of the funding authorities.

P&A does not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, gender, or national origin in the provision of its programs or services. Pete Cantrell is P&A's designated coordinator for Sec. 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. November 2005 ED-08