



Understanding Services for Your Child

It is often difficult to understand what services are available through the school or through the community and how one qualifies for these services. This month's tip will assist your navigation through these situations.

Early Intervention services, typically being developmental services, like **Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy** and **Speech Therapy** are provided through the community. To qualify under the government program one must have an evaluation through the local CDSA. Private insurance often will cover these services through the community depending upon the diagnosis and terms of your health plan. Many plans state that they do not cover for services under the diagnosis of Developmental Delay, as they understand these services are available through governmental programs. Early intervention programs are available until the age of three; all governmental services over the age of three, and then are obtained through the school system.

Services through the school system include, not only the developmental therapies listed above, but also educational services. The educational needs are provided through what is known as the **Exceptional Children's Program** or often referred to as the EC program. Children over three but under five, who have significant delays, may receive educational services at a special preschool like Long Preschool in Concord or McKnight Preschool in Kannapolis.

Children receive services through the age of seven with a diagnosis of Developmental Delay, after seven years of age they need a more clear diagnosis to receive services. Just because a child may have a diagnosis that might be served under this program, they must have significant impairments to qualify for services under the program. Therefore a child who has a learning disability but is making straight A's would not qualify for services. The conditions that might be served after the age of seven include Learning Disabilities, Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Autism, Orthopedic Impairment and Behavior and Emotional Impairment. Doctors cannot write letters and "order" the school to serve your child's needs. Because these are federally mandated programs, children must qualify for these services based on the criteria set forth by the government. There is a classification called Other Health Impaired (OHI) where by a child could receive services without a specific impairment listed above, but one would have to show that impairments to education exist. This is one situation where a letter from your doctor might be helpful.

There are other programs through the school where your child might receive services. Public Law 504 provides a way where children who need accommodations because of conditions like ADD, but do not qualify for EC services, may be able to receive modifications and accommodations in the classroom. These are referred to as **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**. This law is vaguer than the law that covers EC services and there are differences from school to school in interpretation of this law. Services included here would be extra time for tests, separate testing location, modifications of assignments, assignment note books and behavioral contracts. 504 Modifications might follow your



child through college and professional school.

Title One Reading is a federally funded reading program that offers remediation to students who are behind in reading. The funds are available to any school that has a high percent of children on the free lunch program. A strict criterion for these services does not exist, so teachers will refer students for these services if they have any concerns where reading skills are delayed.

The federal government requires that all schools in our country be capable to provide **Educational Testing** for children who are having educational difficulties. These testing should include IQ tests, Achievement Tests, Functional Behavior Assessment, Hearing test and a Vision test. School professionals often do not refer to this testing as testing for learning disabilities as the diagnosis requires interpretation of these testing results. The school professionals will only be able to determine if the student qualifies for EC services based upon these testing results.

The educational testing may be done privately in town. It usually costs \$700 to \$1000 and usually is not paid by insurance companies. Inquire with your insurance company to determine if this is a service that is payable by you insurance company.

Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and Personal Educational Plan (PEP) are terms used by the school to describe a plan in place for your child's educational needs. As a parent you should have input into the writing of this plan for educational needs of your child. These are usually completed yearly.

The federal government also requires that your child's education be conducted in the **Least Restrictive Environment** as possible. The schools must comply with this. It can be difficult at times to define, and will require you and the school professionals to work closely to determine if your child's environment is too restrictive or not restrictive enough.

Assistance can be obtained from outside the school environment. Many private educational centers are available in our communities. These centers would offer **Tutors** to assist with remediation in an effort to help a student catch up if they have fallen behind their peers. Some of these centers will provide **Educational Coaches** to work on study skills, organizational skills to improve educational habits. Coaching works best for older student who are motivated to improve their school work.

Offering a **Home Study Hall** daily for your student to complete their homework is a good way of assisting with good study habits. The student is required to be in the home study hall for an hour daily, the same hour each day. They would be rewarded for positive use of this time. Harder subjects should be complete first. Written work due tomorrow would be first, then reviewing class work from the day followed by projects and studying for tests and quizzes. There is a tip on how to set up a Home Study Hall if you are interested.

Often, children **Fall Through the Cracks** at school because our systems are large. It is impossible for the school to meet everyone's needs. Who is at risk? Children with abilities on the lower side of normal (IQs between 70-89), children with Learning Disabilities who do not meet federal guidelines for assistance under the EC program, children with ADD who also have a LD, and any child who does not have an adult advocate are at the greatest risk.

Lastly it is important that all of the adults are **On the Same Team**. Fighting with the school professional will not help your child in the long run. Often there are disagreements as to what is the best approach. Try to be rational and compromising. If you disagree with the school's plan, it might be best to give it a



try for a period of time and then reevaluate to see if their plan is working or if a change is needed because it is not working. Only through **Good Communication** and working together can you get the most from your child's school.

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