The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines related services

Some children with disabilities need related services to help them meet the goals in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). Related services means transportation and any other developmental, corrective, or other supportive services that a child needs to benefit from special education.

Related services may include:

- Transportation
- Early identification and assessment of disabilities in children
- Speech-language pathology and audiology services
- Interpreting services
- Psychological services
- Parent counseling and training
- Physical and occupational therapy
- Recreation, including therapeutic recreation
- Social work services
- School health services
- Nursing services
- Counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling
- Orientation and mobility services
- Medical services (for evaluation of a medical disability)

Related services are not limited to the ones outlined above. If a service is necessary for the child to benefit from his or her special education program, the service must be provided, even if it is not included in this list.

Who provides related services?

Qualified professionals may provide related services in the area of their expertise. Paraprofessionals and assistants who are trained and supervised in accordance with state law or policy may also assist in providing related services.

Who decides which related services are right for a child?

A child's IEP team decides which related services are necessary. Parents are important members of the IEP team. Qualified related service providers may also be members of the team. The team gathers information from evaluation and uses this information to determine a child's needs. The IEP team will discuss the child's needs and decide whether a related service is needed for the child to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

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How are related services written into the IEP?

The IEP will include written statements saying which related services will be provided. Some statements may be written as goals for a related service, such as occupational therapy. Other statements, such as those about transportation or audiology services, may be written in the services and modifications section of the IEP. The IEP will describe:

- the type of related service that will be provided, and
- how often, how long, and where that service will be delivered

Related services may be provided in group or individual settings, depending upon on a child's needs. They may be provided in all educational settings including the regular education classroom or in a separate setting.

Who pays for related services?

Related services must be provided at no cost to a child's family. The school may ask for parent written consent to bill other private agencies, such as a parent's private insurance, for health-related services or Medical Assistance.

The school district needs parental consent to release any personally identifiable information from the child's educational record. This includes information about the types of services the child receives in school. Schools may not require parents to enroll in a public benefits or insurance program in order to receive related services. The child must receive the related services in his or her IEP, whether or not parents give consent to use their private insurance or Medical Assistance benefits.

For more information about billing insurance companies to pay for related services included in your child's IEP or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), see PACER's resource, Third Party Billing.

What if the related services in a child's IEP are not being provided because there are staff shortages?

The school district must provide the related services in the child's IEP. The district may contract with providers outside the school district if there are personnel shortages in the school.