



NASET's Educating Children with Severe Disabilities Series

Least Restrictive Environment Placements

Introduction

When considering educational placements for children with severe disabilities the IEP Committee must review the least restrictive setting. The least restrictive setting is based on how far from a child's peers they will be placed. The more severe the problem the more restrictive the setting may be which places children farther from their general education peers. In order to accomplish this task, the Eligibility Committee, CSE, or IEP Committee has a variety of placements from which to choose. These placements range in levels of restriction, including class size, student teacher ratio, length of program, and degree of mainstreaming.

In the normal course of events it is hoped that children should only be placed in a more restrictive environment if it is to their educational advantage. However, they should be moved to a less restrictive setting as soon as they are capable of being educated in that environment.

THE PLACEMENTS BELOW FOLLOW A PATH FROM LEAST RESTRICTIVE TO MOST RESTRICTIVE:

- 1.) **Regular class placement** - This placement is the least restrictive placement for all non-disabled children. However, this placement alone without some type of special education supportive services is not suitable for a disabled child and is usually not considered suitable by the Eligibility Committee.
- 2.) **Regular class placement with consulting teacher assistance** - A consultant teacher model is used when supportive special education services are required but the Eligibility Committee feels that the child will be better served while remaining in the classroom rather than be pulled out for services. Since the child remains within the class, even though he /she is receiving services, this placement is considered the next LRE setting.
- 3.) **Regular class placement with some supportive services** - This placement may be used with mildly disabled students who require supportive services but can remain in the regular class for the majority of the day. The services that may be applied to this level include adaptive physical education, speech and language therapy, in school individual or group counseling, physical therapy, occupational therapy etc.
- 4.) **Regular class placement with itinerant specialist assistance** - Itinerant services (services sub-contracted by the district and provided by outside agencies) These services are usually provided for students when the disability is such that the district wishes to maintain the child in the district but there are not a sufficient number of students with that disability to warrant hiring

a teacher. An examples of this may be a hard of hearing child who can maintain a regular class placement as long as supportive itinerant services by a teacher specializing in hearing impairments are provided.

- 5.) **Regular class placement with resource room assistance** - This placement is usually provided for students who need supportive services but can successfully remain within the regular classroom for the majority of the day. This type of program is a "pull out" program and the services are usually provided in a separate room. The teacher ratio with this type of service is usually 5:1 and the amount of time spent within the resource room cannot exceed 50% of the child's day.
- 6.) **Part-time Mainstreaming** - This placement is for students who need a more restrictive setting for learning, behavioral or intellectual reasons. These students cannot be successful in a full time regular class or with a "pull out" supportive service but can be successfully mainstreamed for a part of the school day. The nature of the mainstream is determined by the special education teacher.
- 7.) **Full time special class in a regular school** - This placement is viewed as the LRE setting for students whose disability does not permit successful participation in any type of regular class setting, even for part of the day. These are students who usually require a very structured, closely monitored program on a daily basis but not so restrictive as to warrant an out-of-district placement. These students can handle the rules and structure of a regular school building, but not the freedom or style of a less restrictive setting within the school.
- 8.) **Special day school outside the school district** - This type of restrictive educational setting is a desirable placement for students whose disability is so severe that they may require a more totally therapeutic environment and closer monitoring by specially trained special education teachers or staff members. The child is transported by district expense to the placement and many state policies try to discourage travel time on the bus to more than one hour. These types of programs may have student teacher ratios of 6:1:1, 6:1:2, 9:1:1, 9:1:2, 12:1:1, or 15:1:1 depending upon the severity of the child's disability. The more severe the disability the lower the number of student teacher ratio. These programs can run 10 or 12 months, again depending upon the severity of the disability and the individual needs of the child.
- 9.) **Residential school** - Residential placements are considered the next most restrictive placement. Not only does the disabled student receive his education within this setting but usually resides there for the school term. The nature and length of home visits depend upon several factors that are usually determined by the residential school staff after evaluation and observation. For some students home visits may not take place at all , while others may go home every weekend. Some students are placed in residential placements by the court. In this case, the child's local school district is only responsible to provide the costs of the educational portion including related services if needed.
- 10.) **Homebound instruction** - This very restrictive setting is usually provided for students who are in the process of transition between programs and have yet to be placed. It should never be used as a long term placement because of the social restriction and limitations. This option is also used when a child is restricted to his/her house because of an illness, injury etc. and this option remains the only realistic educational service until the child recovers. Home bound instruction requires an adult at home when the teacher arrives or can be held at a community center, library or some other site deemed appropriate by the Eligibility Committee.
- 11.) **Hospital or institution** - The most restrictive setting used is a hospital or institutional setting. While this is the most restrictive setting, it may be the LRE setting for certain students i.e. attempted suicide by an adolescent, pervasive clinical depression, severely or profoundly retarded.

