

Related Services in Special Education – Questions & Answers

This document answers questions regarding related services provided through special education. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and federal regulations at 34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) [§300.8](#) define child with a disability as having an eligible disability and, by reason thereof, needing special education and *related services*. While not every student requiring special education services will also require related services to access a free appropriate public education (FAPE), a student found to *only* need related services cannot be a child with a disability under the IDEA. Therefore, this document describes related services solely from the context of receiving such services through IDEA and special education.

This document clarifies common questions related to the following topics:

[1. Eligibility and Access to Related Services](#)

[2. Determining the Need for Related Services](#)

[3. Provision, Frequency, and Delivery of Related Services](#)

[4. Related Services and Special Education Funding \(Intensity of Services Model\)](#)

1. Eligibility and Access to Related Services

1.1 What are “related services”?

Related services reflect a wide array of developmental, corrective, and other supportive services provided to assist a child with a disability receive a FAPE.

Specifically [34 CFR §300.34\(a\)](#) states that related services “means transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education, and includes speech-language pathology and audiology services, interpreting services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation, early identification and assessment of disabilities in children, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling, orientation and mobility services, and medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes. Related services also include school health services and school nurse services, social work services in schools, and parent counseling and training.” The regulation defines each of those terms.

The student’s admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee determines if the student will receive related services.

The following chart gives the TSDS Web-Enabled Data Standards for related services that are used in Texas and reported through PEIMS:

01	Social Work Services
02	Oral Transliteration Services
03	CUED Language Transliteration Services
04	Sign Language Transliteration Services
05	Sign Language Interpreting Services
06	Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) Services
07	C-Print Services
08	Type Well Services
09	Deaf-Blind Interpreting Services
10	Psychological Services
11	Physical Therapy Services

12	Recreation Including Therapeutic Recreation
13	Counseling Services
14	Orientation And Mobility
15	Medical Services
16	School Health and/or School Nurse Services
18	Audiological Services
21	Occupational Therapy
26	Special Education Transportation Services

1.2 Is speech-language therapy a related service or an instructional service?

It depends. [34 CFR 300.8\(a\)\(2\)\(ii\)](#) and [34 CFR 300.39\(a\)\(2\)\(i\)](#) allow for a state to specifically consider speech therapy as specially designed instruction (SDI), which would make it an instructional service.

Where this matters most is the statement at the top of this document where it explains that a child who needs *only* related services is not a child with a disability under IDEA and therefore not eligible for special education and related services.

Therefore, when speech-language therapy is the *only* instructional service a student would need based on their identified disability, IDEA and Texas state policy allow for speech-language therapy to be considered SDI so that the student could be determined eligible for and receive special education services. In this case, the student could also be eligible for related services, such as occupational therapy, but speech-language therapy would not be considered a related service.

If, however, the student has been determined by their ARD committee as requiring additional SDI to receive a FAPE, then speech-language therapy becomes a related service. *Updated May 26, 2026: “Becoming” a related service matters in this case to the extent that, when instructional services in addition to speech therapy are indicated in an IEP, speech therapy is considered a related service and counted for service group eligibility [see Section 4: Related Services and Special Education Funding].*

Determinations regarding how speech-language services are provided are made by the ARD committee based on the individual needs of the student, as documented in the individualized education program (IEP).

1.3 Who is eligible to receive related services as this term is used in IDEA?

Any student who has been determined to be eligible for special education and related services under IDEA is eligible for related services. However, the provision of related services is still based on what an ARD committee determines is necessary to provide the student a FAPE. An ARD committee would determine any related services based on the individual student’s data and needs.

2. Determining the Need for Related Services

2.1 How is a student’s need for related services determined?

The ARD committee is responsible for determining whether a student requires special education and related services. Decisions are based on evaluation data and the individual educational needs of the student. A professional authorized to provide the related service (e.g., licensed occupational therapist if occupational therapy is being considered, certified orientation and mobility specialist, if orientation and mobility services are being considered) would be a critical member of the multidisciplinary evaluation team and ARD committee when related services are being considered and determined.

2.2 Are related services required to be based on disability category?

No. The ARD committee must make decisions regarding services based on the individual needs of the student, not solely on the student’s disability category. However, there are certain evaluations that could result in the provision of related services that are required for students identified with specific disabilities, such as students with visual impairments, where state law requires an evaluation by a certified orientation and mobility specialist [TEC 30.0021].

2.3 Are parents involved in the determination of related services?

Yes. Parents are part of the ARD committee, and parents will receive regular progress updates related to IEP goals supported by related service providers, as outlined in the IEP.

2.4 Who is permitted to deliver related services?

Related services must be delivered by personnel who meet applicable state certification, licensure, or qualification requirements as outlined in 19 TAC §89.1131.

2.5 Do districts have flexibility in how related services are delivered?

Districts may deliver related services through appropriately qualified personnel, including district staff or contracted providers, as long as personnel meet required qualification standards. (19 TAC §89.1131)

2.6 How does the ARD committee determine whether related services are no longer needed?

34 CFR 300.303(a)(1) requires reevaluation if the district determines that the educational *or related services needs*. . . of the child warrant a reevaluation.” (emphasis added). A review of existing evaluation data (REED), including a review of the student’s progress toward meeting annual goals, may be sufficient to determine whether a related service is still needed. However, additional data may be needed.

Related services may not be discontinued unilaterally. Decisions must be based on data, driven by the ARD committee action, and documented in the IEP to ensure continued provision of FAPE. (34 CFR §§300.321, 300.324; 19 TAC §§89.1050, 89.1055)

3. Provision, Frequency, and Delivery of Related Services

3.1 Can related services be provided virtually or through teletherapy?

Yes. Neither IDEA nor Texas special education rules prohibit the delivery of related services through virtual means, including teletherapy, as long as the services are provided in accordance with the IEP and enable the student to receive FAPE.

However, to receive state funding for the provision of services provided virtually or through teletherapy, an ARD committee would have to determine that the virtual service is required for FAPE and submit a waiver to the state for the provision of remote conferencing. See the [Student Attendance Accounting Handbook](#).

3.2 Can related services be delivered in group settings?

Yes. Related services are not required to be provided on a one-to-one basis unless the ARD committee determines that individual delivery is necessary.

3.3 Can paraprofessionals provide related services?

Yes, paraprofessionals may support instruction or related services under the supervision of qualified personnel, but they are not authorized to independently deliver related services. (19 TAC §89.1131(a); 34 CFR §300.156)

4. Related Services and Special Education Funding ([Intensity of Services Model](#)) *

*To be eligible as a child with a disability under the IDEA, a student must be determined to need some form of SDI because of the disability (34 CFR §300.8(a)(2)). Under previous funding structures, instructional setting (e.g., general education or special education classroom, home, hospital, off home campus) has historically played a significant role in how special education services were understood and funded. This intensity of services funding model is intentionally designed to shift that focus from where services are delivered to the intensity of the SDI and related supports required for a student to access and make progress in their enrolled grade level curriculum.

4.1 Does receiving related services alone meet the definition of special education for funding purposes?

No. An IEP consisting solely of related services or indirect services does not meet the requirement for SDI and is not funded through the special education allotment. Speech language therapy may be provided as the sole instructional service a student receives or a related service when provided in addition to SDI in the special education funding intensity of services model.

4.2 How do related services factor into the intensity of services model?

If the provision of related services occurs outside of the general education classroom/setting, those minutes are considered as part of the average number of minutes per day in a special education setting.

Since related services themselves are not considered SDI, the need for which is a required element in special education eligibility, the general receipt of these services is not directly calculated into the intensity of services tiers. However, when reviewing each factor within each domain, the needs of the student may extend to the related services he or she receives. For example, if a student requires counseling by a school psychologist and the school psychologist has determined that the counseling must occur in a 1:1 provider-to-student ratio for that student to receive a FAPE, then that ratio would be considered as part of Factor C: Required Grouping/Provider-to-Student Ratio, and the specialized training that the school psychologist has would be considered as part of Factor B: Required Provider Credentials – both of these within the Behavior Supports Domain. However, both the ratio and the provider credentials would have to be determined by the ARD committee and documented in the student's IEP as a required component of the student receiving a FAPE in order to be considered.

Related services are directly considered in the Service Groups category. Within the determination of eligibility for service groups 1, 2, or 3, the extent of related services provided to a student during each six-week period is considered.

Service groups 4 and 5 relate to the extent to which a student requires a 1:1 provider-to-student ratio during their instructional day. To the extent that a related services provider makes up part of the determination of whether a student experiences a 1:1 provider-to-student ratio for at least 50 percent of their instructional day, the related services provider-to-student ratio would count in the overall determination of the percentage of the day that a student requires that 1:1 ratio.

4.3 What happens if speech therapy is the only SDI that the student requires?

If speech therapy is the only SDI provided, the student is assigned Tier 1, regardless of factor ratings within the Communication Supports domain.

4.4 If a student receives speech therapy as their only SDI but receives one or more related services, how do we calculate the minutes of related services received per six-week period for the service group determinations?

When speech therapy is considered the SDI for the student and not a related service (because it is the ONLY SDI that the student requires for FAPE), then it is NOT considered in the calculation of related services minutes for service group eligibility. If a student receives one or more related services in this circumstance, those minutes would be considered for the service group determinations.

4.5 If a student requires SDI in other areas in addition to speech therapy, do we calculate the speech therapy minutes for the service group determination?

Yes, if speech therapy is a service required by the student in addition to SDI in other areas, then the speech therapy that a student receives is counted toward the related services minutes for purposes of service group eligibility.

4.6 Do I always count speech therapy that occurs outside of the general education classroom/setting as part of the average number of minutes per day in a special education classroom/setting, regardless of whether it is the only instructional service (SDI) required by the student or whether it is a related service?

Yes. The average number of minutes in special education refers to the classroom or setting where the service occurs; it is not related to the service itself. So, if speech therapy – or any SDI or any related service – is provided outside of the general education classroom/setting, then those minutes count toward this data element.