

AUTISM – NEW CONSIDERATIONS

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RECENT LEGISLATION SOUGHT TO IMPOSE ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- SENATE BILL 314 – Required that a school district or charter school that was evaluating a student with autism spectrum disorder for special education or developing a special education program including an IEP **SHALL** consider a variety of factors (listed as Considerations #1 through #11 below) in conducting the evaluation or developing the program.

SENATE BILL 314

- Bill was passed by both the House and the Senate and was ready for signature into law by the governor. Governor Martinez vetoed the legislation indicating that there was concern that the definition of autism spectrum disorders did not meet the federal guidelines for that exceptionality.

Autism considerations

- These provisions are currently in practice in a number of states including Texas and will be reintroduced in the next legislative session. Helpful to start considering these 11 provisions and begin working them into programming and procedure.

Autism Prevalence

- CDC's Atlanta-based program found: the rate of autism spectrum disorder was 3.4 per 1,000 for children 3 to 10 years of age.
- Summarizing this and several other major studies on autism prevalence, CDC estimates that 2-6 per 1,000 (from 1 in 500 to 1 in 150) children have an ASD.
- The risk is 3-4 times higher in males than females.

Autism Prevalence

- Compared to the prevalence of other childhood conditions, this rate is lower than the rate of mental retardation (9.7 per 1,000 children),
- but higher than the rates for cerebral palsy (2.8 per 1,000 children), hearing loss (1.1 per 1,000 children), and vision impairment (0.9 per 1,000 children).
- The CDC notes that these studies do not provide a national estimate.

ELEVEN (11) CONSIDERATIONS

- **NUMBER 1**
- **(1)extended educational programming** (for example: extended day and/or extended school year services that consider the duration of programs/settings based on assessment of behavior, social skills, communication, academics, and self-help skills);

- Extended educational programming (extended day or extended school year services) should be based on an assessment of individual student need.
- An IEP committee should consider a student's functional communication system, which may require instruction and intervention beyond the normal school schedule. The same may be said for interpersonal and behavioral skills, based on an assessment of individual student need.

- NUMBER 2
- **(2)daily schedules reflecting minimal unstructured time and active engagement in learning activities** (for example: lunch, snack, and recess periods that provide flexibility within routines; adapt to individual skill levels; and assist with schedule changes, such as changes involving substitute teachers and pep rallies);

- Students with autism generally benefit from a regular routine.
- a daily schedule which lists activities in which the student is an active participant throughout the day as well as alternate schedules for exceptions to the regular routine, provides important information to the student and those who work with the student.

- NUMBER 3
- **(3)in-home and community-based training or viable alternatives that assist the student with acquisition of social/behavioral skills** (for example: strategies that facilitate maintenance and generalization of such skills from home to school, school to home, home to community, and school to community)

- A student with autism may have difficulty generalizing skills from one environment to another.
- In-home/community-based training is an option an IEP team *may* choose for a student with autism in order for the student to learn or reinforce social skills in a variety of settings.

NUMBER 4

- **(4) positive behavior support strategies based on relevant information, for example:**
 - (A) antecedent manipulation, replacement behaviors, reinforcement strategies, and data-based decisions; and
 - (B) a Behavior Intervention Plan developed from a Functional Behavioral Assessment that uses current data related to target behaviors and addresses behavioral programming across home, school, and community-based settings;

- The phrase “for example” is used to denote examples of potential strategies rather than a requirement to use a specific methodology.
- The phrase also indicates that what follows are some of the specific strategies/processes that have been shown to be effective with individuals having an Autism Spectrum Disorder, and that the examples are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive.

- **NUMBER 5**
- **(5)beginning at any age, futures planning** for integrated living, work, community, and educational environments that considers skills necessary to function in current and post-secondary environments

- “Futures planning” refers to transition services, which generally begin by age 14.

- **(6)parent/family training and support, provided by qualified personnel with experience in Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), that, for example:**
 - (A) provides a family with skills necessary for a child to succeed in the home/community setting;
 - (B) includes information regarding resources (for example: parent support groups, workshops, videos, conferences, and materials designed to increase parent knowledge of specific teaching/management techniques related to the child's curriculum); and

- (C) facilitates parental carryover of in-home training (for example: strategies for behavior management and developing structured home environments and/or communication training so that parents are active participants in promoting the continuity of interventions across all settings);

- A school should provide information regarding local resources available to parents/families of students with autism. Some resources to consider are parent support groups, workshops, videos, conferences and materials designed to increase parent knowledge of specific teaching and/or management techniques related to the child's IEP.

- Schools should offer parent training that fosters continuity across settings for a student with autism. Training should focus on generalization of IEP-related skills and include areas such as behavior management, interpersonal skills, communication training and/or structured environments across all settings.

- **(7) suitable staff-to-student ratio appropriate to identified activities and as needed to achieve social/behavioral progress based on the child's developmental and learning level (acquisition, fluency, maintenance, generalization) that encourages work towards individual independence as determined by, for example:**

- (A) adaptive behavior evaluation results;
- (B) behavioral accommodation needs across settings; and
- (C) transitions within the school day;

- Typically, a student in the acquisition phase of development may need more direct intensive instruction relative to later phases. As a student moves through the phases, there should be less adult supervision, more self-monitoring and therefore, a higher staff to student ratio.

NUMBER 8

- **(8)communication interventions, including language forms and functions that enhance effective communication across settings (for example: augmentative, incidental, and naturalistic teaching);**

- Teachers may wish to consider strategies such as augmentative, incidental, including language forms and functions that enhance effective communication across settings.
- Teachers should also consider a student's style of learning and the portability of a communication strategy

NUMBER 9

- **(9)social skills supports and strategies based on social skills assessment/curriculum and provided across settings** (for example: trained peer facilitators (e.g., circle of friends), video modeling, social stories, and role playing)

NUMBER 10

- **(10)professional educator/staff support** (for example: training provided to personnel who work with the student to **assure the correct implementation of techniques and strategies described in the IEP**); and

- Schools are responsible for training teachers and paraprofessionals to effectively implement programs for students with autism.
- Training may include a foundation of scientifically-based research Interventions/strategies

NUMBER 11

- **(11)teaching strategies based on peer reviewed, research-based practices for students with ASD** (for example: those associated with discrete-trial training, visual supports, applied behavior analysis, structured learning, augmentative communication, or social skills training)

- Teachers may wish to consider social skills supports such as trained peer facilitators, video modeling, social stories or role playing

- training, visual supports, applied behavior analysis, structured learning, augmentative communication or social skills training.
- While it is the responsibility of an IEP team to make decisions regarding appropriateness of strategies based on the unique needs of an individual student, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to providing services to students with autism.

- WHEN CONSIDERING EACH ITEM MAKE SURE YOU REFLECT IN THE PWN WHY YOU EITHER CHOSE TO FOLLOW THE RECOMMENDATION OR ELECTED NOT TO APPLY IT TO THIS STUDENT.
- DON'T LET THIS BE THE AREA WHERE YOU GET CAUGHT WITHOUT SUFFICIENT CONSIDERATION OR DOCUMENTATION

- If the IEP team determines that services are not needed in one or more of the areas specified in subsection (1)-(11), the IEP must include a statement to that effect and the basis upon which the determination was made.

- Be proactive in this area and begin planning consideration of the 11 principles in each new IEP meeting for each autistic student.
- Have a great summer.
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