
Early Intervention/Education/Vocation

Introduction

Many children with special health care needs also need special education services. All states are required to provide a free and appropriate education for children with disabilities. In Illinois, services are available from public schools for children with disabilities from ages three through twenty-one. Since a child's future depends on his or her education, these can be very important services to obtain.

In the front pocket of this section is a booklet titled A Parent's Guide: The Educational Rights of Students with Disabilities. This resource has been prepared by the Illinois State Board of Education and contains much useful information about special educational services in Illinois. Your DSCC care coordinator can help you learn to use this booklet. Written information is also available on early intervention. Ask your care coordinator to help you obtain these materials.

In Illinois, if a parent requests, early intervention services must be provided for all children, 0-3, with serious developmental delays or a diagnosed medical or physical condition that is likely to result in developmental delays. Early intervention services are provided by child development specialists, social workers, therapists and other professionals.

Vocational training becomes an important service for many children with disabilities when they reach adolescence. It can often help them prepare for a life of independence and self-support.

Not all children with special health care needs require special education services or vocational services. Parents do have the right and responsibility, however, to request an evaluation to determine the need for

such services. Information is included in this section to help parents learn where to go to obtain such evaluations and services. There are tips from other parents of children with special health care needs and from professionals who work with those children. There are also worksheets to help you personalize the information you learn to your child's needs. You can insert additional pages of your own at the back of this section, such as a copy of your child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), Individualized Education Plan (IEP), or other school reports.

Children who are not eligible for special education services, may be eligible for special accommodations at school under Section 504 because of their special health care needs. If your child is not eligible for special education, it is important to ask for a Section 504 plan. Each school has a Section 504 coordinator. The Section 504 plan can identify any special accommodations your student needs, including an individual health plan, and a transition plan.

Personalize this section to make it fit your needs.

Early Intervention

Children who have chronic illnesses or developmental disabilities may benefit from services in addition to medical care.

Sometimes parents have concerns about how their infant or toddler (a child under 36 months of age) is developing. When parents have a concern about their child's development, free screenings and assessments are available through Child & Family Connections to determine if the child may have a delay in his or her developmental delay, or those infants and toddlers with a medical condition that often results in a developmental delay, and their families, may be eligible to receive services to enhance the child's development. In

Illinois, 30 Child & Family Connections, the early intervention system of point of entry, will determine your child's eligibility, assist you in understanding your early intervention rights and work with you to develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). The IFSP identifies services to help you with your child's development. If you would like more information on infant and toddler development or the early intervention services available in your area, contact your local DSCC care coordinator.

Tips

There are many misunderstandings about special education and the services required by law. When you meet with people from the school district to discuss your child's education, ask them to explain your rights to you. Don't hesitate to ask any questions you may have.

Take an active part in your child's education. It is as important for you to be an active member of the educational team as it is for you to be an active member of the medical team.

It is usually in your child's best interest to share information about your child's medical condition with the school staff. You may need to help them learn about your child's special health care needs. This record may be very helpful to school personnel.

Schools are not required to hire school nurses. Ask if your child's school has a nurse.

If your child is on medication, try to develop a schedule that will not require your child to take the medication at school. If your child must take medication during the school day, ask the school staff how they will insure the safe administration of that medication. Be sure they know what the medication is for and its side effects. Check with

the school staff to see if your child is having any problems with the medication.

If your child requires the services of a nurse to stay in school, request a Case Study Evaluation to determine the impact of the medical problem on your child's learning.

If your child is referred for special education services, there will be evaluations performed and reports written. You can ask for a copy of those reports and keep them in this record. There will also be meetings about your child. You can ask for a copy of the reports from the meetings as well.

Not all children with special health care needs require special education services, but it is still important for the parents and the school to work together to help the child receive the best education possible.

If your child is going to be out of school for medical reasons, be sure to let the school know. Plans will need to be made for your child to make up school work and/or for a teacher to provide instruction in the hospital or in your home until the child can return.

School systems often do not understand the health care system and vice versa. Your child will be receiving services from both systems and you can help bridge the gap by asking questions and sharing information.

Ask your child's special education team leader or teacher to explain terms and abbreviations used in describing your child's school program. The words and terms used may mean different things in different school districts. Keep asking until you completely understand your child's school program.

Vocational Information

Vocational training may be a part of your child's special education program. It may also be provided by the Illinois Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS). You can request more specific information from your DSCC care coordinator.

The following tips are from "Vocational Training and Employment: Guidelines for Parents" by M. Sherril Moon and Andrew V. Beale in the December 1984 issue of The Exceptional Parent. If you would like to read the entire article, please ask your DSCC care coordinator for a copy.

The steps outlined here are to help you insure that your child receives proper vocational training and job placement during his or her school years.

Elementary School Level

Vocational training should focus on helping children to develop self-care and daily living skills, positive human relationships and good social skills, and an awareness of vocational opportunities at the upper grade levels and as an adult.

For your child:

1. Familiarize yourself with your state's regulations dealing with the education of children with disabilities.
2. Assign specific jobs/duties to your child around the home.
3. Find out about successful school and adult training programs and the variety of employment options that are now opening up for citizens with profound disabilities.

With your child:

1. Create opportunities for your child to learn about workers and what they do.
2. Emphasize personal appearance, physical fitness and good social and communication skills.

Middle School Level

For your child:

1. Actively support the teacher's efforts to provide job training in community-based sites.
2. See that your child's IEP addresses specific vocational training in a variety of potential jobs.
3. Make sure that you know what job training is available for your child in the high school program.
4. Get in touch with your local rehabilitation agency to find out about the training services and job possibilities available for your child.
5. Find work outside the home for your child to do during summer, weekends and after school.

With your child:

1. Continue to work with your child on improving his or her appearance and physical fitness.
2. Require your child to complete household chores on a regular basis and provide an allowance only on the basis of correctly completing allotted chores.
3. Get your child into the community for leisure activities.

High School Level

For your child:

1. See that vocational training in specific jobs is built into your child's IEP.
2. See that a transition team composed of yourself, the teacher and a rehabilitation agency representative is formed to plan for your child's employment after graduating.
3. Encourage school personnel to find, place and train your child in a job, full or part-time, that pays a wage while he or she is still in school.

4. Find out about all adult programs in your community and make plans before graduation to have your child enter one where some sort of employment is offered if earlier employment cannot be secured.

With your child:

Continue to do all the things you began while your child was in middle school.