

Providing Related Services for Missed Therapy Sessions

When writing an IEP that requires related services, be sure to include the statement that related services will be provided when school is in session, **except** when extended school year services are needed. An example statement may look like this: Johnny will receive speech therapy services two times a week for 20 minutes **when school is in session.**

Frequently Asked Questions About Missed Therapy Sessions

1. Would therapy sessions be required to be rescheduled when a student is absent from school due to illness or family-initiated activities (i.e. vacation)?

No. The general rule is that if the school district makes related services available to the student at the normally scheduled time, the school district is not obligated to make other arrangements to provide services if the student is absent from school at that time for reasons other than his or her participation in school-sponsored activities. If, however, the student is absent from school for a prolonged period of time, or there is a pattern of repeated short-term absences from school, the IEP team should conduct a meeting to review the student's IEP to determine if his or her current program or placement needs to be modified.

2. Would therapy sessions be required to be rescheduled if the student is participating in a class field trip or attending school activities (i.e. assemblies) in the building?

Yes. The school district is generally responsible for making alternative arrangements for providing the related services listed on the student's IEP. In addition, the provision of special education services should never preclude a student from participating in school-related programs or activities in which students without disabilities participate.

3. Would therapy sessions be required to be rescheduled if the related service provider is absent due to illness or attending a professional development opportunity?

Yes. The school district is responsible for either making other arrangements for the student to receive the related services at the scheduled time, or rescheduling the session(s) in order to meet the school districts' responsibility of providing FAPE to the student in accordance with his or her IEP.

Suggestions for Making Up Missed Therapy Sessions

In an effort to be in total compliance with IDEA and the student's IEP, document that you made a “good faith effort” to make up canceled therapy sessions. Some ways in which therapy sessions may be made up include:

1. Working the make-up therapy sessions into your existing daily schedules over time (9-week periods), or when another speech student is absent and using that student's therapy session for another student's make-up session.
2. Asking students to come 15 -20 minutes early or stay 15-20 after school dismissal for a make-up session during your regularly scheduled work time.
3. Using a group therapy session as make-up session when appropriate.