

What does Physical Therapy Intervention Look Like in Special Education?

A Continuum of Service Delivery

Upon parent permission to assess, a school physical therapist completes an assessment. If the child is supported within his/her educational environment and is accessing and benefiting from his/her curriculum, physical therapy is not required. If needs are identified in accessing and making progress in their curriculum, physical therapy is recommended as a related service. The therapist uses his/her professional expertise and scientifically based research to determine the intensity and frequency of intervention.

Effective physical therapy intervention uses a continuum of direct treatment, consultation, monitoring and collaboration in order to achieve the desired goals for a child. School physical therapy can be provided as part of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for students without a medical diagnosis. Optimally, physical therapy services take place in the context of the child's educational environment. The mode of service delivery may vary during the course of intervention, as the child's needs change. Treatment may also be provided as a co-treatment with other related services (Occupational Therapy, Adaptive Physical Education, and Language and Speech).



When is a Child Ready to Graduate from Physical Therapy?

The recommendation for continuation or graduation of physical therapy services is determined by the professional expertise of the physical therapist in collaboration with the IEP team.

There are several factors that the IEP team should consider when making decisions regarding physical therapy service completion:

1. The student's needs that are being addressed by physical therapy no longer negatively impact his/her educational performance in the regular education or special education program.
2. The student no longer requires PT as a related service in order to benefit from his/her special education program.
3. The student consistently demonstrates behaviors that inhibit progress in physical therapy such as lack of cooperation, motivation, or chronic absenteeism. In these circumstances, the IEP team should consider the initial eligibility decision since these behaviors may reflect social maladjustment, environmental, cultural, or economic factors rather than an actual disability. The IEP team may also explore alternative services or strategies to remedy the interfering behaviors or conditions.
4. The student's needs will be better served by an alternative program and/or service, as determined by the IEP team.
5. Therapy is contraindicated because of a change in medical or physical status.
6. Student graduates from high school or reaches the age of 22 years old.

Physical therapy services are intended to target specific areas of weaknesses related to educational access. They are not necessarily intended to be ongoing services for the duration of the child's academic career.

How Do You Contact the Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy Program?

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The Mission of the Division of Special Education is to provide leadership, guidance, and support to the school community in order to maximize learning for all students within an inclusive environment so that each student will contribute to and benefit from our diverse society.

Physical Therapy in Education

What is School Physical Therapy (PT)?

School PTs use therapeutic activities that correct, facilitate or adapt the child's functional performance in motor control and coordination, posture and balance, functional mobility, activities of daily living, accessibility and the use of assistive devices. School PT is based upon state standards, core curriculum and the OT & PT Guidelines in the California public schools.

School PT addresses environmental factors, a child's physical and sensory motor needs, and activities that support participation and access to the child's curriculum. The areas addressed must directly relate to the child's performance within their school setting (campus, classroom playground, cafeteria, bathroom and library).

School physical therapists are involved in:

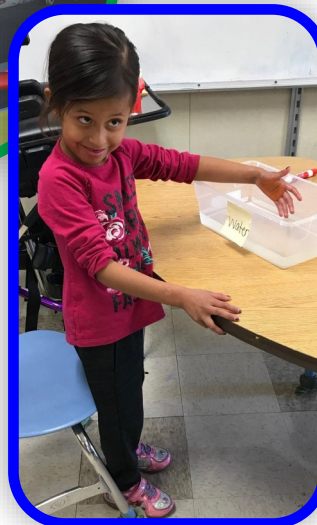
- ◆ Prevention and pre-referral activities
- ◆ Assessments and student program planning for individuals with exceptional needs
- ◆ Teacher, staff and parent education
- ◆ Treatment
- ◆ Collaboration with all service providers



Who Are the Physical Therapists?

Physical therapists are skilled, degreed and licensed health professionals. Their qualifications include:

- ◆ An educational background in human anatomy and physiology, physical pathophysiology, whole body kinesiology, gait and posture analysis, physical treatment modalities, human development, motor control/learning, and cardiopulmonary, orthopedic and neurological rehabilitation
- ◆ A degree from an accredited school and a current license from the California Board of Physical Therapy and the State of California
- ◆ Ongoing training to further advance their knowledge base is required



What does Physical Therapy Look Like in the School Environment?

School-based physical therapy focuses on purposeful, goal directed activities that improve a child's functional performance throughout his/her school day. Physical therapists use a comprehensive approach to evaluate a child's needs in his/her educational environment.

Analyze the Environment:

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| ◆ Campus | ◆ Cafeteria |
| ◆ Classroom | ◆ Bathroom |
| ◆ Playground/Yard | ◆ Library |

Analyze Curriculum and Tasks:

- ◆ Sitting upright in a chair or on the floor during circle time
- ◆ Keeping up with peers when walking from the classroom to the play yard
- ◆ Moving within the school environment with minimal need for assistance
- ◆ Negotiating obstacles within school setting
- ◆ Navigating the play structure with the least amount of supervision necessary for safety
- ◆ Navigating and engaging in movement exploration during playground activities

Assess Foundational Components:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| ◆ Gross Motor | ◆ Balance |
| ◆ Endurance | ◆ Functional Mobility |
| ◆ Postural Control | ◆ Tolerance for Positioning and Movement |
| ◆ Motor Control and Coordination | ◆ Environmental Adaptations and Modifications |
| ◆ Strength and Stability | |

What is the Role of the Physical Therapist in Prevention and Pre-Referral in General Education?

The physical therapist serves as a consultant or resource to the school staff regarding motor development and access to the educational program.

Tier 1: Core Consultation

- ◆ Provides information on normal motor development.
- ◆ Suggests ideas for setting up the classroom for student success.
- ◆ Assists with environmental accommodations for students to access the curriculum, classroom and campus.



Tier 2: Strategic/Supplemental Instruction and Intervention

- ◆ Observes students in the classroom or other school environments.
- ◆ Consults with parents, teachers and other school staff regarding concerns
- ◆ Suggests accommodations for general education, if limitations exist.



Tier 3: Intensive Instruction and Intervention

- ◆ Consults with teachers and parents on a regular basis to monitor recommended accommodations and supports.
- ◆ Participates in Student Support & Progress Team

Throughout all of these phases, progress is continuously monitored. If these interventions are determined insufficient to meet the child's specific needs, the team should consider a referral for special education.