
Chapter 7 — Least Restrictive Environment

The District ensures that, to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities, including students in public or private institutions or other care facilities are educated with students who are nondisabled. Placement of students in special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of students with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

❖ Continuum of Alternative Placements

Hamden Public Schools provides a continuum of alternative placements to meet the needs of students with disabilities who require special education and related services. These alternative placements are available to the extent necessary in order to implement the IEP. This continuum of placements includes instruction in regular classes, special classes, special schools, home instruction and instruction in hospitals and institutions. In addition, supplementary services (such as a resource room or itinerant instruction) are provided in conjunction with regular class placement.

Determining Placement

In determining the educational placement of a student with a disability, including a preschool student with a disability, we ensure that the placement decision is made in conformity with the LRE provisions of IDEA. The placement decision is made by the PPT.

The placement of each student with a disability is determined, at least annually, based upon his/her IEP. Unless the IEP requires some other arrangement, students are educated in the school they would attend if they did not have a disability. Students are educated as close to their home as possible.

In selecting the least restrictive environment, consideration is given to any potential harmful effect on the student or on the quality of services the student needs. Each IEP includes an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate with nondisabled students in the regular class and in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities, and a justification for removal from regular education. A student with a disability is not removed from education in age-appropriate regular classrooms solely because of needed modifications in the general curriculum.

Each student requiring special education and related services is educated in the school that he or she would attend if he or she did not require special education and related services, unless the IEP requires another placement.

Parental Involvement

The District must take steps to ensure that one or both of the parents are present at each PPT meeting or are afforded the opportunity to participate at each PPT meeting with respect to decisions related to identification, evaluation, educational placement and the provision of FAPE. If neither parent can participate in a meeting at which a decision is made related to changing the IEP of their student,

Hamden will use other methods to ensure parent participation (including individual or conference telephone calls).

If the Hamden is unable to obtain parent participation in a placement decision, the District may make a placement decision. In this situation, we would attempt to ensure parent involvement by arranging a meeting at a mutually agreed upon time and place. Records of phone calls made, or attempted, and results of those calls, copies of correspondence sent to parents and any responses received, and documentation of visits to parents' homes or places of employment and results of those visits are examples of methods that could be used by our staff.

The District presumes that divorced parents have equal rights under state and federal law to participate in all aspects of their child's education, unless either or both parents do not have authority under applicable state law governing matters such as guardianship, separation or divorce.

Hamden Public Schools makes reasonable efforts to ensure that parents understand, and are able to participate in any group discussions relating to the educational placement of their student. Such efforts would include arranging for an interpreter for parents with deafness or whose native language is other than English.

Nonacademic and Extracurricular Activities

Our District ensures that in providing for nonacademic and extracurricular activities and services, each student with a disability participates with nondisabled students to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the student. The provision of these activities and services includes meals and recess periods. Other activities and services that are available to students with disabilities are counseling, athletics, transportation, health services, recreational activities, and special-interest groups or clubs sponsored by the District. Hamden also makes referrals to agencies that provide assistance to individuals with disabilities and employment of students, including employment by the District and assistance in making outside employment available.

Students with disabilities have available to them the variety of educational programs and services that are available to nondisabled students in our District. These programs and services include but are not limited to art, music, industrial arts, consumer education and vocational education.

Private Special Education Programs

A student with a disability who is placed in a private school or facility or other private special education program by our District is provided special education and related services in conformity with the student's IEP. This is done at no cost to the parents. The placement is at a school or facility that meets the standards that apply to state and local districts. Prior to the student's placement, our District convenes a PPT meeting to develop the IEP. A representative of the private program must attend the meeting or participate via telephone. The student has all of the rights of a student with disabilities who is served within our District schools. The student's IEP will be fully implemented in the private facility and, if necessary, by other providers authorized by our District. All out-of-state facilities will meet the educational standards for private special education facilities of the receiving state. If no such standards exist, the District will provide the Connecticut State Board of Education with documentation that the private placement is appropriate to the student's needs as set forth in the student's IEP.

Residential Placement

If placement in a private residential program is necessary to provide special education and related services to a student with a disability, the program (including nonmedical care, room and board) is at no cost to the parents. In the case of a student placed in a residential facility because of the need for services other than educational, the financial responsibility of our District is limited to the reasonable costs of special education instruction unless the placement is acquired in order for the student to benefit from education.

Homebound or Hospital Instruction

Placement involving homebound and hospital instruction is provided when recommended by the PPT. One or more of the following conditions must apply:

- A physician certifies in writing that the student is unable to attend school for medical reasons and states the expected date that the student will be able to return to the school program;
- The student has a handicap so severe that it prevents the student from learning in a school setting or the student's presence in school endangers the health, safety, or welfare of the student or others;
- A special education program recommendation is pending and the student was at home at the time of referral; or
- The student is pregnant, or has given birth, and a physician certifies in writing that homebound instruction is in the student's best interests and should continue for a specified period of time.

Homebound and hospital instruction is provided when a student's condition causes an absence of at least three weeks duration. The instruction (as specified in the student's IEP) is subject to the following:

- If a student was not previously receiving special education and related services the requirements of evaluation and an IEP apply if there is reason for the PPT to believe that the student will require special education and related services; and
- If a student has been receiving special education and related services the PPT modifies, if necessary, the short-term instructional objectives in the student's IEP. When recommended by a PPT, a student receives related services while instructed at home or in the hospital

The instruction begins no later than two weeks from the first day of absence, provided nothing in the student's condition precludes it. Instruction is provided for *at least* one hour per day or five hours per week for students in kindergarten through grade 6, and two hours per day or ten hours per week for students in grades 7 through 12. The PPT may, when appropriate, increase or decrease instruction time if the student's mental or physical condition warrants. Instruction is provided in the home or hospital setting to which the student is confined.

When a student is not otherwise in need of special education and related services, homebound and hospital instruction shall maintain the continuity of the student's regular program and an IEP is not required. For purely medical reasons, a PPT meeting need not be held and an IEP need not be written.