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Least Restrictive Environment Notice to Parents

Dear Parents,

Least restrictive environment (LRE) refers to the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirement that students with disabilities (preschool through secondary school) be educated with their peers who do not have disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate. This means that your child’s IEP team begins with carefully considering if your child can be educated and receive special education services in the preschool that s/he is currently attending, or in another preschool setting where there is general education preschool curriculum and peers that do not have a disability.

IDEA requires that children with disabilities not be placed in special classes or separate schools unless the nature and severity of their disability is such that education in regular classes with supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. Regular classes are those settings in which the majority of students are students without disabilities. Having daily interaction with typical, same-aged students is of great benefit as students often mimic what they see and acquire new skills when exposed to other children who are able to meet the general education requirements. This is acknowledged in the law.

Your child’s IEP must be implemented in the placement that maximizes his or her opportunity to be educated with same-age, nondisabled peers. Our region must be able to provide the full continuum of placement options either in our facility or through agreements with other facilities. The decisions about what is necessary to meet the unique educational needs of your child include determining the environment that is the least restrictive and the supplemental aids and services that are necessary to ensure that your child receives FAPE (free and appropriate public education) in the LRE. These decisions are based on comprehensive evaluation data and are made by the IEP team, including the parents.

Continuum options include settings such as Head Start, community public preschool, community private preschool, community child care center/day care, home instruction, or instruction in a hospital or institution. Your child's regional program must ensure that your child's placement is at no cost to your family. This covers tuition costs for the portion of time

needed to carry out the IEP and ensure the student has access to the general education environment as designated in the IEP team meeting.

Your child's IEP team, including you, as the parents, will discuss any options available in your area that are appropriate for meeting the individual needs of your child. A placement decision will be made by the team after thoroughly considering all appropriate options and choosing the option that meets the needs of your child.

Sincerely,

Kim Caylor

Early Intervention & Education Program Unit Manager