

Indicator 6: Educational Environments for Children Birth-Five Instructions

Please utilize the **Indicator 6 Decision Tree** as you determine the child's educational environment. Also, read **Questions and Answers for Educational Environments and Children Birth-Five** for additional information.

Introduction to Indicator 6

The U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requires states to report the percentage of children (three - five years of age) *who attend 1) a regular early childhood program and receive the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program; and 2) a separate special education class, separate school, or residential facility.* In accordance with the *Code of Virginia*, children with a disability whose second birthday falls on or before September 30 are at the age when eligibility can be considered for special education and related services.

The OSEP's expectation is that states will increase the number of children with disabilities who attend a regular early childhood program *and* receive the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program, and will decrease the number of students attending a separate special education class, separate school, or residential facility.

The December 1 Special Education Child Count collects information required to meet federal reporting requirements under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*, and information required for certain elements of the Standards of Quality (SOQ) state funding calculation. It is through the December 1 Special Education Child Count that Indicator 6 data is collected. Local Education agencies (LEAs) are required to report on each child receiving special education and related services. Data reported includes preschool educational placement. In Virginia, data is reported for children ages birth - five. The placement codes correspond to the data elements collected. The placement codes for children ages birth - five are listed below in the section titled, "Placement Category Codes."

The OSEP educational environments codes are based on the child's age as of December 1, not by grade. If the child is zero-five years of age as of December 1, the placement codes for Indicator 6 are used (placement codes 17-22), regardless of the grade. Indicator 5 reports the educational environment for children aged 6-21 with IEPs. If the child turns six prior to December 1, the school age educational environments codes will be used (placement codes 1-6).

Reporting the Educational Environment for Children Ages Birth-Five

The Virginia Department of Education has developed an **Indicator 6 Decision Tree** to assist with reporting each child's educational environment. This instructional document provides definitions to key vocabulary as well as steps for determining the accurate educational environment classification using the Indicator 6 Decision Tree. The process of determining the most accurate educational environment classification is to be completed prior to the December 1 Special Education Child Count.

Key Definitions

The following words and terms shall have the following meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.

Regular early childhood education program:

- A regular early childhood program includes 50 percent or more children who do not have disabilities (i.e., children who do not have IEPs). This can include, but is not limited to:
 - Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI/VPI+)
 - Head Start
 - Kindergarten (public or private)
 - Reverse mainstreaming classrooms
 - Preschool classes (public or private)
 - Group child development center or child care
 - Community based play groups

Attending:

- The child is considered to be attending if he or she is a member of the program. If there is intentional teaching (either direct or embedded instruction) and promotion of the child's interaction with children without disabilities, the time may be counted as time attending a regular early childhood program.
 - If a child attends a special education classroom and 'visits' the regular program on occasion, he/she is really not attending a regular program, he/she is visiting.
 - A child simply being in the same place with a group of children without IEPs does not count as spending time in a regular early childhood program.
 - If a child attends a special education classroom for a portion of the week and also attends a regular program where he/she receives intentional instruction, he/she is considered attending.

Typical week:

- A typical week is what the child does consistently across weeks during the school year. For example a child may attend a community-based licensed child care every Monday in the afternoon. This is considered typical. However, if the child only occasionally goes to child care this would not count as typical. A week is considered for preschool children because the child may not have the same schedule each day. For example, a child may attend child care three days a week and not daily.

Special education program:

- A special education program is a program that includes more than 50 percent children with disabilities (i.e., children with IEPs).

Separate class:

- A separate special education classroom includes classrooms with more than 50 percent students with disabilities. Classrooms may be in:
 - Regular school buildings
 - Trailers, portables
 - Hospital – outpatient
 - Other community-based settings

Separate school:

- A separate school is a school designed specifically for students with disabilities in either a public or private day school.

Residential facility:

- A residential facility is a program in a public or privately operated residential school or residential medical facility where the student stays on an inpatient basis.

Home:

- Home includes the residence of the child’s family or caregiver.

Service provider location or other locations not in any other category:

- A service provider location or other locations not in any other category include a private clinician’s office, clinician offices located in a school building, hospital facilities on outpatient basis, libraries, and other public locations. These children do not attend any regular early childhood program, special education classroom, separate school, or residential facility.

Placement Category Codes

The following codes are the Early Childhood Special Education Placement Category Codes.

Code 17: Regular Early Childhood Program

Code 18: Special Education Classroom

Code 19: Separate Special Education School

Code 20: Special Education Residential Facility

Code 21: Home

Code 22: Service Provider Location or other locations not in any other category

Steps for Providing an Accurate Educational Environment

INFORMATION GATHERING: Gather Information to determine “Does the child attend a regular early childhood program?”

Ask the family to list and describe programs the child attends outside of school.

- When considering whether or not the child attends a regular early childhood program, you must also count time the child spends in selected settings *outside* of his/her school day: public or private preschool classes, public or private kindergarten, licensed child care centers, licensed family and group child care homes, Head Start, and before and after programs. For example, if the child attends a special education classroom at the local elementary school in the morning and attends a licensed day care in the afternoon, that time in the licensed day care counts as time in a regular early childhood program, as long as 50 percent or more of the children in the licensed day care program do not have disabilities (i.e., do not have an IEP). ***Therefore, it is imperative that you ask the family about where the child spends time outside of the school day.***
- Consider only the regular early childhood programs the child attends during a typical week. A typical week is what the child does consistently across weeks during the school year. Do not consider weekend time. For example, if a child attends a Mother’s Day Out program every Tuesday, this is considered a typical week.
- Exclude time outside of the school day that does not count as attending a regular early childhood program. This includes time spent with babysitters, neighbors, relatives, or at home.
- It is expected that an opportunity to learn about the child’s other environments and routines would be part of the conversation with parents during the IEP meeting. If during the conversation you learn that the child attends a setting classified as a regular early childhood program outside of the school day, you must ask how much time during the week the child spends in the setting.

List and describe programs where the child attends provided by the LEA.

- Identify any regular early childhood programs the child attends during the school day during a typical week. The child is considered to be attending if there is intentional teaching and promotion of the child’s interaction with children without disabilities. See the definitions above of “regular early childhood education program” and “attending” for clarification.

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT DETERMINATION: Utilize the Indicator 6 Decision Tree as you determine the child’s educational environment. Answer the questions in the order provided below.

1. Answer the first decision tree question: “Does the student attend a regular early childhood program?”

Choose “Yes” or “No” based on the definition of a regular early childhood program. Remember that this question is simply asking does the child attend a “regular early childhood program” provided by the LEA or the family during a typical week? If the child attends a regular early childhood program it would be answered “yes.” If the child does not spend any time in a regular early childhood program in a typical week, the answer would be “no.” If the answer is “no,” move directly to the question on the right side of the decision tree, “**Does the child attend a special education program?**” (question #2 below).

If YES - Use placement code 17 only and answer the questions below.

If NO - Use placement codes 18-22 and move to the question “Does the child attend a special education program?”

A. For the child attending a regular early childhood program, determine whether the child attends a regular early childhood program “at least 10 hours per week” or “less than 10 hours per week.”

Count the number of hours the child attends a regular early childhood program.

- Add both the hours provided by the family as well as the LEA. Based on the number of hours the child attends a regular early childhood program, determine whether the child attends “at least 10 hours per week” or “less than 10 hours per week.”

B. For the child attending a regular early childhood program, answer the question “Does the child receive the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program?”

The answer choices are “Yes, in the regular early childhood program” or “No, in some other location.”

- Only consider special education and related services provided by the LEA. Do not count services that are paid for by the parent. Count all the hours of special education and related services on the child’s IEP. If the majority of those services are provided in a regular early childhood program, the child would be coded as receiving the majority of special education and related services in the program. If the majority of special education and related services are provided outside the regular program, the child is receiving services in another location.
- Services in the regular early childhood program would include a therapist working with the child in the classroom or on the playground during outside time. For example, a physical therapist working on motor skills during recess.
- Services are those that occur in the class the majority of the time. While occasional pull-out sessions may be necessary, the majority of specialized instruction is conducted in the regular early childhood program. In the event that a child receives some of the specialized services in the regular early childhood program and some in another location, IEP teams must determine where the “majority” of special education and related services are provided.
- Pull-out services or services provided in a classroom down the hall from the regular early childhood program are considered to be provided “in some other location.”
- If service time is evenly split between “regular education program” and “outside of the regular education program,” answer that the majority of services are provided in the regular education program.

If the child attends a Regular Early Childhood Program (RECP) - Use placement code 17 only

2. **For the child who does not attend a regular early childhood program, answer the question, “Does the child attend a special education program?”**

Choose “Yes” or “No” based on whether the child attends a special education program which includes a classroom, school, or residential facility.

If the child attends a special education program - Use placement codes 18-20

A. For the child who is attending a special education program, answer the question, “Where does the child receive special education and related services?”

The answer choices are “separate classroom,” “separate school,” or “residential facility.” (Note that none of these settings are correct if the child also attends a regular early childhood program—in which case you should have answered “yes” to the initial question “does the child attend a regular early childhood program?”)

If the child attends a special education classroom - Use code 18

If the child attends a separate school - Use code 19

If the child attends a residential facility - Use code 20

3. For the child who is not attending a special education program, answer the question, “Is the child receiving the majority of special education and related services in the residence of the child’s family or caregiver?”

Your answer choices will be “Yes” if the child is receiving the majority of special education and related services in the residence of the child’s family or caregiver or “No” if the child is receiving special education and related services in a “service provider location or some other location that is not in any other category.”

- A babysitter counts as a caregiver.
- A “service provider location or other locations not in any other category” include a private clinician’s office, clinician offices located in a school building, hospital facilities on out-patient basis, libraries, and other public locations.
- These categories cannot be correct if the child attends a regular early childhood program or a special education program (i.e., special education classroom, separate school, residential facility).

If the child receives the majority of special education and related services in the residence of the child’s family or caregiver - Use code 21

If the child receives services in a Service Provider Location or other location not in any other category - Use code 22