

Indicator 6: Educational Environments for Children Birth - Five Questions and Answers

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

Reporting Preschool Educational Environment Data

1. Why are we reporting preschool educational environments data?

The 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 age eligible for special education and related services.

OSEP's expectation is that states will increase the number of children 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.

2. When is the preschool educational environments data reported to the State Education Agency?

It is through the December 1 Special Education Child Count that Indicator 6 data is collected. The December 1 Special Education Child Count Collection gathers 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. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are required to report on each child receiving special education and related services. Data reported includes the educational placement for preschool children. The OSEP requires states to report the percentage of children ages three-five years of age for Indicator 6. However, in Virginia, LEAs are required to report on each child ages birth through five receiving special education and related services.

3. When should the preschool educational environment data be updated?

The preschool educational environment data is to be updated prior to the December 1 Special Education Child Count. It is up to the LEA to determine when and how to collect and/or update the educational environment.

Suggestions for updating the educational environment data include the following instances:

- When an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is written
- When an IEP is amended
- Any time a team member becomes aware that a change has occurred that does not involve a change in the child's IEP placement (e.g., a child no longer attends an after school program)

Indicator 6 Decision Tree and Placement Codes

4. How do I use the Indicator 6 Decision Tree?

The Virginia Department of Education has developed an Indicator 6 Decision Tree to assist with reporting each child's educational environment. The document titled, **Indicator 6: Educational Environments for Children Three-Five** provides definitions to key vocabulary as well as steps for determining the accurate educational environment classification using the Indicator 6 Decision Tree.

5. What are "placement codes" related to Indicator 6?

The following are the placement codes used in Virginia.

- 17 = Time in Regular Early Childhood Program
 - Y = Yes, student spends ten or more hours a week in the Regular Early Childhood Program
 - N = No, student does not spend ten or more hours a week in the Regular Early Childhood Program
 - Y = Yes, student does receive the majority of special education and related services in the Regular Early Childhood Program
 - N = No, student does not receive the majority of special education and related services in the Regular Early Childhood Program
- 18 = Special Education Classroom
- 19 = Separate School (private or public)
- 20 = Residential Facility
- 21 = Home
- 22 = Service Provider Location or Other Locations not in Any Other Category

6. *What if a child is five years old and has transitioned to kindergarten and not in a preschool program?*

Placement codes are determined by the age of the student 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).

Regular Early Childhood Program (RECP)

7. *How is a “regular early childhood program” defined?*

A regular early childhood program includes 50 percent or more children who do not have disabilities (children not on IEPs).

8. *What are considered to be regular early childhood programs?*

A regular early childhood program is a program that includes a majority (at least 50 percent) of nondisabled children (i.e., children not on IEPs). This category may 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

The child may be enrolled in the program by the LEA or by the parent/guardian. The program is to be a part of the child’s typical week for the child to be considered a participant in the environment for Indicator 6 purposes. (A typical week is what the child does consistently across weeks during the school year. See question about “a typical week” below for more information.)

For Indicator 6 purposes, the definitions of a regular early childhood program and a special education class are independent of any label put on the classroom itself for funding purposes, classroom certification, or anything else. If a preschool classroom has 50 percent or more children **without** IEPs, it is considered a regular early childhood program. If a classroom has more than 50 percent children **with** IEPs, it is considered a special education classroom.

9. *When determining if a child attends a regular early childhood program do you consider programs provided by the family?*

Yes. When determining if the child attends a regular early childhood program, consider programs provided both by the family and by the school during the child's typical week.

10. *How do I know if the child is attending a regular early childhood program outside of school time?*

When determining program attendance, it may be beneficial for teams to first ask families to list and describe programs where the child attends outside of school. Next, the team can list and describe those provided by the LEA.

11. *What is meant by "attending" a regular early childhood program?*

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.
- 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 may be considered attending.
- 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.

12. *If a special education classroom and a regular early childhood classroom (e.g., Virginia Preschool Initiative class or kindergarten class) go to lunch, the playground, or specials at the same time, does this time count as attending a regular early childhood program for the child in the special education classroom?*

Two classes simply being in the same place at the same time does not count as attending a regular early childhood program.

13. *If a child attends a special education classroom and spends some time in the regular early childhood program, does this count as attending a regular early childhood program?*

The answer depends on the nature of the time in the 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 is receives intentional instruction, he/she may be considered attending. However, if the 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. Keep in mind, attending requires intentional teaching (either direct or embedded instruction) and promotion of the student's interaction with children without disabilities. For example, the child attends the regular preschool program for one hour daily, Monday – Thursday and the teaching assistant works with the child while she is in centers with peers without disabilities.

14. What is meant by “typical week” in the question “Is the student attending a regular early childhood program at any time during the typical week?”

A typical week is what the child does consistently across weeks during the school year. For example a child typically may attend a community-based licensed child care two days a week in the afternoons after school, but if the child only occasionally goes to day care this would not count as typical. If a child is attending a special after school program that will only last a week, this also would not count as typical. The child does not have to attend every day, but does need to attend consistently across time for the time to count as typical.

15. If a child attends a regular early childhood program, I must also determine whether the child attends a regular early childhood program “at least 10 hours per week” or “less than 10 hours per week.” Do I count all the hours the child attends a regular early childhood program?

Yes, 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 ten hours per week” or “less than ten hours per week.”

16. If a child attends a regular early childhood program, I must also determine whether the child receives the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program. Do I consider services paid for by the family?

No. This question only refers to LEA provided services.

17. What is meant by the “majority of special education and related services provided in the regular early childhood program?”

Services in the regular early childhood program 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.”

Special Education Classroom, Separate School, and Residential Facility

18. How is a special education classroom defined?

The special education classroom category includes classrooms with more than 50 percent students with disabilities (i.e., students with IEPs). Classrooms may be in:

- Regular school buildings
- Trailers, portables
- Hospital – outpatient
- Other community-based settings

Students should not be reported in this category if they also attend a regular early childhood program. ***If the classroom has 50 percent children with disabilities and 50 percent children without disabilities, the classroom is considered a regular early childhood program.***

19. How is a separate school defined?

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

Students should not be reported in this category if they also attend a regular early childhood program.

20. How is residential facility defined?

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 and Service Provider Location or Some Other Location

21. If a child does not attend a regular early childhood environment, a placement option is, “home.” How is this defined?

Use the placement code, “home” when the majority of special education and related services are provided in the residence of the child’s family or caregiver. This does include services provide in the residence of the child’s babysitter.

22. If a child does not attend a regular early childhood environment, a placement option is “service provider location or some other location not in any other category.” How is this defined?

Examples of service provider locations 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.

Students should not be reported in this category if they also attend a regular early childhood program, a special education program (i.e., special education class, separate school, or residential facility), or receives any services at home.