

About Separate Site Placement

Most parents want their child with disabilities to be included in the general classroom as much as possible, but sometimes a child with emotional, behavioral, or other needs can be more successful in a nontraditional school setting. Here is some information on separate site programs and questions you may want to ask if you are considering this kind of placement for your child.

What is a separate site program?

A separate site program is a setting other than a traditional school. It can include such programs as:

- alternative learning centers (ALCs)
- alternative learning programs (ALPs)
- day treatment
- chemical dependency treatment
- public separate day school (i.e., separate site emotional and behavioral disorders program)
- care and treatment programs (i.e., residential treatment center, hospital)
- correctional placement

What can a separate site program offer my child?

Separate site programs can offer supports and programming appropriate for a child with emotional, behavioral, or specific treatment needs. They also can help if your child is at risk for dropping out of school.

How are children placed in a separate site program?

Parents, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, or the court can place a child in a separate site program.

With voluntary placement, you, as a parent, make the decision to place your child in a separate site program. You may make this decision based on a recommendation by a therapist, county social worker, or other professional. You

may also choose this option based on research you have done yourself.

With Individualized Education Program (IEP) team placement, the team makes the decision. You are part of the IEP team and would be involved in the process. The team may believe that services provided through a separate site program would be the best way for your child to receive educational benefit from the IEP services—and a free, appropriate public education (FAPE). The IEP team must keep Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirements in mind when determining your child's placement. This means that unless an IEP team believes a child's specific needs will not be met, children with disabilities should 1) attend the school to which they would go if they did not have disabilities and 2) participate in classrooms with children without disabilities. Before looking at a change in placement, the IEP team should try things like assistive equipment, special behavior strategies, using a resource room, or modifying the curriculum.

With court-ordered placement, the court orders a child into a separate site program to ensure the child's safety or to provide treatment.

What should I consider when choosing a separate site program for my child?

Depending on your child's situation, you may want to ask some of the following questions:

General Questions

- Why is the proposed placement being considered?
- What prevents my child from succeeding in the current setting?
- What would it take for my child to succeed in the current setting?
- Has a functional behavior assessment (FBA) been completed? If not, will one be done before making a final placement decision?
- What if I disagree with the proposed placement?

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Program Questions

- May I schedule a tour and talk with program staff to see how they interact with the children and their families?
- Who is served by the program? (You may want to inquire about the participants' ages, gender, and disabilities, as well as whether they are there under court-ordered placement, voluntary placement, or IEP placement.)
- What is the student-staff ratio?
- Please explain the daily program format.
- In what ways are your staff and program sensitive to individual and cultural differences?
- Do you offer clear individual and program goals?
- What are the overall program outcomes for the youth you serve? May I see outcome data?
- What training and skills do your teachers and staff have for promoting academic-vocational and social-emotional development? (For example, do they have a background in special education, classroom management, crisis management, conflict resolution, and collaborative problem solving? Do they have disability-specific training?)
- How does the staff deal with behavior issues?
- Is there a facility-wide behavior plan? Will it be individualized for my child?
- What is the program's philosophy of positive behavior interventions?
- What are your medication management practices?

Education Questions

- How will education services be provided?
- Can my child receive the special education services he or she needs for his or her specific disability?
- Are all of the IEP-related services my child needs available in this setting?
- How are credits toward graduation calculated and who tracks them?
- Who informs the home district about a student's progress?
- Is your academic program provided by a school district or privately contracted teachers?
- Will my child's current IEP be accepted as written, or will we develop a new IEP to reflect the new setting?
- Who will ensure the transfer of educational records?
- Who sets up the IEP meetings, and how is the home district involved?
- Does the program provide the same curriculum and text books as the home district? Why or why not?

- Does this setting meet Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirements? Has the IEP team tried to provide supports and service so my child can succeed in his or her regular school before looking at a change in placement?

Family Involvement

- How often will you communicate with me? Through what method?
- What type of treatment information do you share with parents?
- How will I be involved in the treatment or educational plan?
- If it is a residential program, what is the visitation policy? May my child come home on holidays or weekends?

Financial Questions

- Who pays for this placement? (i.e., private insurance, public school as a special education-related service, medical assistance, county, court-ordered and funded)
- Will I have any out-of-pocket expenses?

Transition Back to the Community

- What is the average or expected length of stay for a child in this program?
- What are the program's requirements for my child's transition back to the community?
- Are there specific requirements that students must meet to return to a regular school setting? If so, what are they?
- What is the transition process to ensure success when my child returns to the regular school and/or community?
- What follow-up care will be provided?
- Who will write the discharge plan?
- How soon before a placement change will the transition meeting take place?

What are some of my rights as a parent?

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You have the right to be involved throughout the duration of your child's stay in a separate site facility, unless your parental rights have been terminated through the court. You have the right to:

- be informed about the services your child is receiving
- attend planning meetings and IEP meetings
- receive copies of your child's records
- disagree with the placement, unless it has been court-ordered