

Braiding Funds: How Districts Can Create Inclusive Placement Opportunities for Young Children with Disabilities

Cost sharing

State leaders provide information on the allowable ways funds from various early childhood programs can be used to create classroom opportunities and support placement of children with disabilities in early childhood programs. An example of cost sharing is when various funding streams ‘follow the child’ and support children in a single classroom, or when one program pays for a specific operating cost, and another program pays for a different operating cost. An example of a specific cost might be a district funding an extra classroom assistant to support the children in the classroom. Each funding source must be used as intended and documented.

Fee for service, or private pay

Inclusive special education classrooms operating in schools invite community children to attend the program for a fee. Fees often range from nominal amounts for snacks and consumable products, to market rates for the same service.

In kind sharing of resources

Programs share resources instead of direct funds, such as one program provides the classroom, and another program provides transportation.

Class size waivers

Waivers for smaller class size are used to meet the needs of children, those with and without IEPs. For example, a waiver would allow a classroom to operate with fewer children than required and receive the same money as a classroom meeting the requirement. In some cases, money needed to support waivers is absorbed by the individual program, or a local district may agree to pay a portion of the classroom operating costs, in order to provide an appropriate inclusive classroom placement for children with IEPs.

Holding slots

Slots, or seats in a classroom are held for children with disabilities who are identified throughout the year and in need of placements within early childhood programs. Some programs allow seats to be held for an extended period of time for children with disabilities, or districts might pay the operating cost of an unfilled slot or seat in the classroom to ensure there are seats available for children with disabilities identified throughout the year.

Funded enrollment


IDEA funds used to pay for a child’s enrollment in an early childhood program, if a public program is not available to implement the educational plan, or when a child does not meet the income requirement of a public program.

For more information, visit the ECTA Center’s Inclusion page:

<https://ectacenter.org/topics/inclusion>

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Early Childhood
Technical Assistance Center


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CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

“All young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs, where they are provided with individualized and appropriate support in meeting high expectations.”

~U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education, September 2015
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/earlylearning/joint-statement-full-text.pdf>



Plan: Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), each preschool aged child with a disability has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) developed by a group of educators and the child’s parent. The team documents the child’s strengths and areas of need, develops yearly goals and plans services that will enable the child to reach their goals. The final step in developing the plan is for the team to determine the type of placement where the child will receive their services. The first consideration is discussion of the supplementary aids, and special education and related services the child would need to be successful in a regular early childhood setting.

Settings: Settings might include programs such as Head Start, State Pre-K, preschool, Title I, Kindergarten, or child care. Consideration should be given to an early childhood program the child is attending. If the plan can be delivered in that setting, it would allow the child to remain with his peers and avoid unnecessary transitions. Only when a child's educational needs cannot be met in an early childhood program should other placement options be considered.



Equal Access: Young children with disabilities have equal access to early care and education programs, as detailed in the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If a child is otherwise eligible to attend a public or private program, the child cannot be denied access based on disability and must be considered for enrollment in the same manner as their peers.



Programs and Services: Children with disabilities may attend publicly funded programs such as Head Start, State Pre-K, Title I, or other inclusive program at no cost to families. If a child attends a publicly funded preschool program, the child’s placement is funded through that entity. Special education and related services are provided through the school system. In addition, Special education funds may be used to provide supports for the child and teachers, including training for those working with the child. If a child’s IEP team decides an inclusive setting is needed, and a public program is not available, the district is responsible for providing the inclusive setting. School districts should work with their community partners to create inclusive opportunities for young children with disabilities.