



Addressing Chronic Health Care Needs in the IEP

Points to Consider

To ensure successful transition to adult living, learning, and earning, the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) for students receiving Special Education Services should address any chronic health care conditions that affect their education. Many important changes in legal status, systems of care, and services occur between the ages of 18 and 21. Planning for transitions to post-secondary life must start at age 14 or earlier and must plans include education for health care responsibility and self-advocacy.

IEP classification categories, such as "Other Health Impairment," convey the presence of an acute or chronic health problem that adversely affects a child's educational performance. However, the classification does not convey specific health conditions, health care needs and the components of an IEP designed to address these needs. Identifying appropriate health-related services and health care education for the transition age student is crucial to the planning process for post-secondary life.

HEALTH-RELATED SERVICES TO ADDRESS HEALTH CARE NEEDS

When developing an IEP, the team must clearly state current levels of functioning, and performance, and current health care status. The IEP identifies services that will enable a student to reach educational goals and addresses health-related services, such as skilled nursing and therapies necessary to enable a student to access and receive a free appropriate public education.

- The IEP communicates health care needs to all involved with the student. The IEP is the foremost communication tool that provides all the educational professionals, medical services providers and paraprofessionals with a clear and comprehensive picture of a student within the school environment. Since students typically have new teachers and related service providers every year, an IEP that includes health care needs serves to increase the understanding of a particular health condition, symptoms, and treatment that may affect the student's school day.
- The IEP should establish health care goals for the student. A student's awareness of health care issues and movement toward self-determination increases safety. Even if a student is not expected to move completely toward independence in self-care, it is important for the student to understand their care routines and question any change, as appropriate.
- The IEP should establish strategies for developing the skills necessary to self-advocate for quality health care and meet health care needs, either independently or with support.
- A student considering working or pursuing post-secondary education has the potential to be self-determined and to self-advocate for his or her needs. This includes the adult domains of living, earning, lifelong learning, and health care. These goals start with the IEP.

MOVING TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE IN HEALTH CARE

Identifying and communicating the need for assistance

When students are concerned about their physical and emotional health and health care, they need to learn:

1. who to contact,
2. what information needs to be conveyed,
3. where to discuss the information in a confidential manner, and
4. how to appropriately convey the information.

Participating in health care and decision making

Accurate, assertive communication leads to better health care and enables a student to be prepared to handle a lifetime of transitions, including new educational and medical staff, new caregivers, and adult housing.

Students with chronic, lifelong health conditions can be taught to participate in their own care. Students can care for and advocate for themselves when they understand their health condition and treatment. Self-knowledge and self-direction are the ability to identify and convey one's own needs, are critical to fostering independence.

Learning about personal, individual health care needs helps students to positively discuss their conditions with others and teach others about their specific condition and needs, building self-knowledge and confidence and gaining respect from others. This promotes trust from others regarding a student's ability and accuracy in conveying information about their symptoms and care routines. Learning and sharing about a condition also demystifies it to the student and others, and helps avoid the stigma that can be attached to a special needs issue.

Frequent opportunities, from a young age, to practice and implement skills that carry over to daily living will build a foundation for successful transition to adulthood. School nurses, teachers, and related service providers can provide collaborative guidance that connects attainable goals to similar tasks in the school setting, helping develop generalized skill sets that can be transferred across settings.

Note: **Self Direction** is a term used to describe the freedom a person has to make their own choices. **Self Determination** is a term used to describe the principle that people have the right to freely choose; determination of one's own fate or course of action without compulsion; free will.

Additional Resources

Check out "Health Care and the IEP, Tips for Students, Parents, Educators"
Developmental Trends: Chronic Health Conditions in Children & Adolescents

<http://www.education.com/reference/article/chronic-health-children-adolescents/>

Health Conditions and the IEP process

http://southeastregionalcenter.org/pdf/Health_objectives_for_Individual_Education_Plans.pdf

What Does Health Have to do With Transition?

http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/29/e4/2c.pdf