

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DIVISION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES AND SUPPORTS CONSIDERATIONS FOR EDUCATIONALLY RELEVANT THERAPY

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Special Education Services and Supports

Considerations for Educationally Relevant Therapy for Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy

The *Considerations for Educationally Relevant Therapy (CERT)* tool has been developed to assist occupational therapists (OTs) and physical therapists (PTs) working in the educational environment in determining the need for educationally relevant therapy in the schools. This tool is **not** an evaluation or assessment instrument. It is a summary of educational considerations based on a review of student records, evaluations, observations, parent/teacher information, and other data.

According to 34 CFR 300.24, the role of a related service, such as occupational or physical therapy, is to enable the student to benefit from special education in order to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE). The OT and/or PT along with the individualized educational program (IEP) team, determines the need for educationally relevant therapy.

The emphasis of school-based services provided by OTs and PTs has shifted over the years from a medical approach to an educational approach. The functional skills a student needs to perform in the educational setting are dependent on a variety of factors, including the student's diagnosis; present level of function; educational program; and overall developmental, cognitive, and academic abilities. Medical therapy concerns such as improving range of motion, strengthening, improving swallowing, or preventing contractures may affect a student's ability to accomplish the educational goals, *but are not the specific goals*. Likewise, sensory processing deficits, attention deficits, or physical impairments are not reasons, in themselves, to provide therapy services. The impairment must be linked to the student's inability to achieve educational goals and objectives on the IEP.

Therapy in the educational environment should be viewed as a continuum of services that encompasses a variety of service delivery models and intervention strategies. Research has shown that interventions embedded in class routines using functional life skills increase the achievement of IEP goals and motivation needed for participation in the general education curriculum. The knowledge and expertise of an OT and/or PT can be utilized to determine and design intervention strategies that can be integrated into a student's daily routine and implemented by school-based personnel. The student's needs may vary from year to year and are dependent on multiple factors, including the student's present level of performance, overall development, and educational program.

It is important to remember that the student must have a recognized disability or disorder which adversely affects his/her educational performance which includes developmental, academic, and functional skills.

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Directions for Completing the Consideration for Educationally Relevant Therapy Tool

The *Consideration for Educationally Relevant Therapy (CERT)* tool includes a **Summary Sheet**, a **Student Profile**, and a **Therapy Profile**. Information from the **Student Profile** and **Therapy Profile** is recorded on the **Summary Sheet** in the appropriate sections. This tool is completed at the IEP meeting with the relevant therapist(s), parents and other required members of the IEP team. The following is a description of each part of the tool.

The **Student Profile** describes student performance in five areas of school-related functions: Personal Care, Mobility, Gross Motor, Fine Motor/Visual Motor, and Sensory Processing. Within each area, there is a continuum based on student ability. The *Student Profile* is completed after a review of student records, evaluations, observations, parent/teacher information, and other data. The therapist should thoroughly read each paragraph before choosing the column that best describes the student's abilities and current level of support. A therapist interprets the descriptors within the context of the student's educational environment. The points from each of the five areas are recorded in the *Student Profile* section of the **Summary Sheet**. Specific evaluation tools should be noted in the *Sources of Information and Additional Comments* section. The date the Student Profile is completed should be recorded.

The **Therapy Profile** describes factors in five areas that commonly influence the effectiveness of therapy services. These areas include number of years the student has received educationally relevant therapy, the student's potential response to educationally relevant therapy, the student's learning environment, therapy services to be provided to the student, and support services to be provided to school staff and/or parents. The therapist should thoroughly read each column and, after collaborating with the IEP team, choose the column that best describes the student's learning environment, current level of support, and potential response to educationally relevant therapy. The points from each of the five areas are recorded in the *Therapy Profile* section of the **Summary Sheet**. The *Sources of Information and Additional Comments* section should include parent/teacher input and other information shared at the IEP team meeting.

The **Summary Sheet** includes information from the **Student Profile**, the student's priority educational needs, IEP goals and objectives, information from the **Therapy Profile**, and *Recommendation for Therapy*. All information, except the *Student Profile*, should be completed at the IEP meeting by the school-based therapist. Based on the student's priority educational needs and goals/objectives, the IEP team should then determine if the expertise and intervention of an OT and/or PT is needed.

A recommended frequency of therapy can be derived by completing the grid at the bottom of the **Summary Sheet**. Place an X on the horizontal axis of the *Student Profile* that corresponds with the total points. Place an X on the vertical axis of the *Therapy Profile* that corresponds with the total points. The point where the axes intersect indicates a recommended frequency of therapy. The following descriptors are guidelines for the therapist to use in interpretation of the scoring grid.

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Services are not indicated when the student is self-reliant and functional in the educational environment or the student's needs are addressed by classroom curriculum or other existing services (which may include total assistance by school staff)

Periodic Services may include documented environmental or equipment modifications and training and/or consultation with parents and/or school staff. Examples of frequency of therapy are one segment per month, two segments per grading period, thirty minutes per month, or once per semester.

Regular Services may include specific therapeutic strategies, environmental or equipment modifications, and training and/or collaboration with parents and/or school staff. Examples of frequency of therapy are two segments per month, one segment per week, or 30-45 minutes per week.

Intensive Services may include intensive therapeutic strategies, multiple environmental or equipment modifications, and training of parents and/or school staff. Examples of frequency of therapy are one to two segments per week or 45-60 minutes per week.

The IEP team proceeds with a *Recommendation for Therapy Services* on the **Summary Sheet**. Comments should be noted if the professional judgment of the therapist differs from the IEP team's recommendation.

If both an OT and PT have evaluated the student, **each school-based therapist**, based on his or her area of expertise, **should complete all sections of the tool on separate forms**.