

Ventura County Special Education Local Plan Area Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

#12



Information Alert for Parents of Special Education Students

SOCIAL SKILLS IN THE SCHOOLS

An Overview for Parents of Students in Special Education Programs

Children with IEPs represent a wide variety of disabilities. Sometimes social skills are affected by the disability, sometimes not. Children with special needs may display some of the following characteristics:

- An inability to use language appropriately to get their needs met
- An inability to maintain interest in conversations with others
- Rigidity in transitioning from one activity or subject to another
- Difficulty with following school or classroom rules
- Difficulty in making friends
- Difficulty in managing anger or frustration

There are many other social skills difficulties that children may have. The Present Levels of Performance page should note any concerns in the Social/Emotional area that you or any other members of the team have for your child at school.

If social skills are considered to be an area of need for your child, work with the IEP team to identify how those skills will be worked on at school. Social skills are considered to be very important within the educational context and may be even more important than some of your child's other needs, as appropriate social skills are necessary for many other environments, including community and work.

The IEP team is required to note if the student has "behavior affecting learning." If so, this will be noted, and strategies for addressing those behaviors will be specified. These may include:

- A Positive Behavior Support Plan
- A home/school or individual child contract for behavior
- Goals for reduction in the non desired behavior
- Goals for learning new, more appropriate behaviors
- Goals for better use of language
- Changes to the learning environment to reduce frustration and increase success
- Social skills groups taught by teacher or therapist
- Sensory strategies to increase readiness for learning (reduce over – or under-regulation)
- Strategies for ongoing home/school communication
- Strategies for participating in non-structured activities

We have lots of informational materials for you! Go to our website and click on "Information for Families."

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www.venturacountyselpa.com

The Special Education services to address the above may vary, and may include:

- “Specialized Academic Instruction” (SAI) in which a teacher or Paraeducator works on the goal individually or in a group. SAI may also include the use of Applied Behavioral Analysis strategies to promote skill development.
- “Speech-Language Therapy” in which a Speech-Language Therapist or Assistant works with the student on use of language, including vocabulary, and/or social interactions. Services may be provided individually or in a group.
- “Behavior Services” in which a School Psychologist, Behavior Intervention Case Manager (BICM), Special Education teacher or trained Paraeducator work with the student to implement a Positive Behavior Support Plan. Some students will need a Functional Analysis Assessment (FAA) or Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) conducted by a trained professional to analyze the causes of the child’s behavior, to assist in developing the plan. A Paraeducator would not conduct the FAA or FBA, but may assist in gathering data.
- “Individual or Group Counseling” provided by a School Counselor or Therapist. Counseling may utilize a psychotherapeutic approach in which a student works through certain issues with support of the therapist, or a “topical” approach in which a planned series of activities are used to take the child or group through an organized curriculum.
- “Occupational Therapy” in which an Occupational Therapist or Assistant works on teaching the student use of sensory or self-monitoring techniques to assist in learning readiness

If your child has goals that are written to address his or her social skill development, the team will set a target for your child to achieve within one year. It is important that the team all agree on how the skill will be measured, and that everyone understands it. You will expect progress reports on your child’s progress toward social skills goals at the same time as report cards come home in your school. You can ask to see the data collection sheets that are used to record progress. If your child is not making adequate progress, speak to the Special Education Case Manager to address your concerns. In some cases, if the child is not making progress, a new IEP meeting will be convened to discuss changing either the goal, the Behavior Plan, or the services.

For more information on this issue, go to the SELPA website at www.venturacountyselpa.com, click on Behavior Interventions.