

Guideline for Students with Severe Autism Spectrum Disorders

Information about Evidence Based Practices for working with children on the autism spectrum can be found at:

<http://www.captain.ca.gov/index.html>

<http://www.nationalautismcenter.org>

<http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu>

1. Class Composition: Class size averages between 8-12 students depending on age level and classroom dynamics. Students are grouped by age and grade level. (Preschool, lower elementary, upper elementary, middle school, high school, 18-22).
2. Staffing: Each class has one teacher and 2-3 full or part time assistants. If a classroom is experiencing significant disruptions, a temporary support assistant (TSA) may be assigned to support the classroom or an individual student for a brief periods of time so that the teacher is able to establish instructional control.
3. Student Services: Classroom time and Designated Instructional Services (DIS) for each student are based on individually assessed needs and IEP team decisions. Services may include but are not limited to Speech and Language, APE, OT, PT, assistive technology, self-regulation, individualized, specific skill training, social skills instruction, and positive behavioral support.
4. Administration: An administrator selected by the lead education agency (LEA) provides support to the classroom. This individual must have knowledge of the needs of students with autism spectrum disorders and be able to represent the district at IEP meetings.
5. School Psychologist: A school psychologist is assigned to support the special day classes. This individual must be able to conduct assessments and file reviews for students with autism spectrum disorders, may be able to handle intakes and placement changes, in addition to other administrative and typical duties assigned to this role. The school psychologist may be required help develop a behavior plan and act as a trainer in assault prevention and management.
6. Nursing Services: A school nurse experienced with students with autism spectrum disorders serves the special day classes. The school nurse provides training and support for all specialized health care needs and medication management. The school nurse monitors dietary and nutritional needs and completes all required health care documentation, including medication monitoring.
7. Credentials: The teacher has either a moderate/severe or SH: or a mild/moderate, LH credential. The teacher with a mild/moderate LH credential should have specialized training in working with students with autism spectrum disorders.
8. Curriculum: The classroom provides common core curriculum, with modifications as appropriate. Instruction may be offered in the following domains: daily living skills, functional academics, gross and fine motor skills, social communication, community-based instruction, vocational preparation and recreation/leisure. All classes may promote skill development in self management, social skills, and emotional regulation techniques.
9. Instructional strategies: Appropriate, evidence-based instructional strategies are implemented utilizing a prompt hierarchy and fading and shaping techniques as appropriate. Instruction will include teaching and reinforcing positive replacement behaviors. Instruction is tied to IEP goals and changes are data driven. Emergency procedures for behavior are used only in extreme situations when a student presents a

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- danger to self or others and are documented by credentialed staff. De-escalation techniques (such as Pro-ACT) are used in preference to restraint.
10. Behavior Supports: A behaviorist or school psychologist supports the classroom for behavioral consultation and the development, implementation and management of behavior plans. In addition to the individual plans, each classroom utilizes positive behavioral support systems, such as positive reward systems or a token economy, as well as a social skills curriculum.
 11. Staff Training: All teachers and staff must have specialized training in research-based strategies and methodologies for students with autism spectrum disorders. This may include: social skill acquisition, visual supports, applied behavior analysis (ABA) and pivotal response. All teachers and assistants are trained in diffusion of behavior escalation and assault prevention techniques utilizing a program such as Pro-ACT or other evidence based programs. This training is provided in-house by a trained trainer. Additionally, teachers and assistants participate in positive behavior intervention trainings during minimum, half days, and in-service days. Staff is also required to attend mandatory district trainings (CPR, epi-pen, sexual harassment, child abuse reporting, blood borne pathogens, etc.).
 12. Scheduling: Class is scheduled, as much as possible, to allow for mainstreaming students in the least restrictive environment. Parent involvement is sought and regular communication is an ongoing part of the program.
 13. Facilities: All facilities for students with disabilities follow SELPA housing guidelines. (See SELPA policies manual.) Classrooms are located so that site administrators can respond quickly and efficiently in an emergency, or if assigned support staff is not available.
 14. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): Training locations, scheduling, and access to extracurricular and non-academic activities are designed to foster interaction with non-disabled peers.
 15. Specialized Budget: Programs for students with autism may have a specialized budget for their unique needs, e.g., specialized curriculum such as gross motor equipment, visual communication systems, assistive technology, and behavior reinforcers.
 16. Inter- and Intra-agency Agreements: Agencies appropriate to the program will have agreements for issues such as campus safety, site emergency procedures, communication with district personnel, regional center, mental health, social services, SCOE, etc. to define roles and responsibilities and communication procedures. The IEP team will take an active role in the Collaborative Autism Diagnostic (CAD) clinics.