

Frequently Asked Questions – Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

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Students Aged 3-5 (Early Childhood)

Q1: What are regular early childhood programs?

A regular early childhood program is a program that includes a majority (at least 50 percent) of nondisabled children (i.e., children not on IEPs). This may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Head Start
- Kindergarten
- Preschool classes offered to an eligible pre-kindergarten population by the public school system
- Private kindergartens or preschools
- Group child development center or childcare

Q2: How should children receiving the majority of special education and related services in a location other than the child's classroom but within the same building be reported?

Special education and related services delivered to the child in the course of daily activities and routines in which all children in the classroom participate (e.g., "circle time", "learning centers") would be considered as being received in the Regular Early Childhood Program (LRE codes PA1 or PB1). However, services delivered in a location that removes the child from the opportunity to interact with nondisabled children would not be considered as being received in the Regular Early Childhood Program. These include, but are not limited to, services delivered in a 1:1 therapeutic setting, or in a small group comprised solely of children with disabilities whether or not they are provided in another location within the building where the regular early childhood program is located



Q3: When considering if a child is attending a regular early childhood program, does the child need to be enrolled in the program, vs. attending as a 'visitor' for a portion of time?

PEAs should report these data based on children with disabilities being enrolled in these types of programs. CWDs being enrolled in a regular early childhood program most closely aligns with the intent of the least restrictive environment provisions of the IDEA.

Q4: What are special education programs?

A special education program is a program that includes less than 50 percent nondisabled children (i.e., children not on IEPs). This may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Special education programs in
 - Regular school buildings
 - Trailers or portables outside regular school buildings
 - Childcare facilities
 - Hospital facilities on an outpatient basis
 - Other community-based settings
- Separate schools
- Residential facilities

Q5: Should childcare and other programs that families have chosen for their child be considered when reporting these data?

Yes, PEAs should take into consideration childcare and other programs that families have chosen for their child when determining the appropriate educational environment report category (LRE code).



Students Aged 6-21

Q1: How should I calculate the percentage of time inside the regular class for a student with a disability?

To calculate the amount of time spent inside the regular classroom for a student with a disability between the ages of 6 and 21, use the following formula:

$$\text{\# of hours spent in a regular class} / \text{total \# of hours in a school day} * 100$$

The total number of hours (denominator) should include lunch, recess, and study periods.

Time spent outside the regular classroom receiving services unrelated to the student's disability should be considered time inside the regular classroom.

Educational time spent in age-appropriate community-based settings that include students with and without disabilities should be counted as time spent in the regular classroom.

Q2: How do I calculate the percentage of time inside the regular classroom when a student has a shortened school day?

When calculating the percentage of time that a student spends inside the regular classroom, the denominator should include the total number of hours in a student's school day. If a student does not attend for a full school day, the calculation should only include the number of hours that the student attends school.



Q3: How should time spent during lunch, recess, and study periods be counted when calculating time spent inside the regular classroom? Are there some conditions under which these times might be considered time in which the student is segregated from nondisabled students (e.g., special education students may be separated so that they eat lunch in the cafeteria with their special education peers)?

The time a student with disabilities spends during lunch, recess, and study periods should be counted as time spent inside the regular classroom, unless the student has been removed from the environment with nondisabled students in order to receive services related to the student's disability. If a student is segregated from nondisabled students during lunch, recess, or study periods, the time spent during that activity should not be included in the numerator of the calculation of percentage of time in the regular classroom

Q4: How do I report LRE for a student with a disability who has been unilaterally placed by a parent or guardian in a private residential facility?

A student unilaterally placed in a private residential facility by a parent or guardian is reported as a *private school placement* category (service code J).

This category includes a student enrolled by parents or guardians in a regular parochial or other private elementary or secondary school whose basic education is paid through private resources and who receives special education and related services at public expense from a PEA under a service plan.

Q5: How should I report LRE for a parentally placed private school student with a disability who receives special education and related services from my PEA?

This case fits the private school placement category (service code J) as the student is enrolled by a parent or guardian in a regular parochial or other private elementary or secondary school and the student's basic education is paid through private resources, and the student receives special education and related services at public expense from a PEA under a service plan



Q6: How should I report a student who is placed by court order in a residential mental health facility (other than a hospital) and is receiving special education and related services under an IEP in that setting?

A student with a disability who is placed by a state-placing agency in a residential treatment center is reported as a *public or private residential facility* category (service code EA or EB or EC).

Selection of the service code is based on the percentage of time the student is inside the regular classroom. See service code definitions for complete details

Q7: How should I report LRE for a student who is placed in a short-term public residential placement (e.g., less than a week) on the child count date?

On the child count date, if the student is in a residential facility for students with disabilities at public expense, even if the duration of that placement is intended to be short term, the student would be reported in the *public or private residential facility* category (service code E).

Q8: Would the reporting of LRE for a student placed in a secure-care facility vary depending on whether the student is receiving special education and related services in a one-on-one setting or in a small group setting of peers with and without IEPs?

No. In either situation, a student who is receiving special education and related services in a secure-care facility should be reported with service code FA or FB or FC.

Selection of the service code is based on the percentage of time inside the regular classroom. See service code definitions for complete details.

Q9: How should I report LRE for a student with a disability who attends an alternative school or participates in an educational program in an alternative setting for students with and without disabilities?

Educational time spent in age-appropriate settings that include students with and without disabilities should be considered time spent in the regular classroom.



Q10: How do I report LRE for a student who participates in a Career and Technical Education District (CTED) program? Does the reporting category vary depending on whether the program provides special education support to the student?

Educational time spent in age-appropriate community-based settings that include individuals with and without disabilities should be counted as time inside the regular classroom when calculating the percentage of time, a student has spent inside the regular classroom. This is true regardless of whether special education support is provided to the student in that setting.

Q11: How should LRE be reported for a student who is homeschooled and resides within my district boundaries?

Home-schooled students are defined the same as students that are parentally placed in private schools. These students would be reported with service code J.

Q12: If a student has more than one disability category, how is the service code determined/reported?

When reporting the service code for a student with more than one disability, consider services for all disabilities provided collectively to determine the correct service code to report. From an AzEDS reporting perspective, if a student with more than one disability is reported with multiple service codes at a given time, this will result in an integrity failure.

Q13: What if I have a student who meets one of the four disability needs that qualify for Service code I and has a separate stand-alone disability need that Does not? Won't that violate the "one service code per student at a given time" rule?

As long as the student is eligible for one of the disability needs, A, MD, OI, or SID, then service code I can also be reported with any other stand-alone disability need category. If service code I is reported for a student that is not eligible for either A, MD, OI, or SID, this will result in an integrity failure.