

Least Restrictive Environment through the Life Span

Children

At home, children with developmental disabilities most often have greater opportunities for educational and social growth when they live with their families. A very high priority is placed on “the development and expansion of services and supports designed to assist families that are caring for their children at home.” Services and supports must...

- ♥ Respect and support the decision-making authority of the family;
- ♥ Are flexible and creative in meeting family needs;
- ♥ Recognize and build on family strengths, natural supports, and community resources;
- ♥ Are culturally-competent; and
- ♥ Promote inclusion

(Welfare and Institutions Code §4648, 4685)

At school, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) refers to the setting where a child with a disability can receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) designed to meet his or her educational goals, alongside peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate.

“IDEA’s strong preference that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities be educated in regular classes with their nondisabled peers with appropriate supplementary aids and services.”

(64 Federal Register 12470; 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(5)(A))

In the community, inclusion refers to one’s legal right to work, play, and live in the community of their choice, just like everyone else. The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life.

Community inclusion is a success when people:

- ♥ Have relationships with people who are not paid to spend time with them
- ♥ People have opportunities to experience a variety of social roles that include friendships, contributing to the community and gaining new skills
- ♥ People have opportunities and resources to do and accomplish things that are important to them
- ♥ People experience a sense of belonging



Welfare and Institutions Code §4648

“It is the intent of the Legislature that services and supports assist individuals with developmental disabilities in achieving the greatest self-sufficiency possible and in exercising personal choices.

The regional center shall secure services and supports that meet the needs of the consumer, as determined in the consumer’s individual program plan, and within the context of the individual program plan, the planning team shall give highest preference to those services and supports which would allow minors with developmental disabilities to live with their families, adult persons with developmental disabilities to live as independently as possible in the community, and that allow all consumers to interact with persons without disabilities in positive, meaningful ways.”

Adults

At home, the “highest preference” is for an adult with a developmental disability to live as independently as possible in the community. “Consistent with state and federal law, the Legislature places a high priority on providing opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities, regardless of the degree of disability, to live in homes that they own or lease with support available as often and for as long as it is needed, when that is the preferred objective in the individual program plan.” (Welfare and Institutions Code §4689).

The range of supported living services and supports include, but are not limited to:

- ♥ Assessment of needs
- ♥ Assistance in finding and maintaining a home
- ♥ Advocacy & self-advocacy
- ♥ Social, behavioral support
- ♥ Use of 24-hour emergency response services
- ♥ Daily living skills training
- ♥ Personal care assistance
- ♥ Facilitating community participation
- ♥ Employment goals

(Welfare and Institutions Code §4689)

Adults living at home with parents and/or a family member, can receive independent living skills (ILS) training if the need for ILS is written into the Individual Program Plan (IPP), and the need for ILS is either to help the individual get skills to live on their own or to help them become more independent while living at home with a parent, family member or other person. (Welfare and Institutions Code §4688.05)

At school, from ages 16-22, the school district is responsible to provide a coordinated set of activities that is designed to be within a results-oriented process, focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student to facilitate their movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.

(34 CFR 300.43(a); 20 U.S.C. 1401)

At work, the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) assists Californians with disabilities to obtain and retain employment and maximize their equality and ability to live independently in their communities. A vocational rehabilitation team will identify a combination of services and resources necessary to help the person prepare for, find and retain employment. These may include, but are not limited to:

- ♥ Career assessment and counseling
- ♥ Job search and interview skills
- ♥ Independent living skills
- ♥ Career education and training
- ♥ Assistive technology

Bottom line: “An array of services and supports should be established which is sufficiently complete to meet the needs and choices of each person with developmental disabilities, regardless of age or degree of disability, and at each stage of life and to support their integration into the mainstream life of the community.”

(Welfare and Institutions Code §4501)



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