Early Childhood Special Education Orientation

Indicator 6: Early Childhood Educational Environments

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Objective

- Review foundational documents that influence Early Childhood Education and Early Childhood Special Education

- Review important documents that promote inclusion

- Define Indicator 6 and understand federal reporting requirements under the IDEA

- Understand how, when, and why we collect and report

- State possible early childhood educational environments as stated in the ECSE IEP

- Utilize the Decision Tree

- Problem solve to create better outcomes for each and every child

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Vermont Guiding Principles:
Supporting Each and Every Young Child and Family's Full and Equitable Participation

We believe that each and every child...

• Learns within the context of secure and authentic relationships, play, and interactions within their environments.

• Deserves equitable access to experiences that acknowledge and build on their uniqueness.

• Deserves opportunities to deeply learn and develop to their full potential through joyful interactions in safe, accepting environments.

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Advancing Equity

All children have the right to equitable learning opportunities that help them achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society. Thus, all early childhood educators have a professional obligation to advance equity. They can do this best when they are effectively supported by the early learning settings in which they work and when they and their wider communities embrace diversity and full inclusion as strengths, uphold fundamental principles of fairness and justice, and work to eliminate structural inequities that limit equitable learning opportunities.

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC Position Statement on Equity, April 2019)

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Considerations for Equity

1. Provide high-quality early education programs that build on each and every child's unique individual and family strengths, cultural background, language(s), abilities, and experiences.

2. Eliminate differences in educational outcomes as a result of who children are, where they live, and what resources their families have.

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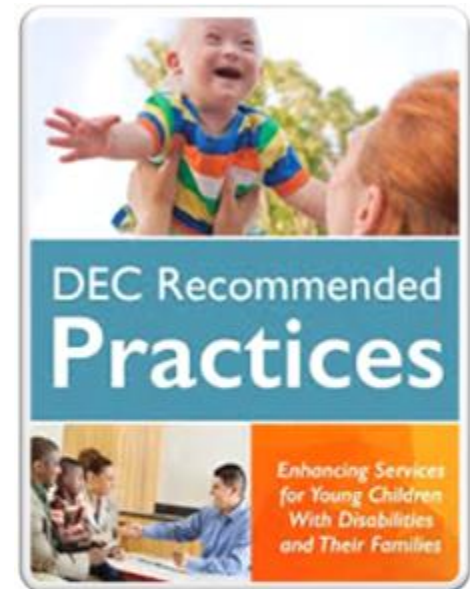
DEC Recommended Practices

Leadership	Assessment	Environment
Family	Instruction	Interaction
Teaming and Collaboration	Transition	

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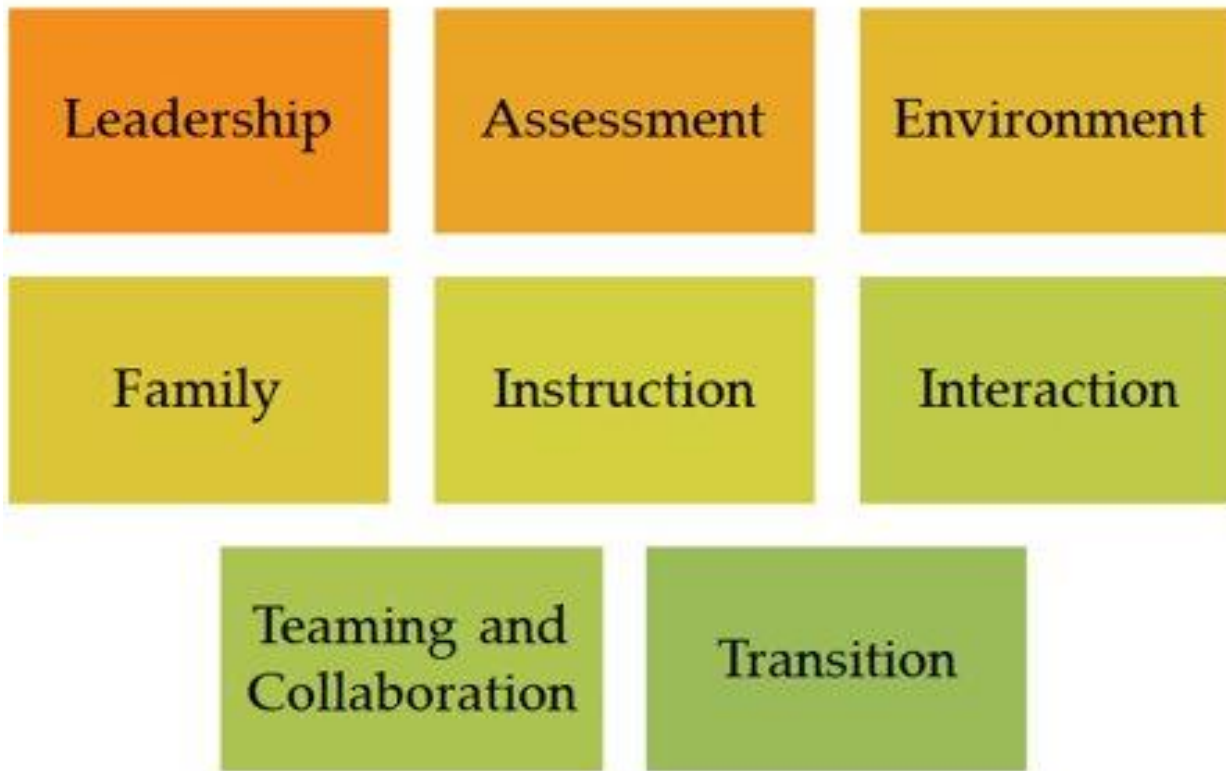
DEC Recommended Practices: Environment

Focus on Environment

E1. Practitioners provide services and supports in natural and inclusive environments during daily routines and activities to promote the child's access to and participation in learning experiences.

E3. Practitioners work with the family and other adults to modify and adapt the physical, social, and temporal environments to promote each child's access to and participation in learning experiences.

DEC Practice Improvement Tools: Environment

Vermont Early Learning Standards

Early MTSS

Vermont's Early Multi-tiered System of Supports
Promoting a Statewide Birth to Five (Early MTSS) and PreK-3 MTSS Sustainable System
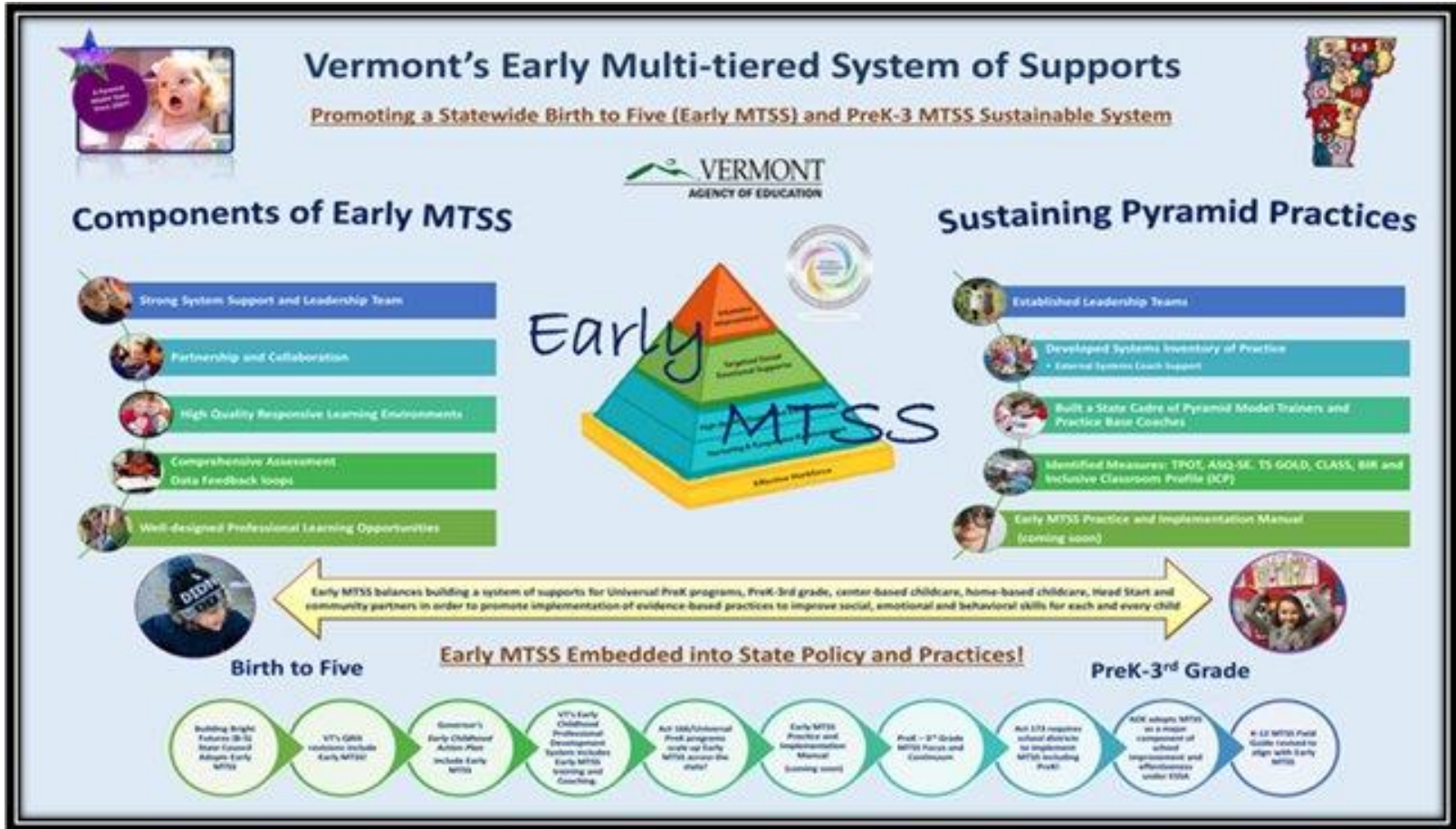
State Performance Plan (SPP) and Annual Performance Report (APR)

IDEA requires each state to develop an SPP/APR that evaluates the state's efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of IDEA, and also describes how the state will improve its implementation.

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SPP/APR

SU/SDs are required to submit information and data for reporting, monitoring and compliance purposes.

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What are Performance Indicators?

- For purposes of measuring effectiveness for special education programs and services funded through the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)](#), 12 performance indicators are used.

- Performance indicators are measurable values that demonstrate how effectively state-level programs are achieving objectives.

- Organizations use performance indicators to evaluate their success at reaching targets.

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ECSE Indicators

Indicator 6: Early Childhood Environments → Indicator 7: Early Child Outcomes → Indicator 8: Parent Involvement → Indicator 12: Part C to Part B Transition

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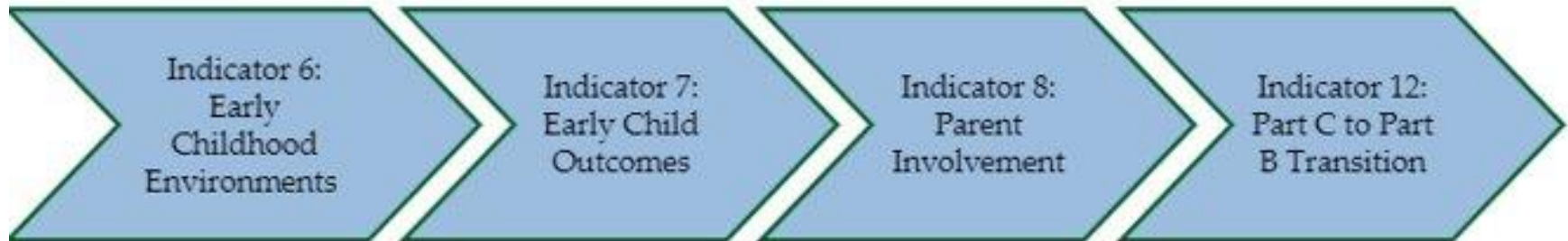
What is Indicator 6: Early Childhood Educational Environments

Indicator 6 examines the percent of children aged 3 through 5 with IEPs who:

A. attend a **regular early childhood program** and receive the majority of special education and related services in the **regular early childhood program**; or

B. attend and receive the majority of special education and related services in a **separate** special education class, separate school or residential facility. (20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(A)).

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What does "Other than Regular Education Classroom" mean?

The U.S. Department of Education defines services being delivered in "other than regular education setting" as: *Classroom or program that includes less than 50 percent nondisabled children.*

"Other regular education settings" may include, but are not limited to:

• Special Education classes

• Hospital facilities

• Separate rooms, classes, or schools

• Separate school or programs

• Residential facilities

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Where are Regular Education Classrooms?

Regular Education Settings in Vermont include:

- Head Starts

- Pre-qualified public or private PreK's

- Licensed Center Based Child Care Programs

- Licensed Family Child Care Homes

- Kindergarten (public or private)

A regular education classroom includes no more than 50% of children with disabilities

Determining Early Childhood Education Environments/Placements

Placement decisions are made by the IEP team which includes:

• Parents

• Educator

• Special Educator

• Related Service Providers

• Other persons knowledgeable about the child

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Important Documents Supporting Inclusion and Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

DEC & NAEYC Joint Position Statement on Inclusion (2009)

Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in EC Programs Joint Policy Statement (2015)

Dear Colleague Letter on Preschool LRE (2017)

DEC and NAEYC Joint Position Statement on Inclusion (2009)

Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships, and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports.

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Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs Policy Statement (2015)

Inclusion in early childhood programs refers to including children with disabilities in early childhood programs, together with their peers without disabilities; holding high expectations and intentionally promoting participation in all learning and social activities, facilitated by individualized accommodations; and using evidence-based services and supports to foster their development, friendships with peers, and sense of belonging. This applies to all young children with disabilities, from those with the mildest disabilities to those with the most significant disabilities.

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Dear Colleague Letter on Preschool Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) (2017)

A preschool child with a disability who is eligible to receive special education and related services and his or her families are entitled to all the rights and protections guaranteed under Part B of IDEA and its implementing regulations in 34 CFR Part 300. One of these guaranteed rights is the right to be educated in the LRE in accordance with section 612(a)(5) of IDEA and CFR section 300.114 through 300.118. The LRE requirements under Part B of IDEA state a strong preference for educating children with disabilities in regular classes alongside their peers without disabilities.

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Why Inclusion?

Special Education is a service, not a placement.

Research Based Facts on Inclusion

Brief Summary: Fact Sheet of Research on Preschool Inclusion

• In 27 years, the practice of providing special education and related services in regular early childhood settings to preschoolers with disabilities has increased only 5.7% and many young children with disabilities continue to be educated in separate settings.

• Inclusion benefits children with and without disabilities.

• The quality of preschool programs including at least one student with a disability were as good as or better than preschool programs without children with disabilities. However, traditional measures of early childhood program quality might not be sufficient for assessing quality of programs that include children with disabilities.

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Access, Participation, and Supports

Access + Participation + Supports = High Quality Early Childhood Inclusion

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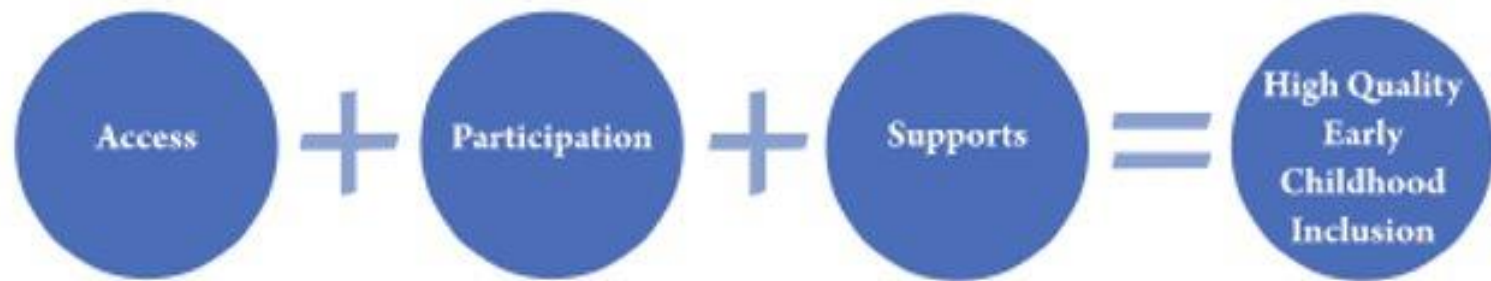
ECSE IEP and Reporting

Vermont Early Childhood Educational Environments Memo

5-year-olds who are attending kindergarten and receiving special education services must be reported in a school-aged educational environment beginning with the 2020-2021 school year.

The Vermont Early Childhood Special Education IEP (Form 5)

Environments/ Placements:

- **Early Childhood**
  or
- **Kindergarten**

Child is attending a regular early childhood program* for **10 or more** hours per week.

☐ and receives at least 50% of their special education services in the regular early childhood program|

☐ and receives at least 50% of their special education services in some other location

OR

Child is attending a regular early childhood program* for **less than 10** hours per week

☐ and receives at least 50% of their special education services in the regular early childhood program

☐ and receives at least 50% of their special education services in some other location

Indicate where the child received the majority of their special education services. _____

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Early Childhood Educational Environment/Placement: NOT Attending a Regular Early Childhood Program

OR

Child is **not** attending a regular early childhood program* and receives special education services in:

☐ a separate special class

☐ a separate school

☐ a residential facility

☐ their home

☐ the service provider's location or another _____

Head Starts, private childcares, or other preschool programs are regular early childhood programs, unless the class contains more than 50% of children with disabilities.

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OR

Child is attending kindergarten and receives special education services:
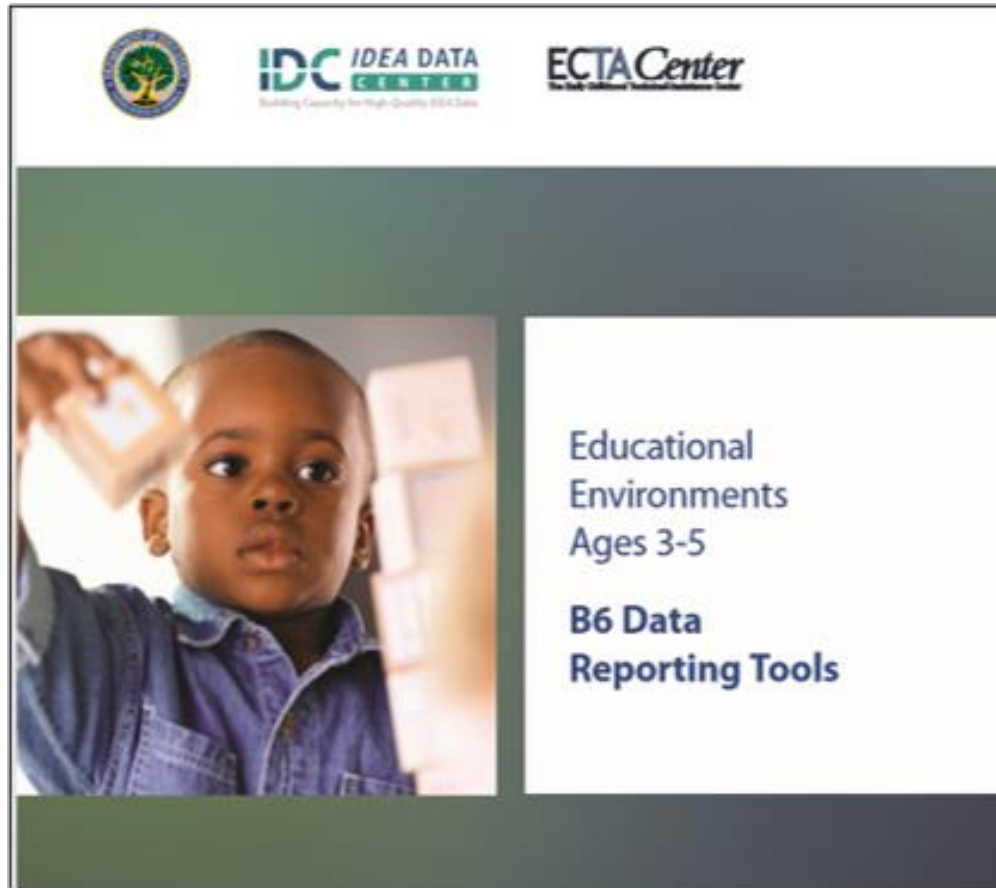
- ☐ Inside regular class at least 80% of the time
- ☐ Inside regular class 40% to 79% of the time
- ☐ Inside regular class less than 40% of the time
- ☐ Separate day school – public or private
- ☐ Residential facility

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When is Indicator 6 Data Collected and Reported?

- December 1 Child Count collection period begins, entering no later than December 15th.

- June 30th collection period begins, entering no later than July 15th.

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Breaking it Down: Reporting Educational Environments Ages 3 through 5

Decision Tree for Reporting Early Childhood Educational Environments for Children Ages 3-5 with IEPS
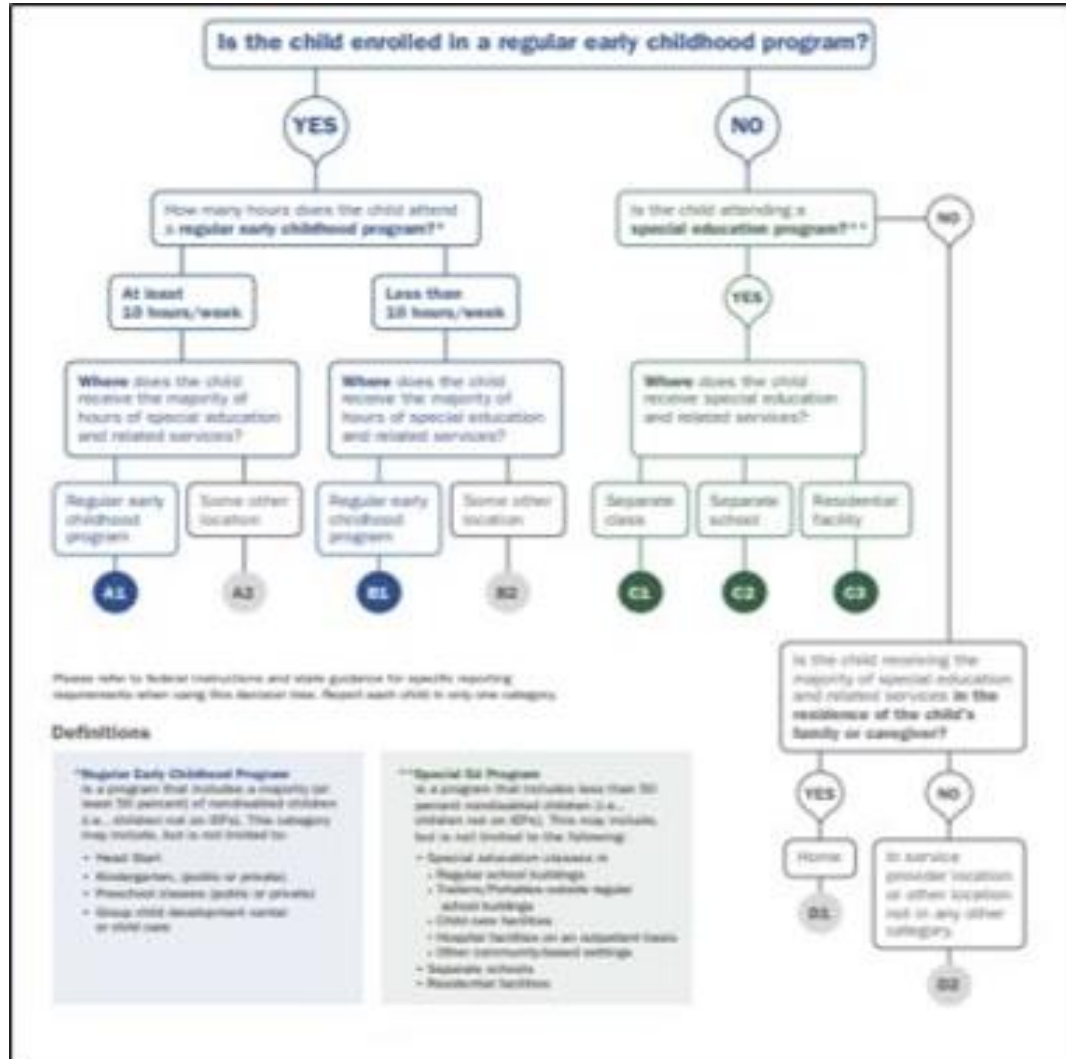
Category Definitions of Programs and Services to Report Indicator B6

Category Definitions of Programs and Services to Report Indicator B6

Children attending a
regular early childhood program...

A1 ...at least 10 hours per week and receiving the majority of hours of special education and related services **in the regular early childhood program**

B1 ...less than 10 hours per week and receiving the majority of hours of special education and related services **in the regular early childhood program**

Children attending a
special education program
(not in any regular early childhood program)...

C1 separate class

C2 separate school

C3 residential facility

Children attending a
regular early childhood program...

A2 ...at least 10 hours per week and receiving the majority of hours of special education and related services **in some other location**

**B2** ...less than 10 hours per week and receiving the majority of hours of special education and related services **in some other location**

Children attending **neither a regular early childhood program nor a special education program**
(not included in category A, B, or C)...

D1 ...and receiving the majority of hours of special education and related services **in the home**

D2 ...and receiving special education and related services **at the provider location or some other location**

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SPP/APR Part B Indicator 6 Calculation

State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR), Part B, Indicator 6

Indicator B6-A

Percent of children 3 through 5 with IEPs attending regular early childhood program and receiving the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program.

$$\frac{A1+B1}{\text{total number of children 3-5 with IEPs}} \times 100$$
$$(A1+A2+B1+B2+C1+C2+C3+D1+D2)$$

Indicator B6-B

Percent of children 3 through 5 with IEPs attending separate special education class, separate school or residential facility.

$$\frac{C1+C2+C3}{\text{total number of children 3-5 with IEPs}} \times 100$$
$$(A1+A2+B1+B2+C1+C2+C3+D1+D2)$$

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Scenarios for B6 Reporting Tools: Educational Environments for Children Ages 3–5

Essential ECSE Questions for Leadership

- Is the team collaborating with local childcare centers, preschools, and other early childhood settings to coordinate inclusive services?

- What are the district's procedures for determining placement in the LRE?

Critical Teaming Questions

1. Do all team members participate in the discussion?

2. Is parent input considered?

3. Is the team considering the full continuum of educational environments in their classroom discussion?

4. Does the team describe the child's functioning, rather than just test scores?

5. Does the discussion include the child's full range of functioning, including skills and behaviors that are age appropriate, immediate foundational, and leading to immediate foundational?

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Commonly Asked Question 1

Q1: Should private programs that families have chosen for their child, be considered when determining a child's environment/ placement?

Answer 1

A1: Yes. LEAS should consider the full continuum of educational placement, including childcare and other private programs that families have chosen for their child when determining the appropriate educational placement.

Q2: Is a private program such as a childcare, licensed family home, or Head Start considered a "regular early childhood program?

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Answer 2

A2: Regular Early Childhood Program is a program that includes a majority (at least 50 percent) of nondisabled children (i.e., children not on IEP's). This category may include, but is not limited to: Kindergarten, public or private Preschool classes, public or private Group child development center or childcare. However, more informal settings such as neighborhoods settings would not because they are generally nor required to comply with VELS or curriculum.

Q3: How should a child receiving the majority of special education and related services in a location other than their classroom but within the same building be reported?

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Answer 3

A3. This would be reported in "some other" location. ECSE and related services delivered in a location that removes the child from the opportunity to interact with children without disabilities, **would not be considered** as being received in a "regular early childhood program".

This includes but is not limited to services delivered in a 1:1 therapeutic setting, or in a small group comprised solely of children with disabilities, whether they are provided in another location within the building where the regular early childhood program is located.

Q4: If a PreK classroom at a school has 10 students, 6 with IEPs, and 4 without IEPs. Is this classroom considered a "regular education program?"

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Answer 4

A4: No. If more than 50% of children attending a program have IEPs, it is not reported as a "regular education program". It is considered a special education classroom.

Commonly Asked Question 5

Q5: At a recent IEP meeting, the IEP team decides that the best environment for the child is the school's preschool program. Currently the classroom has 4 children with IEPs and 4 children not on IEPS. Is this a regular education environment?

Answer 5

A5: No. If more than 50% of children attending a program have IEPs, it is not reported as a regular education program. It is considered a special education classroom.

Commonly Asked Question 6

Q6: Does the IEP team need to amend the ECSE IEP each time the classroom ratio changes?

Answer 6

A6: No. The preschool environment is entered at the time the ECSE IEP is written. The environment applies at the time the ECSE IEP is written. We understand ratios may fluctuate throughout the school year.

Resources

- [Vermont Guiding Principles](#)
- [Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education, National Association for the Education of Young Children](#)
- [DEC Recommended Practices](#)
- [DEC/ECTA Performance Checklists](#)
- [Interactive Selection Tool](#)
- [Practice Guide for Practitioners](#)
- [Vermont Early Learning Standards](#)
- [DEC/NAEYC Joint Policy Statement](#)
- [US Department of Education and Office of Special Education Dear Colleague Letter](#)
- [Brief Summary Fact Sheet on Inclusion](#)
- [ECTA LRE Determination](#)
- [VT AOE Memo: Child Count Educational Environments for 5 year olds in Kindergarten Reporting](#)

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IDC Educational Environment Resources

- [Educational Environments Ages 3-5 B6 Data Reporting Tools 2017-18 Clarifications](#) contains a decision tree, the SPP/APR Part B Indicator 6 Measurement Table and reporting clarifications.

- [IDC B6 Project](#) contains an interactive decision tree, glossary, and information on reporting categories with scenarios for educational environments for children ages 3-5.

- [Environments 3-5 Data Template: Calculating Local Data Worksheet](#) is a template for calculating local data so that SEAs and LEAs can see in real-time the percentages of their children ages 3-5 attending and receiving services in specific educational environments.

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