

Federal Rules defining **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)** state that each public agency must ensure that:

- To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.
- Each public agency must ensure that a continuum of alternative placements is available to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services and make provision for supplementary services (such as resource room or itinerant instruction) to be provided in conjunction with regular class placement.

With regard to **placement** of students, federal rules state that:

- In determining the educational placement of a child with a disability, including a preschool child with a disability, each public agency must ensure that the placement decision is made by a group of persons, including the parents, and other persons knowledgeable about the child, the meaning of the evaluation data, and the placement options; and is made in conformity with the LRE provisions.
- Additionally, the child's placement is determined at least annually; is based on the child's IEP (Individual Education Program); and is as close as possible to the child's home; unless the IEP of a child with a disability requires some other arrangement, the child is educated in the school that he or she would attend if nondisabled. In selecting the LRE, consideration is given to any potential harmful effect on the child or on the quality of services that he or she needs. A child with a disability is not removed from education in age-appropriate regular classrooms solely because of needed modifications in the general education curriculum.

Federal rules define **nonacademic settings** and state that:

- In providing or arranging for the provision of nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities, including meals, recess periods, and the services and activities, each child with a disability participates with nondisabled children in the extracurricular services and activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of that child. Each child with a disability has the supplementary aids and services determined by the child's IEP Team to be appropriate and necessary for the child to participate in nonacademic settings.

What does this mean?

- LRE is defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA).
- LRE means that students with disabilities are educated with peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate.
- LRE determinations are based on an individual student and his/her needs as determined through the IEP process.
- There is a LRE explanation on the IEP. The statement is an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate with non-disabled students in the regular classroom, extracurricular and other activities.
- An IEP meeting must be held to discuss changes in placement (where the student receives special education services).

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Arc Guide

Least Restrictive Environment in Special Education



- LRE decisions must be individually based. LRE decisions cannot be made solely on the basis of a particular disability category.
- Schools are not required to have every placement option at each school building. If a student needs a level of services to the extent that most services need to be provided outside of the regular education classroom, those services may not be available at the school the student would typically attend nor do they have to be.
- Supplementary aids and services means aids, services and other supports that are provided to enable students with disabilities to be educated with peers without disabilities. Supplementary aids and services must be provided based on the student's individual needs in order for the student to be educated in the LRE.

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