

Checklist for Medically Necessary Shortened School Day

Purpose: LEAs can follow this process to support the rationale for a medically necessary shortened school day. Use this checklist to move through the process, and for monitoring any student already on a medically necessary shortened school day.

NOTE for IEP Teams: Do not proceed with this checklist if there is insufficient documentation to answer or discuss each consideration as an IEP team. For example, consider medical documentation provided by the family. If the district determines medical documentation is needed to determine a FAPE for the student, then the district must pay for the evaluation needed to obtain the district-requested medical documentation. The district could make this decision because they have no medical documentation and need it to determine a FAPE or have some medical information and need more medical information in addition to what has previously been provided or what has been provided by the parent.

Prior to the IEP Team Meeting

1. Secure Medical Documentation

- Obtain documentation from a licensed prescribing healthcare provider specifying the medical condition that necessitates a shortened school day, including specific limitations, expected duration, and recommendations for the student's educational program.

Iowa Code Reference: 281—41.320(1) (Evaluations and eligibility determinations must include medical information when necessary to understand the impact of the disability on the student's educational needs).

Iowa Code Reference: 281—41.320(1) (The medical opinion provides critical insight into the student's health needs and must be considered).

2. Convene the IEP Team

- Schedule an IEP team meeting, including parents, relevant school personnel, and the prescribing medical professional or a representative when appropriate. Use the medical documentation as a foundation for discussing the student's educational needs.

During the IEP Team Meeting

1. Weigh Medical Opinion

- The IEP team must carefully consider the prescribing healthcare provider's opinion, which is essential in determining the appropriateness of a shortened school day.

Iowa Code Reference: 281—41.320(1) (The medical opinion provides critical insight into the student's health needs and must be considered).

Iowa Code Reference: 281—41.321(3) (Parents must be involved in the development of the IEP and any decision-making processes related to their child's education).

2. Involve Parents

- Ensure that parents or guardians are fully informed and participate in the decision-making process, understanding how the medical opinion guides the discussion. Parents must know outside information will be reviewed and considered at the IEP meeting, and that the outside information does not override an IEP team decision.

Iowa Code Reference: 281—41.321(3) (Parental involvement is mandated in the IEP process).

3. Assess Educational Impact

- Evaluate how the shortened school day, as recommended by the prescribing medical professional, will affect the student's ability to access the general education curriculum and meet their academic and functional goals. Consider alternative strategies or accommodations that might allow for a full school day.

Iowa Code Reference: 281—41.116 (The school day should be the same for all students unless otherwise specified in the IEP, reflecting individualized needs based on expert recommendations).

4. Document in the IEP

- Clearly document the rationale for the shortened school day in the IEP:
 - Include Medical Recommendations
 - Specify the duration and any conditions under which the student would return to a full school day
 - Discuss and determine medical needs that will be addressed by an individual health plan, if appropriate
 - Ensure PWN documentation includes rationale for the IEP team's decision

Iowa Code Reference: 281—41.320(2) (All decisions, including deviations from the standard school day, must be documented in the IEP).

5. Monitor and Review Progress

- Develop a plan for monitoring the student's progress during the shortened school day, collecting data on academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being. Schedule regular IEP meetings to review progress, with attention to any updates from the medical professional.

Iowa Code Reference: 281—41.324(1) (The IEP must be reviewed periodically, at least annually, to ensure it continues to meet the student's educational needs, especially in the context of ongoing medical advice.)

6. Develop a Reintegration Plan

- Develop a plan for reintegrating the student into a full school day when medically appropriate, with clear criteria and timelines, developed in consultation with prescribing medical professionals.

Iowa Code Reference: Although no specific code addresses reintegration plans, the requirement to provide FAPE under 281—41.101 implies that plans should support the student's educational progress without unnecessary restrictions.

Federal Code Reference: 34 C.F.R. § 300.101(a): This regulation requires that each public agency must ensure that a FAPE is available to any child with a disability who needs special education and related services, including the consideration of how a student's educational needs can be met in the least restrictive environment, which includes plans for reintegration. This federal requirement supports the state's obligation to create plans that help students return to a full school day when appropriate, aligning with Iowa Code 281—41.101.

7. Ensure Parental Rights and Involvement

- Ensure parents fully understand their rights under IDEA, including the right to consent to or challenge decisions made by the IEP team regarding their child's school day.
- Provide information on how to resolve disputes if the parents disagree with the decision(s), especially if they feel the medical recommendations have not been adequately considered (ASK Resource Center Link)

Iowa Code Reference: 281—41.507 (Outlines the procedural safeguards available to parents, including the right to mediation and due process hearings).

8. Create Communication Plans and Pathways

- Discuss and create plans to keep IEP team members informed after the IEP meeting. This includes Obtaining Signed Consent between LEA, parents, and any other party to exchange information (medical providers or professionals)

After the IEP Meeting

1. Monitor and Review Progress

- Implement a plan for monitoring the student's progress during the shortened school day, collecting data on academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being.
- Schedule regular IEP meetings to review progress, with attention to any updates from the medical professional. Regular IEP meetings are recommended to occur monthly using all available valid and reliable data.

Iowa Code Reference: 281—41.324(1) (The IEP must be reviewed periodically, at least annually, to ensure it continues to meet the student's educational needs, especially in the context of ongoing medical advice).

2. Monitor Progress on the Reintegration Plan

- Review progress on a plan for reintegrating the student into a full school day when medically appropriate, with clear criteria and timelines, developed in consultation with the prescribing medical professional.

Iowa Code Reference: Although no specific code addresses reintegration plans, the requirement to provide FAPE under 281—41.101 implies that plans should support the student's educational progress without unnecessary restrictions.

3. Maintain Ongoing Communication with Medical Providers

- Keep regular communication with the student's healthcare providers to ensure the educational plan aligns with medical recommendations. Update the IEP as necessary based on these communications.

Iowa Code Reference: 281—41.321(2) (Allows for the inclusion of outside agencies, such as medical providers, in the IEP team if they have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child).