

Services in Community Preschools or Daycares

Can My Child Get Services in a Community Preschool or Daycare?

Yes. If your child qualifies for special education, they have the right to receive services in **the least restrictive environment (LRE)** — and that may include a private preschool, church daycare, or Head Start program.

The goal is to support your child in environments where they can learn alongside typically developing peers whenever appropriate.

How Services Can Look in a Community Setting

Services don't have to happen only in a public school classroom. If your child is in a community preschool or daycare, their IEP team will consider:

- What support your child needs
- What services can be delivered in that setting
- How to work with staff to make the setting successful

Examples of What It Might Look Like:

- A speech therapist visits the daycare once a week
 - A special education teacher consults with the daycare teacher on strategies
 - Occupational therapy sessions happen in a quiet area of the daycare
 - Visual supports and behavior plans are used during daily routines
-

What the Law Says (IDEA)

- Your child must receive services in the **least restrictive environment (LRE)** that is appropriate
- LRE means **being with peers without disabilities to the maximum extent possible**
- The setting must be determined by your child’s IEP team, including you
- Public schools must **consider and explore community settings** before placing a child in a more separate or restrictive environment

Legal Highlights

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), schools are required to:

“To the maximum extent appropriate, educate children with disabilities alongside children who are not disabled.” (*IDEA § 300.114*)

Preschoolers are included in this right. The IEP team must consider inclusive settings like community preschools or daycares before recommending a more restrictive placement. Placement decisions **cannot be based on:**

- Program convenience
- Staffing limitations
- Pre-existing models or policies

Families cannot be required to enroll their child in a public preschool to receive services. If services cannot be provided onsite, the district must offer other ways to deliver support — not remove services altogether.

“Public agencies may not make placement decisions based on funding, staffing convenience, or pre-existing service delivery models.”
(*OSEP Letter to Clarke, 2012; 2017 Dear Colleague Letter on Preschool LRE*)

What If My Child’s Preschool Doesn’t Want Services Onsite?

- The school district cannot require you to move your child to a public program in order to receive services
 - If services can't be provided onsite, the IEP team must explore **alternate ways** to deliver them (e.g., pull-out sessions, consultation, transportation to another location)
 - Communication and flexibility between your family, the preschool, and the school district is key
-

What Other Parents Wish They Knew

- “I thought I had to move my child to the public school — but I didn’t.”
 - “Once our daycare and teacher were on the same page, things really improved.”
 - “It helped to ask the school team, ‘How can we support my child where they already are?’”
-

Parent Reflection Space

Use these questions to think about where your child learns best.

- What setting does my child feel most comfortable in?
 - Are there specific routines or supports that already help?
 - What concerns do I have about keeping services in the current preschool or daycare?
 - What questions should I bring to the IEP team?
-

Sources

- Kansas State Department of Education. (2023). *Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and Placement Guidance*. Retrieved from <https://www.ksde.org/>
 - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B. (2004). Retrieved from <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>
 - U.S. Department of Education. (2021). *Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs*.
 - OSEP Letter to Clarke (2012); Dear Colleague Letter on Preschool LRE (2017).
-

Important Reminder

This handout reflects Kansas-specific practices and IDEA requirements. Always work with your IEP team to explore options that meet your child’s individual needs — no matter where they learn.