

STANDARDS IN ACTION: INTERIM SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES OR SUSPECTED DELAYS

INTERIM SERVICES 1302.61(a) AND (b)



THE CURRENT SITUATION

Magda, a teacher in a full-day classroom of three-year-olds, has been struggling to help Jake be successful in their classroom. Jake entered the program in the fall, having just turned three in August. This is his first experience in an early childhood program. Jake's aunt and his mother, Danica, both cared for Jake and his cousins until he was old enough to enroll in Head Start. Danica completed the Ages & Stages Questionnaires®: Social-Emotional, 2nd ed., for his screening. Jake's score did not raise concerns that would refer him for further evaluation. But his total score fell into the monitoring range on the screening tool.

In the weeks following the screening, the classroom settled into a community of young children who were learning the ropes—as well as the rules—of their environment. As they learn what to expect and what is expected in return, Jake's occasional, strong emotional responses (outbursts) began interfering with his success. Magda wanted all children in her classroom to learn and grow from their experiences. So she asked Sharon, the program's disability coordinator, to come and observe so they could think together about how she might support him. Here are questions they discussed to frame Sharon's observation:

- When and in what activities is Jake most successful?
- What interactions or activities are challenging for Jake?
- What circumstances typically happen before his outbursts?
- Might his outburst relate to time or the daily schedule?

THE SOLUTION: FIRST THINGS FIRST

Based on Sharon's observation, Magda and Sharon's reflections on their observations, and ongoing conversations with Danica about what she saw at home, Sharon and Magda agree to refer Jake to the Local Education Agency (LEA) for further evaluation and to determine his eligibility for special education, Part B services. Magda spoke with Danica to share her and Magda's thoughts and get Danica's feedback and permission for the referral. Magda also gathered the documentation she had on Jake, including the earlier screening and all observation and anecdotal notes she had collected. Magda included this information in her referral.

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Within two weeks, the LEA told Sharon that they had received signed consent for evaluation from Danica, and would be scheduling his evaluation within the next five weeks.

Sharon reminded Magda of two related Head Start Program Performance Standards in 1302.61:

- “(a) Programs must ensure the individualized needs of children with disabilities ... are being met and all children have access to and can fully participate in the full range of activities and services.”
- “(b) While the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA determines a child’s eligibility, a program much provide individualized services and supports, to the maximum extent possible, to meet the child’s needs.”

Sharon and Magda met with Danica to develop a plan to meet his individualized needs in the weeks before determination of Jake’s eligibility for special education services. In addition to the questions above, they also considered the following questions while developing a plan that would support Jake’s success:

- What happens in similar situations at home with his cousins? Are the behaviors at school alike or different from those at home?
- What strategies have been implemented at home that have been helpful in supporting Jake?
- What modifications might be made in the classroom to help Jake be successful?

After Sharon, Magda, and Danica talked about what he did at home and what they observed in the program, they agreed on the following strategies and modifications. Magda would document all changes and his responses over time as they tried new things so they could share their strategies and the results with the LEA during his evaluation.

- Jake’s outbursts were more frequent toward the end of the day. Magda requested a consistent volunteer engage Jake in quieter activities at that time, such as one-on-one or small-group reading.
- Jake finds it challenging to sit quietly in a large group (e.g., at the table while waiting for food to be served; during circle time in the morning). Magda will
 - give Jake “helping tasks” such as helping set the table or gather and store supplies to prepare for the snack or meal; and
 - allow Jake to choose an alternate activity during circle time until he is better able to sit and learn from the experience, with the following parameters:
 - Jake must choose between two activities offered by Magda that he can successfully complete independently
 - He must remain quiet and not disturb circle time activities
- To enhance his sense of belonging in the classroom, Magda will offer opportunities to let him shine and be a leader in appropriate ways (e.g., leading the parade on the playground; choosing the book for a small-group reading).



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THE SOLUTION: NEXT STEPS

Then, Magda and Sharon met with the education services team to talk about next steps. This team includes other teaching staff, the education manager, coaches, and supervisors. They meet monthly to address continuous quality improvement efforts. Magda and Sharon put this item on the meeting agenda to discuss what supports Magda and other staff needed to begin implementing this plan. Through this discussion, the team

- identified online training opportunities to develop Magda's skills in providing behavior supports to children. Magda began by reviewing the 15-minute In-Service Suite entitled Redirecting Behavior;
- developed a coaching schedule for Sharon and Magda to review these resources, observe practices in the classroom, and reflect on progress and challenges; and
- agreed on a communication plan and schedule between the Implementation Team and Jake's mother to support learning and problem-solving.



SELECTED RESOURCES:

- Disabilities Services Newsletter Issue 1: Interim Services
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/disabilities-newsletter-01062017.pdf>
- 15 Minute In-Service Suites: Behavior Guidance
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/teaching-practices/article/engaging-interactions-environments>
 - Stating Behavioral Expectations
 - Creating Classroom Rules
 - Redirecting Behavior
 - Problem Solving in the Moment
- Strategies for Understanding and Managing Challenging Behavior in Young Children: What Is Developmentally Appropriate—and What Is a Concern?
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/teaching-practices/article/understanding-managing-challenging-behavior>
- Dual Language Learners with Challenging Behaviors
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/dual-language-learners-challenging-behaviors>



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