



Key Players on the Special Services Team

A child who has been identified as having special needs will need the help of a special services team. A special services team is made up of parents, educators, therapists, medical workers, and other professionals. The purpose of the team is to conduct an assessment of the child by gathering information about the child and determining his or her strengths and needs. The team then uses this information to create a plan for the child that will meet his or her needs. The parents or legal guardians of the child are the most important members of the team because they have been and will be the child's primary teachers and caregivers. Other family members such as a grandmother or aunt may be identified by the parents as the primary caregiver and asked to participate on the team. In addition to the parents

or legal guardians, other members of the special services team may include the following people.

The Family It is usually the parents who are on the early intervention team, although anyone the family identifies as the primary caregiver may participate. Family members generally spend the most time with the child and are the most knowledgeable about the child's skills and needs.

Early Intervention Specialists Early childhood teachers or consultants specialize in helping the child to learn and develop. They are often available to visit the child in the day care setting where they give care providers helpful tips for integrating and teaching children with special needs.

Speech-Language Pathologist This person specializes in communication disorders concerning voice articulation (pronunciation), oral motor skills, language (vocabulary) and hearing. Oral motor skills refer to the way the muscles of the mouth and face work. A speech and language pathologist helps a child use language.

Physical Therapist This person specializes in large motor function related to coordination, balance, muscle strength, endurance, range of motion and mobility. A physical therapist helps a child move the large muscles of the body, for example, by helping a child to walk.

Occupational Therapist This person specializes in fine motor (small muscle) skills, oral motor skills, and activities of daily living. An occupational therapist might help a child learn to use a spoon or get dressed.

Service Coordinator This person helps the family coordinate all the special services for the child.

Nurse or Doctor Occasionally a medical staff person participates on the early intervention team, particularly when the child has serious health problems. He or she provides valuable information about the health needs of the child in the child care setting.

Child Care Provider The child's care provider is one of the most important persons on the team. She spends much time with the child and provides important insights about what the child likes, what his or her abilities are, and what challenges the child. She is instrumental in putting into practice in the child care setting many of the recommendations of the team. ■

*Note: From *Mainstreaming Young Children: A Training Series for Child Care Providers*. (p. 75), by P.W. Wesley, 1992, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center. Copyright 1992 by Patricia W. Wesley. Reprinted with permission.*