

Comparison of Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education Including Occupational Therapy Services

	Early Intervention	Preschool Special Education
Purpose	Provides family centered services to meet the developmental needs of eligible children	Provides special education and related services to meet the educational needs of identified preschool students with disabilities.
Eligible Children	Eligible children are infants and toddlers ages birth through 3. Services are mandated under Part C of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004)	Eligible preschool students with disabilities ages 3-5. A preschool student with a disability is identified because of mental, physical or emotional reasons, not dependent on a single procedure and administered by a multi-disciplinary team. Services are mandated under Part B of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004)
Services Provided	Services must be available all year and tends to be discipline based.	Services must be available during the school year and the extended school year for eligible children. Services are collaborative in nature. Some activities may be conducted by teachers, aides, and other school personnel.
Caseload	Smaller caseloads with extended therapy time	Larger caseloads with shorter time for therapy activities
Therapy Delivery	Direct 1:1 treatment in child's natural environment, which is typically the home. Therapy may also occur in hospitals or clinics.	In the least restrictive environment (LRE) where the child receives education. Therapy includes integrated/inclusive therapy, staff training, program development, collaboration with staff, group intervention, direct one-on-one treatments, and/or consultation. Direct treatment may not be necessary.
Focus of Therapy	Therapy addresses medical conditions and works to remediate impairments to realize full potential	Addresses access to special education and school environment. Works toward independence and participation, not remediation of impairment.
Who Decides Scope of Service?	A plan is developed by the IFSP team, which includes the parent, Early Intervention Official, service coordinator, evaluator, and other participants invited by the parent. Insurance coverage and the doctor's orders may influence treatment.	The IEP team, which includes parents, educators, and therapists. The team determines the focus, duration, and frequency of service based on educationally-relevant therapy needs. A doctor's order does not necessarily influence decisions about school therapy services.