

Music Therapy as a Related Service through the IEP

Overview

1) What is Music Therapy

As defined by the American Music Therapy Association (www.musictherapy.org), music therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals. In the special education setting, music therapy functions as a collaborative service to support IEP-related progress in goal areas such as academic learning, social skills, expressive and receptive communication, behavior, movement, and daily living skills. Music therapists assist in the facilitation of functional educational outcomes, including the student's ability to generalize skills taught through music to the non-music setting.

Music therapy is provided by Board Certified Music Therapists who have a minimum of a Baccalaureate degree in Music Therapy from an accredited University including 1200 hours of clinical training. In addition, music therapists must maintain Board Certification through the Certification Board for Music Therapists (www.cbmt.org), which is accredited by NCCA; the same governing body for Occupational Therapy certification.

2) When Can Music Therapy be Considered a Related Service?

As indicated in a clarification statement provided by the U.S. Department of Education (OSERS, 2000 & 2010) music therapy can be considered as an IEP-related service for a particular student if assessment results determine that this type of support is required for the student to receive meaningful educational benefit from his or her educational program. A music therapy eligibility assessment is conducted to determine whether music therapy supports are necessary in order to accommodate the student's strengths, interests, and learning preferences and make progress in IEP goal areas. Music therapy as a related service is NOT offered to teach students a musical instrument or simply because a student shows an interest in music.

3) Music Therapy Eligibility Criteria

The following criteria are considered by the music therapist when determining the necessity of music therapy support within the student's IEP:

- Based on research, can the student's IEP goal areas be functionally supported through music therapy interventions?
- Is additional support required to address relevant IEP goals based on factors such as slow or insufficient progress, interfering behaviors, or a limited number of instructional approaches the student has been responsive to?
- Is music a documented learning strength for the student through which educational performance is enhanced?
- Given the music opportunities currently available in the student's program, are more specialized music approaches necessary to access the student's learning strength in music?

4) Services

If music therapy services are deemed necessary and added to a student's IEP, the service is indicated on the front page and added to relevant IEP goals. Services are provided in the least restrictive environment and thus consultation is always considered before direct service. Session data is maintained, and the student's need for music therapy is reviewed at each subsequent IEP meeting. Services are discontinued when no longer found to be required for the student to achieve meaningful educational benefit.

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