



## Recommendations for School Accommodations: Physical and Occupational Therapy

Keeping the body flexible, upright and mobile can help combat some of the complications of neuromuscular disease. Such therapy also benefits academic performance by enabling children to do more and stay healthier. Your student's IEP (Individualized Education Program) may specify that a certain time must be set aside for them to work with a physical or occupational therapist.

### **PT or OT interventions include the following:**

- Assessment of the school's physical environment and how the child can access all aspects of the school (e.g., stage, playground, modular buildings).
- Range-of-motion exercises and stretches prevent contractures or freezing of the joints of the knees, hips, feet, elbows, wrists and fingers.
- Hand splints keep the wrists and fingers in a good position.
- Education by therapists on proper body mechanics can help ensure safe transfers of nonambulatory students by aides, teachers and other caregivers. This also will help to foster an injury-free environment for all involved.

### **Adaptations and/or assistive equipment for the classroom include the following:**

- Small adaptations to help with everyday tasks, including special feeding utensils and cups, straws, a foam rubber cylinder for grasping pens and pencils, voice recorders, etc.
- Communication devices allow students with weak speech muscles to convey their needs and thoughts
- Adaptive chair for optimal positioning so the student can participate during class
- Slant board for presentation of class work
- Adaptive mouse/keyboard as needed
- Wheelchair-accessible desks
- Adaptive toilet
- Mechanical lift or transfer boards for safe transfers for nonambulatory students
- Mat table for hygiene
- Wheelchair tray for access to materials (i.e., laptop, keyboard)
- Computer adaptations and software allow those with limited movement to type and surf the internet
- Standing frames allow nonambulatory students to continue to bear weight on their legs, promoting healthier bones, better circulation and a straighter spine
- Walkers, wheelchairs, and foot, ankle and leg braces keep children safely mobile and engaged in the social scene.

### **Common Accommodations**

Accommodations are selected based on each student's needs at the time the IEP is written. These can be added or removed — based on IEP team recommendations — as the student's needs change.

**These areas should be addressed in consultation with family, medical experts and school staff during the IEP process or as they arise:**

- Accessible transportation
- Medical care and avoidance of infection
- Implementing at-home instruction for medically fragile children that features consistent support, communication, follow-through and high expectations

**Classroom and school campus accessibility modifications:**

- Allow computer-generated assignments
- Adaptive physical education
- Playground adaptations
- Rest time
- Bathroom assistance
- Field trip assistance
- Assistance for feeding
- Extra time to pass between classes
- Use of elevator in the school
- An extra set of textbooks to keep at home to minimize carrying a heavy load
- Assistance with packing and unpacking school materials
- Assistance/supervision during classroom/campus transitions
- Assistance with meal setup and cleanup
- Emergency evacuation plan
- Assistance with transfers in/out of seat
- Assistance with toileting and personal hygiene
- Allow use of personal smartphone to assist with notetaking, assignments and agenda
- May leave up to five minutes early or arrive late to class to transition when halls are clear
- Send student to the school nurse for any report of pain or discomfort

**Curriculum modifications:**

- Provision of aides and notetakers
- Copy of classroom notes/study guides
- Shortened assignments and assessments
- Extended time for assignments and assessments
- Assigning work buddies and using computer-assisted learning
- Using special education strategies to compensate for learning, memory and language-processing difficulties
- Tutoring
- Untimed tests
- Adapted keyboards, software and calculators
- Allowing alternative ways to demonstrate understanding of a concept, such as making an oral rather than a written report

**Additional accommodations for nonambulatory students include:**

- Assistance with wheelchair/scooter mobility
- Assistance during campus transition
- Use of handheld urinal in restroom
- Assistance with transfers in/out of mobility device

**\*Red Flags\***

If a student is demonstrating decreased balance, difficulty with transfers or transitions or difficulty accessing any part of their curriculum, contact the school's Exceptional Student Education (ESE) representative and/or therapy staff.

