

**New Jersey Department of Education
Special Education Receiving School Monitoring**

Receiving School: Children's Therapy Center **County:** Bergen

Monitoring Dates: November 1 – 2, 2005

Monitoring Team: Ann Marie Bruder and Diane Mari

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Children's Therapy Center conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Children's Therapy Center with an opportunity to evaluate its strengths and areas of need with regard to:

- The provision of a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment;
- The development and implementation of policies and procedures resulting in procedural compliance; and
- The organization and delivery of programs and services to meet the needs of the students with disabilities.

The self-assessment was designed to identify areas of strength, promising practices, areas that need improvement and areas that may be noncompliant with state and federal requirements. The Children's Therapy Center developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and to determine the progress in implementing the plan.

During the monitoring process, the monitoring team reviewed receiving school documents such as policies and procedures, student records from sending districts, lesson plans, services as indicated in individualized education program (IEPs), staff evaluations, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students/teachers/related service personnel, and other relevant information. Interviews were conducted with the receiving school's special education administrators, building principals, special education teachers, parents and related service personnel.

Noncompliant items reflected in this report may result in nonallowable costs imposed by the Division of Finance in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23-4.1 through 4.16.

School Strengths:

The Children's Therapy Center is commended for their highly committed and dedicated staff. The staff is enthusiastic and caring as they provide educational instruction and services for their students. Parents feel welcomed and that their children are nurtured in a caring environment. All classrooms are equipped with the adaptive equipment and technology for the students to become independent learners. The school also has a kitchen that has all the adaptable devices for practicing appropriate independent living skills for the students.

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The Children's Therapy Center provides a large variety of specialized equipment and techniques to address the students' individual needs. The school also provides opportunities for the students and their families to meet with vendors for wheelchair repair, creating splits, communication devices and technology equipment. The Children's Therapy Center forms partnerships with groups such as UCP to borrow/lend equipment for the students to utilize. The social workers collaborate with parents and insurance companies to assist in the completion of paper work.

The Children's Therapy Center is also commended for the strong support system for parents and siblings as they provide ongoing communication regarding student progress and workshops for family support. Some of the workshop topics include: medical advocacy, transition, sibling support, nutrition, social support services and discussion about community involvement and experiences.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards:

General Provisions, Staff Requirements, Discipline and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the Children's Therapy Center during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Children's Therapy Center accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding length of school day and year, provision of physical education, services at no cost to parents, extended school year programs and services provided in accordance with IEPs, program open to observation by LEA and DOE, provision of services as per IEP, provision of occupational therapy (OT) services as per IEP, provision of physical therapy (PT) services as per IEP, provision of speech language services as per IEP, and provision of counseling services as per IEP.

During the self-assessment process, the Children's Therapy Center identified concerns in the areas regarding implementation of a hearing aid policy and the maintenance of hearing aids. The receiving school improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the receiving school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

Section IV: Facility Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Children's Therapy Center accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding certificates of occupancy and inspections, and fire drills.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding programs provided in approved facilities.

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Area of Need:

Programs Provided in Approved Facilities – During the on-site visit a review of records and interviews indicated that the Children’s Therapy Center has expanded its facilities and increased the number of classes within the school without prior written approval from the county office of education.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that any changes to a school’s required policies, procedures, and programs are made in accordance with 6A:14-7.3(a). The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section V: Individualized Education Program/Annual Review

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Children’s Therapy Center accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP meeting conducted with required receiving school participants, IEP meeting conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEP prior to service delivery, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing, implementation of IEP components and informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives.

During the self-assessment process, the Children’s Therapy Center identified concerns in the areas regarding communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components, and student participation in general education with non-disabled peers. The school’s improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records determined that the school has appropriately implemented specific activities for correction of these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

Section VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Children’s Therapy Center accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding class size and age range, exceptions for class size and age range, special class program descriptions maintained at county office, certifications for specialized populations special classes serving students with similar educational needs, teachers trained and instructing in the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS), collaboration for home instruction, dispensing medication, nursing services, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services, and medical exams for sport teams.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit in the area regarding evaluations conducted by speech therapists.

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Area of Need:

Evaluations By Speech Staff- During the on-site visit, through interviews and record review it was determined that the school's speech-language specialists are conducting formal evaluations that are the responsibility of the sending districts.

- **The receiving school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that when speech language-specialists believe that a student may require an evaluation, a referral is made to the child study team. The plan must include in-service training for the staff regarding the new procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Children's Therapy Center on November 1–2, 2005. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the Children's Therapy Center's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the receiving school's improvement plan.

The receiving school is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review, the receiving school was able to identify areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The receiving school is further commended for the prompt implementation of corrective action to address the areas of need identified during the self assessment process. As a result, many of those identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit.

General Provisions, Staff Requirements, Discipline, Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the Children's Therapy Center during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Additional areas identified as consistently compliant by the Children's Therapy Center school during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included length of school day and year, provision of physical education, services at no cost to parents, extended school year programs and services provided in accordance with IEPs, program open to observation by LEA and DOE, provision of services as per IEP, provision of occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), speech language therapy and counseling services as per IEP, certificates of occupancy and inspections, fire drills, IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP meeting conducted with required receiving school participants, IEP meeting conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEP prior to service delivery, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing, implementation of IEP components, informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives, class size and age range, exceptions for class size and age range, special class program descriptions maintained at county office, certifications for specialized populations, special classes serving students with similar educational needs, teachers trained and instructing in CCCSs, collaboration for home instruction, dispensing medication, nursing services, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services and medical exams for sport teams.

During the self-assessment process, the Children's Therapy Center identified areas of need regarding implementation and maintenance of hearing aids, communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components and student participation with general education students.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding programs provided in approved facilities and evaluations conducted by speech therapists for sending school districts.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Children's Therapy Center will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the county office of education and to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.