

1703: NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

IDEA Part C requires that early intervention services be provided, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the natural environment, including the home and community settings in which children without disabilities participate.

Natural environment means settings that are natural or normal for the child's age peers who have no disabilities.

SoonerStart services provided in a childcare setting or location outside the home (grandparent's or relative's home) when the parent is not present requires written consent by the parent as well as the designation of an adult "primary learner" who will implement early intervention activities on a consistent basis with the child. The primary learner may be a relative or a childcare provider who has agreed to participate in this role. The written parental consent allows the SoonerStart provider to engage the primary learner in early intervention services for the child.

A location is a natural environment if it is:

- the child's home;
- where this child would go if he or she did not have a disability;
- in a part of the community where children and families without disabilities spend time when they are not being treated or tested for illness or health issues.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- a community daycare or preschool;
- a park, library or YMCA program; or
- a church, synagogue or other faith-based setting

A location is not a natural environment if it:

- is where people usually go because they have disabilities or medical issues;
- was chosen because it had specialized equipment
- was chosen because it was convenient for the specialists who work with the child

Examples of "non-natural environments" include but are not limited to:

- a health department
- a hospital setting, rehabilitation center or outpatient therapy clinic
- a therapist's office
- a segregated program in a public school