

Educational vs. Medical Model Therapy

The following chart describes the differences between the educational model [school-based occupational and physical therapy provided under an individualized education program (IEP)] and the Clinical or Medical model for providing occupational and physical therapy.

	Educational School-Based Therapy	Medically-Based or Clinical Therapy
Legal Requirements	Occupational therapy and physical therapy are considered related services in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Of 2004 (IDEA 04). Related services are provided to the children in special education, and are primarily to ensure that the child is able to participate in the learning tasks (e.g., help with handwriting, safety issues related to walking and getting to class).	State and federal licensure requirements and public and private funding requirements
What is the focus of the therapy	The therapy addresses adaptation and performance in the educational setting. If the child does not need special education, then the child is not eligible to receive the therapy as a related service.	Treatment is to alleviate or cure specific underlying medical problems. It refers to treatment that a child needs for medical reasons. It takes a global approach considering whole-life, restorative, developmental issues and the ability to functional in any aspect of daily life.
Who determines the need and amount of Therapy?	The case conference committee, which includes the parents and school staff, utilize evaluation data from the therapists' evaluations.	The child's physician, with the therapist's input. The child's insurance company may also be a deciding factor.
Where is the therapy performed?	The location is determined by the case conference committee and is written in the student's IEP. It can occur in the classroom, or elsewhere (e.g., the gym, special education classroom).	Clinic, hospital, rehabilitation facility, and/or home.
Who provides the therapy?	Therapies included as related services may be provided as direct services by qualified personnel or as integrated services by teachers or paraprofessionals acting in accordance to instructions of qualified personnel. Schools may employ therapists or contract with licensed therapists for related services.	A licensed therapist of a clinic, hospital, rehabilitation facility, or self-employed.
What are the ages of the recipients?	3-21 years	Any age
Who pays for the therapy?	Therapies that are included as related services under IDEA 04 are provided by public schools at no cost to the parent.	Paid by parent/patient, insurance, governmental assistance, etc.
What is the documentation for the therapy?	Individualized Education Program (IEP) – emphasis is on educationally relevant therapy (educational terminology). Under State Physical Therapists Practice Rules, a written order from a physician is required in order for the physical therapist to provide physical therapy to a child with disability.	Documentation required by provider and payer of service using medical terminology.