

The Transition from Early Intervention to Preschool: What is the LRE?

2025 EHDI Conference
Pittsburgh, PA

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WORCESTER
STATE
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Disclosures

- Barbara Hecht is an employee of Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech
- Kym Meyer is an employee of Worcester State University

Learning Outcomes

- Name 5 needs of young DHH children that must be included in assessments and eligibility determinations.
- List 5 Special Factors mandated by IDEA for children who are DHH.
- Describe at least 2 characteristics of the Least Restrictive Environment for young DHH children transitioning from EI to preschool.

Introductions



Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) Students: Federal Guidance and Best Practices

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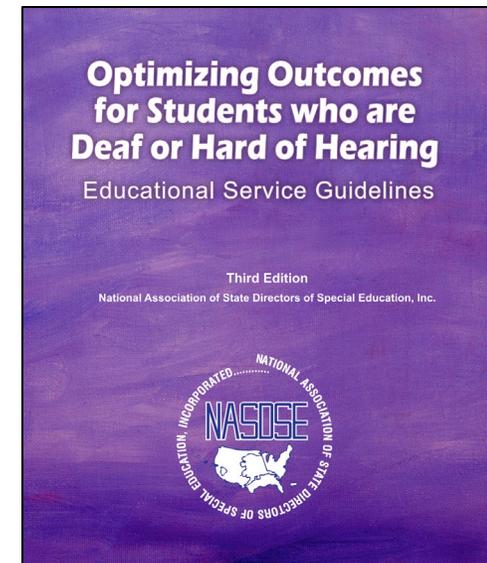
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This whitepaper summarizes federal guidance and recommends practices to follow when considering the appropriate learning environment for students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH), and is applicable to all U.S. states. Links to resources and citations are in the reference section on the last page.

Optimizing Outcomes for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing



- National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
- Best practices document – 3rd edition
- 40 professionals with DHH expertise collaborated on this update, including representation from:
 - State Departments of Education
 - Schools for the Deaf
 - Public School DHH programs
 - Listening and Spoken Language professionals
 - ASL professionals
 - Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Hearing professionals



Free and Appropriate Public Education

§300.101

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/b/300.101>



Special education and related services that—

(C) include an **appropriate** preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in the State involved; and

(D) are provided in conformity with the individualized education program required under section 1414(d) of this title.

What is the Least Restrictive Environment?

IDEA Part B

(34C.F.R. 300.120)

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

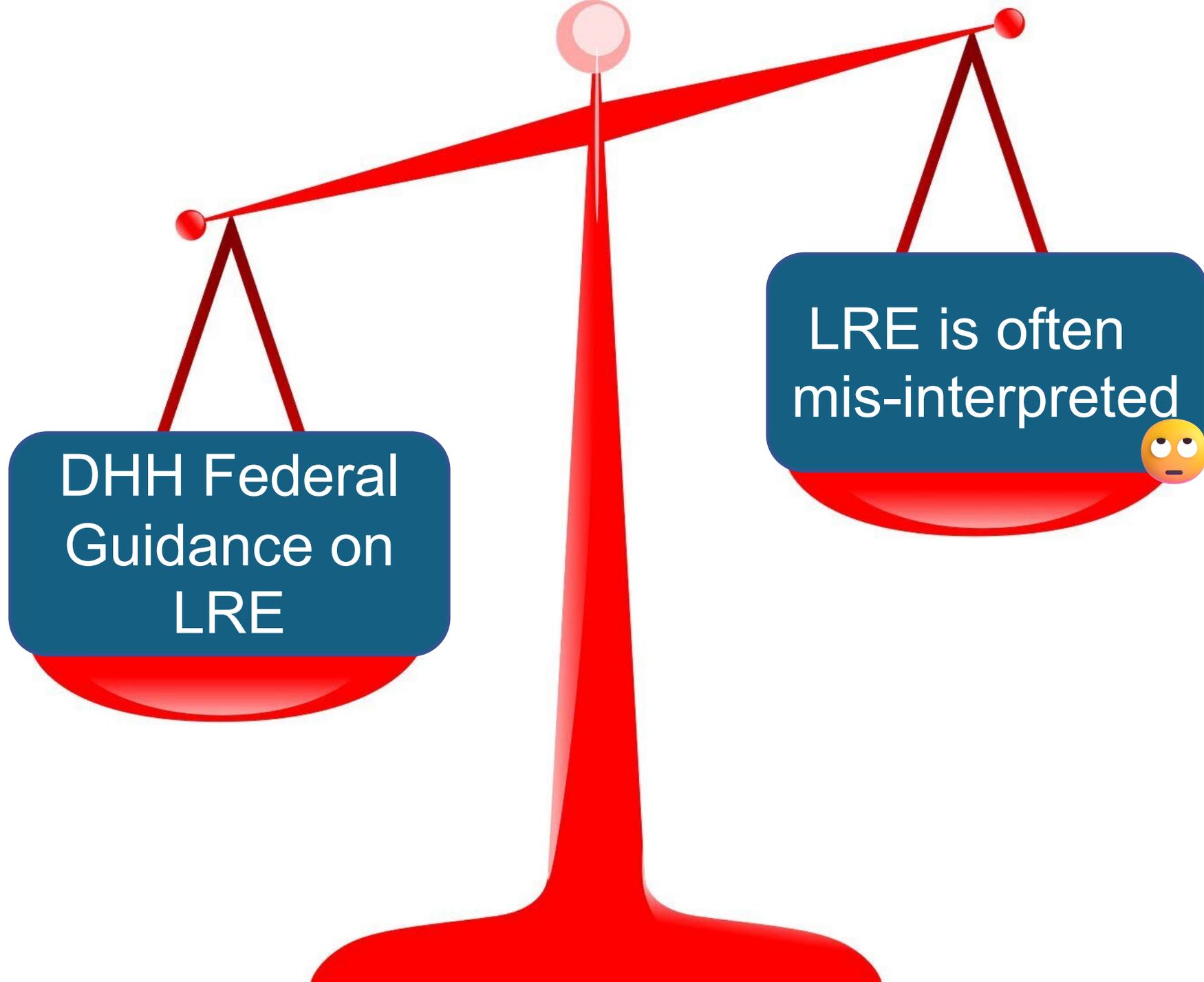
IDEA, Part B

(i) To the maximum extent **appropriate**, children with disabilities ...are educated with children who are nondisabled; and

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

IDEA, Part B

(ii) Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the **nature** or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.



DHH Federal
Guidance on
LRE

LRE is often
mis-interpreted



Confusion and misunderstanding because...

Education in regular education classes
may or may not be the LRE

LRE ≠ Inclusion

Federal Guidance based on input from the field

U.S. DOE, Office for Civil Rights ***Deaf Students Education Services***



1992 Policy Guidance that addresses:

- FAPE
- LRE
- Consideration of Special Factors
- Continuum of Alternative Placements

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/hq9806.html>

DOE Guidance Statement: Impact of Low Incidence

*“Because deafness is a low incidence disability, **there is not widespread understanding of its educational implications, even among special educators.**”*

*“**This lack of knowledge and skills in our education system contributes to the already substantial barriers to deaf students in receiving appropriate educational services.**”*

From the 1992 Policy Guidance

*"The Secretary is concerned that some public agencies have **misapplied the LRE provision** by presuming that placements in or closer to the regular classroom are required for children who are deaf, **without taking into consideration the range of communication and related needs** that must be addressed in order to provide appropriate services."*

DOE Guidance cont.

*“Any setting that **does not meet the communication and related needs** of a child who is deaf does not allow for the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and **cannot be considered the LRE for that child.**”*

1992 Policy Guidance, US DOE

2010 Letter from OSEP to Bosso

2011 Letter from OSEP to Stern

IDEA 2004 Special Factors for DHH children

- 1) Language and communication needs
- 2) Opportunities for direct communication with peers and professionals in child's language and communication mode
- 3) Academic [or developmental] level
- 4) Full range of needs, including [but not limited to] language and communication
- 5) Need for assistive technology

Clarification letters to Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD) Presidents 2010 and 2011

POLICY LETTER: August 23, 2010 to Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf, Inc. President Edward H. Bosso, Jr.

Affirms special factors and individual needs to be considered in determining LRE for DHH students

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/policy-letter-august-23-2010-to-conference-of-educational-administrators-of-schools-and-programs-for-the-deaf-inc-president-edward-h-bosso-jr/>

**POLICY LETTER: September 30, 2011 to Ronald Stern,
Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and
Programs of the Deaf, Inc. President**

State Performance Indicators regarding LRE and natural environments do not mandate particular placements for infants, toddlers or children with disabilities.

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/policy-letter-september-30-2011-to-ronald-stern/>

Least Restrictive Environment

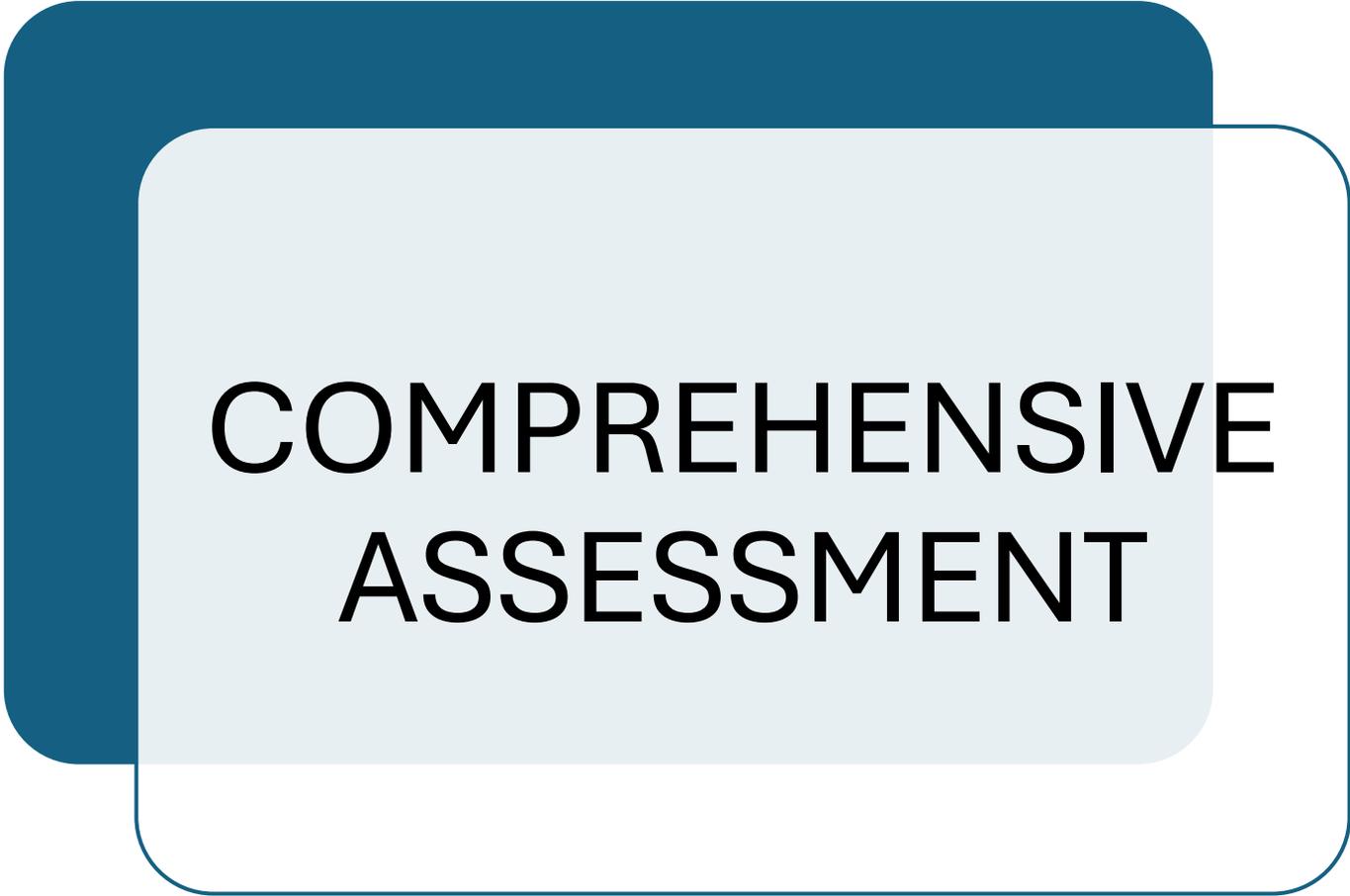
<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/b/300.114>

Determined by the student's IEP and related services. LRE may be any of these



Graphic: https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf_info_briefs/IRIS_Least_Restrictive_Environment_InfoBrief_092519.pdf

How to determine the **Least Restrictive** (early childhood) **Environment** for a DHH child



**COMPREHENSIVE
ASSESSMENT**

Determination of individual child's needs

Based on comprehensive assessment by interdisciplinary team of including professionals with DHH expertise

Using a variety of sources of information

- Standardized measures (norm and criterion referenced)
- Natural, authentic interactions
- Language sample analysis
- Structured naturalistic observation
- Teacher/ EI provider reports
- Caregiver interview and desired outcomes

Comprehensive Assessment

Auditory status and function

- acuity
- auditory skill development
- functional listening in typical classroom settings
- ability to use personal hearing device and assistive hearing technology
- self advocacy

Vision

- acuity
- functional

Comprehensive Assessment

Social, Emotional, Behavioral

Self-help

Self-concept and self- advocacy

Cognitive, Developmental

Sensori-motor development

Speech (oral-motor, articulation, intelligibility--as appropriate)

Language Assessment

Spoken and/or sign language(s)

Child's primary languages and classroom languages

Formal, standardized measures PLUS natural language analyses

- Phonology
- Vocabulary
- Morphology
- Syntax
- Pragmatic language use
- Conversational skills and repair strategies

Some characteristics of the LRE for 3-year-old DHH children

- Auditory access
- Visual access
- Language instruction and intentional facilitation of language development
- Rich communication environment
- Appropriate intensity and duration of preschool program & services
- Class/group size appropriate for a 3-year-old DHH child
- Teacher of the Deaf and Educational Audiologist
- Specialized parent education and support
- Peer and adult role models

Warning: Do not define LRE as “language rich environment”

- ❑ This is not the legal definition
- ❑ Not everyone defines “language rich” the same way.
- ❑ A preschool program may be “language rich” but not meet the language learning needs of a 3-year-old DHH child.
- ❑ A regular preschool or integrated preschool may or may not be **accessible** for certain DHH children.
- ❑ The LRE placement must be **accessible** and **appropriate to meet requirements of FAPE**

How can IEP Teams ensure FAPE in the LRE?

- Use up-to-date national guidance (NASDSE, 2018)
- Ensure that the team includes DHH experts
- Truly individualize the IEP
- Hold high expectations for language development
 - Consider language vs communication systems
- Address child's full range of needs
- Carefully evaluate placement options
- Recognize that needs and LRE may change

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Does a DHH-specific resource list/website exist in your region/state?

- ❑ Family-to-family organization in your state
- ❑ Legal and educational advocacy
- ❑ Language acquisition resources
- ❑ Tele-services for child or caregiver
- ❑ Caregiver education/coaching
- ❑ DHH mentor services
- ❑ DHH organization regional chapter

These are just a few ideas

Collaborate to identify resources that are important across your region/state!



Questions?