Children with Special Needs: Access to Services

### Extent to Which School Provides Services for Students with Special Needs (Staff Reported): 2017-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Not Much</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School</td>
<td>50.2%</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>51.0%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Traditional</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Definition:** Percentage of responses by public school staff on the extent to which their school provides services for students with disabilities or other special needs, by type of school (e.g., in 2017-2019, 48.7% of responses by high school staff in California reported that services for students with special needs were provided a lot).

**Data Source:** WestEd, California School Staff Survey, California Dept. of Education (Oct. 2020).

### What It Is

Children with special health care needs (CShCN) have or are at increased risk for a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally. On kidsdata.org, indicators related to access to services for CSHCN include:

- Access to a usual source of health care
- Access to a variety of services, including medical, mental, and dental care, as well as community- and school-based services, early intervention, special education, and transition services to adulthood

### Why This Topic Is Important

More than 1.25 million California children and youth, and nearly 14 million nationwide, have or are at increased risk for a chronic health condition and require care and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally. Their ongoing health problems—physical, behavioral, or developmental—can affect their ability to function and participate in important educational and social activities, and, in some cases, can shorten their lives. Although advances in medical care have extended and improved the lives of millions of children, obtaining timely, appropriate, and affordable care remains a problem for many families. The vast majority of children with special health care needs (CShCN) nationally (86%) do not receive care that meets federal standards for a well-functioning system. Further, racial/ethnic and socioeconomic inequities in access to care and other supports can lead to poorer outcomes for vulnerable CSHCN and their families.

When compared with children who do not have special health care needs, CSHCN are more likely to experience social-emotional problems, academic challenges, and other types of adversity which can complicate their medical care. As a result, CSHCN often rely on a range of services from multiple sectors, and their parents and family members often face higher caregiving burdens and experience more stress and difficulties with employment and finances when compared with other families.

### How Children Are Faring

An estimated 86% of California children with special health care needs (CShCN) have or are at increased risk for a chronic health condition and require care and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally.
Definition: Estimated percentage of children with special health care needs (CSHCN) ages 1-17 who receive and do not receive services under an early intervention or special education plan (e.g., in 2016-2019, 32.3% of California CSHCN received early intervention or special education services).


During the four-year period 2016-2019, around one in three California CSHCN ages 1-17 (32%) received services under an early intervention or special education plan, according to estimates from the same survey.

Among CSHCN nationally, estimates of receipt of preventive medical visits and early intervention or special education services were similar.

In 2017-2019, more than 48% of responses by staff at California elementary, middle, high, and non-traditional schools reported that services for students with disabilities or other special needs were provided a lot. The share of responses by non-traditional program staff reporting that their school provides services for students with special needs a lot rose from less than 37% in 2011-2013 to more than 48% in 2017-2019.

View references for this text and additional research on this topic: https://www.kidsdata.org/topic/13/access-to-services-for-children-with-special-needs/summary

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