



Navigating Together: A Guide for Families

**Extended School
Year Services
(ESY)**

2025 - 2026

Table Of Contents

1	What is ESY ?	3
2	What are Critical Life Skills?	4
3	The ESY Process	5
4	The ESY Continuum	9
5	Frequently Asked Questions	18
6	Additional Resources	20

What is Extended School Year (ESY)?

Extended School Year (ESY) Services are special education and/or related services provided beyond the regular school year.



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Eligibility for ESY services is determined annually during an IEP team meeting. There is no single formula for determining eligibility. Instead, the IEP team reviews relevant data and considers a series of questions to develop a comprehensive understanding of the student's individual needs.

A student may be eligible for ESY services if the gains made during the regular school year are likely to be significantly jeopardized without continued educational support. In such cases, extending services beyond the school year may be necessary to maintain the progress achieved.

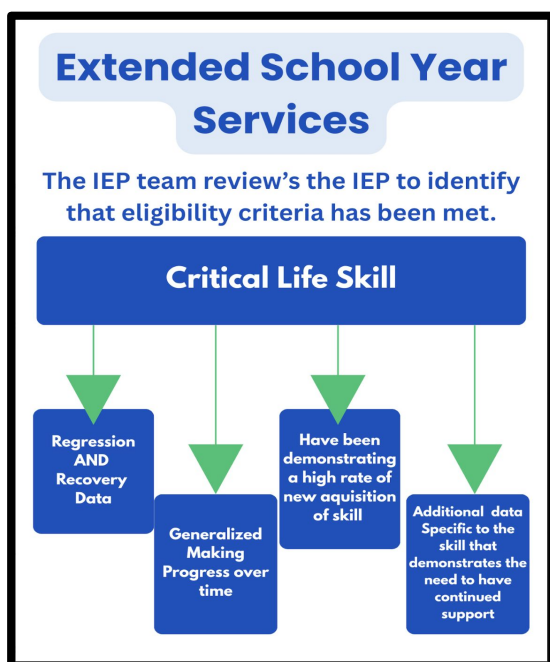
What are Critical Life Skills?

Critical Life Skills are an important consideration throughout the ESY eligibility process. These skills are emphasized due to their essential role in ensuring that a student continues to receive educational benefit after an extended break in their education.

A *critical life skill* is any skill identified by the IEP team as vital to the student's overall educational progress. This includes not only academic skills but also social, behavioral, and functional skills necessary for daily living.

When identifying critical life skills specific to a student's needs, the IEP team may consider areas that support independent living, such as toileting, feeding, communication, dressing, and other self-care abilities.

In some cases, academic and behavioral skills may also be considered critical life skills. Depending on factors such as the student's age, cognitive ability, and the number of school years remaining, areas like reading, math, and written language may be determined essential for the student's continued educational development and future independence.



- Critical Functional skills necessary for daily living
- Allows individual to be as independent as possible across all environments

The ESY Process

Determining ESY Eligibility

Extended School Year (ESY) eligibility is determined annually for every student with an IEP. This is a collaborative discussion between parents/guardians and the school team as part of a student's annual review. However, there is the possibility that an IEP team will either defer the discussion to a later date or hold the eligibility meeting prior to the annual review.

- **Defer The Decision:** An IEP team that meets early in a school year for an annual review may determine that they do not feel they have enough data at that time to identify if the student will need ESY services during the summer break. The team will need to reconvene to review current data on the IEP before the end of the school year, but ideally before the end of the third quarter.
- **Interim IEP prior to Annual Review:** As a school system, we ask our school teams to hold the ESY discussion prior to the last day of third quarter. This is to ensure that our school teams and parents have enough time to prepare for the child's summer ahead.

How to prepare for the IEP Meeting

Prior to the IEP meeting where ESY eligibility is discussed, all members of the IEP team should be prepared to discuss the following:

- Observations on the impact of long weekends and extended breaks on the child's learning and routines.
- Plan to review the student's data on the current IEP over the course of the academic year that the IEP has been in effect.
- Review how the previous summer break impacted the student at the start of the current school year.

The ESY Process:

During The IEP Meeting

ESY Eligibility

At the IEP meeting, the IEP Team should use data to consider factors listed below in order to determine if the student's educational programming **may be significantly jeopardized** during the regular school year without ESY services.

ESY Eligibility Guidance Questions

- Does the student's IEP include annual goals related to Critical Life Skills?

Critical Life Skills: Skills that are required across environments to be as independent as possible.

- Is there a likely change of substantial regression of the identified critical life skills caused by the normal school break and failure to recover lost skills in a reasonable amount of time?
- Is the student demonstrating a degree of progress towards the mastery of IEP goals related to critical life skills?
- Is there a presence of emerging or breakthrough opportunities?
- Are there significant interfering behaviors?
- Does the nature and severity of the disability warrant ESY?
- Are there other special circumstances that require ESY?

It's important to note that answering "yes" to any of the questions does not automatically mean a student qualifies for ESY. Instead, the student's individual data in these areas should give the IEP team a comprehensive understanding of the student's needs to determine whether the benefits gained during the school year would likely be significantly jeopardized without ESY services.

The ESY Process:

During The IEP Meeting

ESY Goals

If a student requires ESY services to prevent jeopardizing progress on IEP goals and objectives, the IEP team must identify which critical life skills to focus on during the extended school break.

When selecting skills for ESY, the IEP team should consider:

- Which critical life skills need to be reviewed to maintain current performance levels?
- Which critical life skills are most essential for the student to retain?
- ESY services focus on maintaining or reviewing existing goals and objectives. ESY does not introduce new learning or increase learning.

ESY Services

Once the ESY goals and objectives are identified, the IEP team must determine the number of service hours needed to review those skills. ESY services are intended to ***maintain*** previously mastered skills and prevent regression, not introduce new learning. As a result, ESY service hours are typically less than those provided during the regular school year.

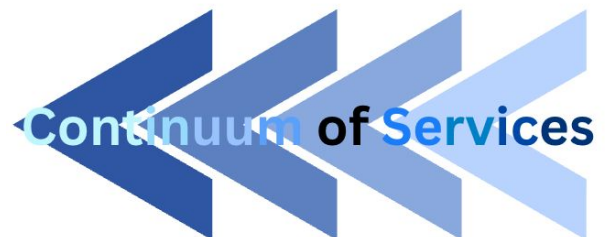
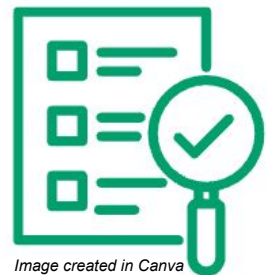
The ESY Process: During The IEP Meeting

ESY Continuum of Service Delivery Options

After the IEP team determines eligibility, critical life skill goals, objectives, and services, they will identify the most appropriate and least restrictive ESY setting for the student during the summer break.

HCPSS offers a variety of ESY programs to meet the specific needs of students receiving special education services over the summer. These programs align with the HCPSS continuum of services, and most mirror the student's school year program to ensure continuity of support. School team members will help ensure the selected ESY program accurately reflects the student's ESY services, current placement, and level of support.

- Early Childhood Special Education: 3 Year Program
- Early Childhood Special Education: 4 Year Program
- Early Childhood Special Education: MINC-EL
- Early Childhood Special Education: MINC- FL
- Early Childhood Special Education: MINC- PK
- Early Childhood Special Education: MINC- PS
- ESY Academic Intervention
- ESY High School
- ESY Communication & Transition
- ESY Social Opportunities & Relationships (SOAR):
- ESY Primary Learner
- ESY Upper Learner
- ESY COMPASS
- ESY Regional Academic Life Skills
- ESY Cedar Lane School & Cornerstone
- ESY Homewood
- ESY Related Service Only



**Some students require services different from/in addition to general ESY Programming. This is determined at the ESY IEP team meeting on a case-by-case basis. Data is needed to support this determination.*

The ESY Process:

Continuum of Services

ESY Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) 3 and 4-Year-Old Programs (Preschool, MINC-PS, PreK, MINC-PK, MINC-EL, PALS)

Target Population

- Students currently enrolled and attending either
 - 3-Year Old Programs (MINC-PS, Preschool, PALS)
 - 4-Year-Old Programs (MINC-PK, PreK, PALS)
 - Multiple Intense Needs Class- Early Learner (MINC- EL)

Services Provided

Students identified for ESY services in ECSE will be provided with the services identified by the IEP team for ESY. The areas of services a student may be recommended for are:

- Related services (speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy) at ECSE sites, as recommended for ESY
- Specialized instruction in small groups, classroom-based program, or community settings, as recommended for ESY
- Classroom-based program for children eligible for ESY, in order to maintain skills learned in the school year
- Special education transportation required unless a parent/guardian provides transportation



The ESY Process:

Continuum of Services

ESY Academic Intervention

Target Population

- Students currently enrolled in grades K – 7
- Students seeking a Maryland High School Diploma receiving special education services inside and outside of the general education classroom
- Students participating in the Alternate Framework who require a functional academic approach to participate inside and outside of the general education classroom

Services Provided

Students identified for ESY services at Academic Intervention will be provided ESY services identified by the IEP team.

The areas of services a student may be recommended for are:

- Special education & related services in academic goal areas
- Special education & related services in non-academic goal areas
- Special education transportation is provided to students with this service identified within their IEP

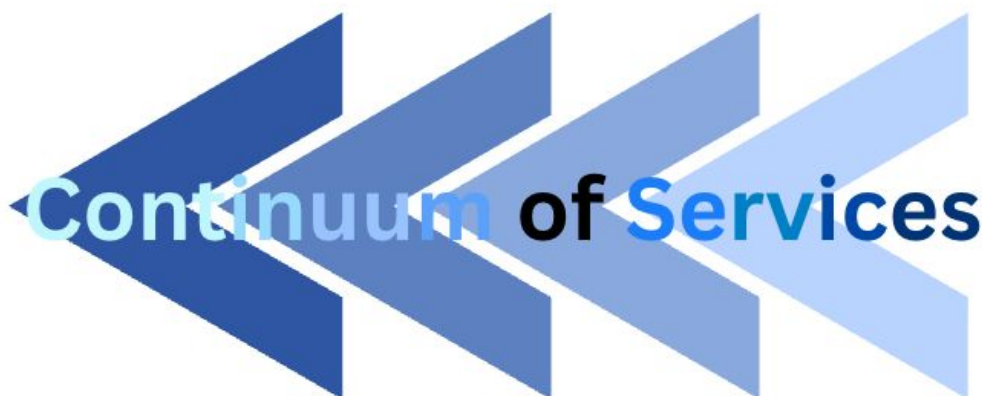


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The ESY Process:

Continuum of Services

ESY High School

Target Population

- Students currently enrolled in grades 8 - 12
- Students seeking a Maryland High School Diploma receiving special education services
- Students participating in the Alternate Framework who require a functional academic approach to learning

Services Provided

Students identified for ESY services within the high school setting will be provided with the ESY services identified within an IEP team meeting. The areas of services a student may be recommended for are:

- Special education & related services in academic goal areas
- Special education & related services in non-academic goal areas
- Special education transportation is required unless a parent/guardian will provide self-transport



The ESY Process:

Continuum of Services

ESY Social Opportunities And Relationships (SOAR)

Target Population

- Students currently in Kindergarten through 7th grade
- Students seeking a Maryland high school diploma receiving
- Students receiving special education services inside and outside the general education classroom setting
- Students with ESY goals and objectives focus on social skills, social pragmatics, social interaction and other related goal areas

Services Provided

Students identified for ESY services in the SOAR program will be provided services identified by the IEP team. ESY goals, objectives and services primarily focus on the following areas:

- Special education & related services reinforcing social skills
- Special education & related services in academic skills, if needed.
- Special education transportation is required unless the parent/guardian provides transportation



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The ESY Process:

Continuum of Services

ESY Regional Academic Life Skills

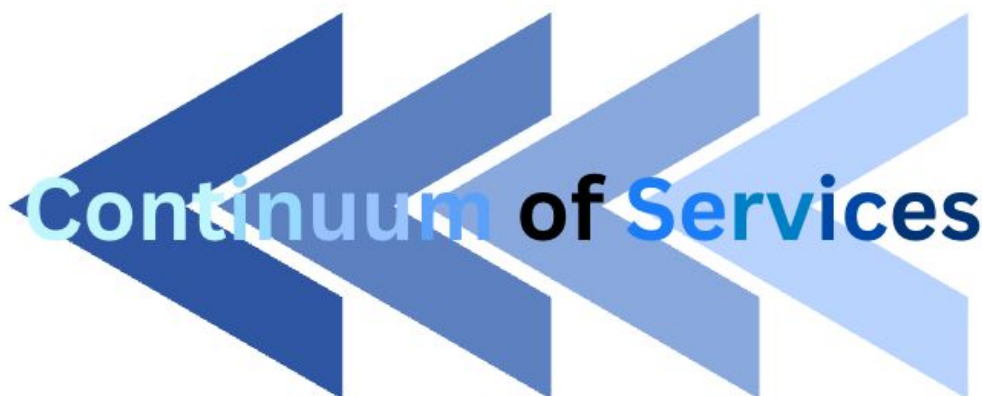
Target Population

- Students currently enrolled in a regional Academic Life Skills Program (ALS) program
- Students that require an integrated approach for delivery of the ESY IEP and related services

Services Provided

Students identified for ESY services in the Academic Life Skills (ALS) program will be provided with the services identified by the IEP team for ESY. Students in the ALS programs have ESY goals, objectives and services primarily focused on life skills and functional academics.

- Special education & related services in academic goal areas
- Special education & related services in non-academic goal areas
- Special education transportation required unless the parent/guardian provides transportation



The ESY Process:

Continuum of Services

ESY COMPASS

Target Population

- Students currently enrolled in a regional COMPASS program
- Students that require continued behavioral supports and intervention within a specifically designed structured classroom setting

Services Provided

Students identified for ESY services in our Regional ED program will be provided with the services identified within an IEP team meeting for ESY. Students in our regional programs have ESY objectives and services primarily focused on:

- Instruction in social emotional learning and social interaction
- Special education & related services in academic goal areas
- Special education & related services in non-academic goal areas
- Special education transportation is required unless the parent/guardian will provide transportation



The ESY Process:

Continuum of Services

ESY Primary Learner & ESY Upper Learner

Target Population

- Students currently enrolled in a Primary Learner (PL) or Upper Learner (UL) program
- Students with specific methodology on their IEP

Services Provided

Students identified for ESY services in our Primary & Upper Learner programs will be provided with the services identified by the IEP team for ESY. Students in the UL/PL programs have ESY goals, objectives and services primarily focused on:

- Special education & related services using specific methodology in IEP goal areas
- Special education transportation is required unless the parent/guardian provides transportation



The ESY Process:

Continuum of Services

ESY Communication & Transition

Target Population

- Students in grades 6th – 12th+ grader
- Students whose ESY IEP goal(s) emphasize multimodal communication using speech generating devices, their voices, and gestures
- Students who have been and continue to receive specialized instruction specific to augmentative communication (i.e. their personal communication device)
- Students with ESY goals and objectives that focus on
 - Social and communication skills
 - Social interaction/communication

Services Provided

Students identified for ESY services in our Communication & Transition Program will be provided with the services identified by the IEP team for ESY.

- Special education & related services targeted in communication
 - *ESY services around classroom instruction hours focus on the student using their device throughout the **entirety** of the school day*
- Special education transportation is required unless the parent/guardian provides transportation



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The ESY Process:

Continuum of Services

ESY Cedar Lane & Cornerstone

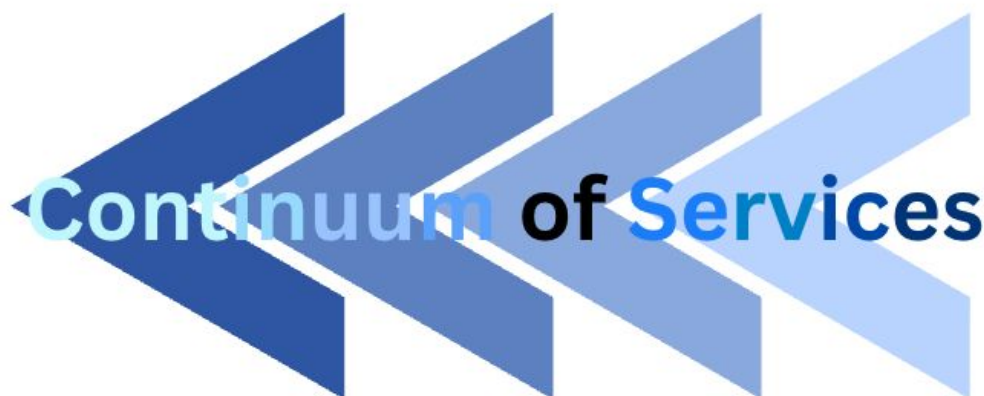
Target Population

- Ages 3 - 21 years
- Students currently enrolled in Cedar Lane School
- Students who have moderate to severe disabilities
- Students working on the Alternate Framework
- Students with integrated approach to delivery of special education and related services

Services Provided

Students identified for ESY services identified within an IEP meeting related to current IEP goals and objectives. The areas of services a student may be recommended for are:

- Special education & related services in functional academic goal areas
- Special education & related services in non-academic functional life skill goal areas
- Special education transportation is required unless parent/guardian provides transportation



The ESY Process:

Continuum of Services

ESY Homewood School

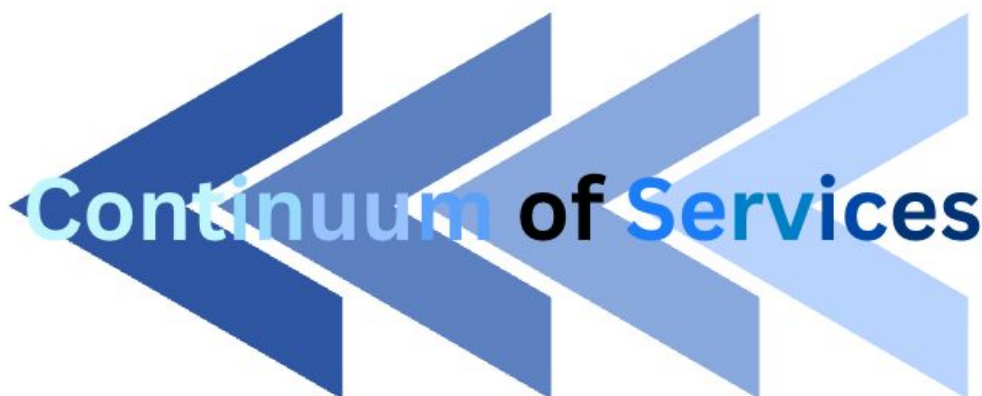
Target Population

- Students currently in grades 6-12
- Students currently enrolled in Homewood School
- Students with integrated approach to delivery of special education and related services

Services Provided

Students identified for ESY services identified within an IEP meeting related to current IEP goals and objectives. The areas of services a student may be recommended for are:

- Special education & related services in academic goal areas
- Special education & related services in non-academic goal areas
- Therapeutic intervention
- Special education transportation is required unless parent/guardian will self-transport



ESY

Frequently Asked Questions

My child did not qualify this year, but has in the past. Why might my child not qualify any longer?

ESY eligibility is reviewed annually using the most recent IEP data. The IEP team evaluates progress to determine if ESY services are necessary to prevent significant setbacks in the fall.

If my child is marked below grade level, will they be eligible?

ESY eligibility is based on current data on IEP goal areas identified by the IEP team as specific critical life skills that must be maintained during the summer break. ESY services focus on maintaining these skills, not on grade-level content standards, to ensure your child can continue making academic progress when they return to school after the extended break.

My child did not qualify for ESY, what should they do for the summer?

While the school district cannot provide direct guidance or programming for your student, we encourage families to explore real-world opportunities to apply the current skills your child has and is working on. We have also compiled a list of local supported opportunities to help families get started in our Parent Resources section of this handbook.

ESY

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does my child work on things they have previously worked on during ESY? Why are they not introducing new skills to my child?

The primary goal of ESY is to maintain current progress over the extended break. ESY services focus on reviewing and maintaining critical life skills identified by the IEP team as essential for the student to retain and build upon during the school year.

What if I disagree with the IEP team's decision?

Parents are valued members of the IEP team and encouraged to participate in ESY decision-making. If there is disagreement about ESY eligibility, families have options.

First, the disagreement should be documented in the Prior Written Notice (PWN) within the team meeting minutes.

The school team will then ensure you receive:

- A copy of the Parental Rights: Maryland Procedural Safeguards Notice
- A copy of the current IEP
- The finalized team meeting minutes or prior written notice

Procedures for resolving disagreements about special education services are detailed in the *Parental Rights: Maryland Procedural Safeguards Notice* ([Link](#)).

ESY

Parent Resources

Maryland Department of Education (MSDE) Technical Assistance Bulletin #23-02 Extended School Year Services (link)

This document is the most recent publication from MSDE regarding Extended Year Services that guide district practices.

Summer Opportunities For Students With Disabilities (link)

This document contains local resources for camps and other activities during the summer months with supports in place for children with disabilities.

HCPSS Family Support & Resource Center

The Family Support and Resource Center is designed to help families of children with special needs. Services include workshops, IEP assistance, IFSP assistance, newsletters, a lending library, facilitation of parent support groups, and community resources and service referrals. The center is open during the school year, Monday through Friday, and over the summer by appointment.

To reach the Family Support and Resource Center, email fsrc@hcpss.org or call 410-313-7161.

The Parents' Place of Maryland Website (link)

This organization focuses on providing resources and support to families in Maryland. Their mission is to empower families as advocates and partners in improving education and health outcomes for all children with disabilities and special healthcare needs.

For additional information, please contact Barbara Baker at our Department of Special Education office at 410-313-5366 or by email at: Barbara_Baker@hcpss.org.