

Clarifying Levels of Support

The terms found in “Levels of Support” are used to describe the intensity and/or duration of the support required for a student to participate to the greatest extent possible in a variety of environments. The continuum ranges from providing minimal assistance to constant support. This is based on responses gathered from parents, teachers, and caregivers on measures of adaptive behavior, observation, and other methods of evaluation. Various assessments will use their own terms to describe Levels of Support. Teams may choose which of the terms are most applicable to describe the level of support required. The level of support can vary from one domain to another: i.e. intermittent support required on a work site, but frequent support required for community participation. Using the numerical score (i.e. 1– 7; 1–100) is not as descriptive, as using the specific term (i.e. intermittent, limited, extensive, pervasive) to describe the level(s) of support needed by an individual. An example from the American Association on Mental Retardation is given below:

AAMR Definition and Examples of Intensities of Support

Intermittent	Supports on an “as needed basis”. Characterized by episodic nature, person not always needing the support(s), or short-term supports needed during lifespan transitions (e.g. job loss or an acute medical crisis). Intermittent supports may be high or low intensity when provided.
Limited	An intensity of supports characterized by consistency over time, time-limited, but not of an intermittent nature; may require fewer staff members and less cost than more intense levels of support (e.g. time limited employment training or transitional supports during the school to adult period).
Extensive	Supports characterized by regular involvement (e.g. daily) in at least some environments (e.g. work or home) and not time-limited (e.g. long-term support and long-term home living support).
Pervasive	Supports characterized by their constancy, high intensity; provided across environments; potential life-sustaining nature. Pervasive supports typically involve more staff members and intrusiveness than do extensive or time-limited supports.