

INFORMATION FOR DWARF CHILDREN ATTENDING SCHOOL

Explain to teacher, principal, and school staff that dwarf child is self-sufficient, but because of his/her stature, adjustments are needed for him/her to be as independent as possible.

Check to see if he/she can reach water fountains, door handles, lockers, chalk boards, lunch counters, book shelves, stair banisters, light switches, hooks for coat, etc. Step stools and doorknob extenders may be needed. Possibly, have a lower drinking fountain installed. Water bottles in lieu of drinking fountain are a good possibility.

Lockers - Locker space should be adapted with low shelves for books and lower hooks for coat and backpack. If the lockers are very small, can he/she have two lockers; one with hooks (for coat and/or backpack) and one with low shelves? The lockers should be located near his/her classes. Also, an extra set of hardcover books should be kept at home. Because of unstable back and neck, dwarf children should not carry heavy books for extended distances (i.e., back and forth to school).

Classes - Because his/her legs are shorter, dwarf student may need more time to get from one class to another. Can he/she use elevators rather than stairs? Stairs can be very difficult, especially if carrying a backpack.

Desks and chairs - Chairs can be too large and forces he/she to sit with legs dangling, which causes legs to lose circulation, fall asleep and become numb during class. He/she should have a cushion behind lower back for support with a stool for feet. It helps if he/she can sit close to the front of the classroom if he/she sits lower in the desk than the other students. LPA sells a specially designed desk chair adaptable for dwarf students in school.

Restrooms - Make sure he/she can reach the door handle. Stools will be needed to reach the sink, faucet, soap dispenser and paper towels. Possibly install lower paper towel dispenser and soap dispenser. If the rest room has mirrors, adjustments should be made (either use stool or install low mirror). Adjustments should be made to use the toilet. Possibly a stool or very low toilet (pre-school size) could be installed.

Fire Drills - EMERGENCY Evacuation - Caution should be used not to trample him/her during evacuation. He/she should be able to reach handles of doors to go out emergency exits. He/she should have someone assigned to stay back and help, with a backup person in case assigned person is missing.

Physical Education - Medical specialists advise against contact sports such as soccer, tumbling, cartwheels, acrobats and trampolines or falling from a height. The reason these activities should be avoided is because Achondroplasia dwarfs and many other types of dwarfism have necks and spines that are susceptible to trauma. There is a narrow opening of the foramen magnum, where the spinal cord travels through at the base of the skull. Additionally, achondroplasia children have short limbs and a larger than average size head. Pull-ups or hanging from bars should be avoided because the arms do not fully extend. Dwarf children should not be expected to run the same length as other children, keeping in mind dwarf children take 2 - 3 steps to each one of an average size child.

Cafeteria - Dwarf child might need assistance reaching food tray, utensils, etc., and/or use stools.

Field Trips - If a lot of walking is expected and stair climbing, keep in mind he/she will need more time and will become very tired. Can walking be cut down, using car transportation to get from point A to B?

An IEP evaluation may not be needed unless the student needs to be assigned to "special education" classes because of a learning disability, etc. The school decides this as they determine the best way to implement the needs of the dwarf child.