

**DeKalb County Board of Education Summary  
Contracted Speech and Related Services**

To ensure compliance with federal and state mandates for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 Plans, the district must secure adequate speech-language pathologists (SLPs), occupational therapists (OTs), and physical therapists (PTs).

Need for Contract	<p>The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 require timely provision of related services. Failure to deliver these services can result in due process complaints, state monitoring findings, and potential legal liability. Delays in therapy services negatively impact academic progress, communication, motor skills, and overall access to education. Contracting ensures equitable service delivery across all schools.</p>
Overview of Services	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Speech-Language Pathology (SLP)</b> Direct therapy for students with communication disorders (articulation, language, fluency, voice). Assessments and evaluations for initial and triennial IEPs.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Occupational Therapy (OT)</b> Direct therapy for students/Fine motor and sensory integration support for students with functional needs. Assistive technology recommendations and classroom adaptations. IEP goal development and progress monitoring.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Physical Therapy (PT)</b> Direct therapy for students/Gross motor skill development and mobility support. Adaptive equipment recommendations for accessibility. Collaboration with school staff for safe participation in school activities.</p>
Current Speech and Related Services DCSD Employees and Contracted Staff	<p>Currently, there are 53 full-time SLPs and two retired, part-time SLPs, 28 Occupational Therapists and 11 Physical Therapists who are district employees. There are currently 80 SLPs, 4 Occupational Therapists and 1 Physical Therapist contracted for services for students with disabilities.</p>
Why do Speech and Related Services shortages Exist?	<p>Nationwide and regional shortages of SLPs, OTs, and PTs have made recruitment and retention challenging. Contracting ensures continuity of services when district staffing cannot meet demand.</p> <p>Nearly 48% of school districts have trouble filling SLP roles, with approximately 64% having vacancies at any given time. Enrollment in OT programs has declined: master's/doctorate applications dropped by ~23% in recent years.</p> <p>As of 2022, there were ~233,890 full-time equivalent PTs in the U.S., with a shortfall of ~12,070 FTEs (5.2%).</p> <p>Resources:</p> <p><a href="https://communityimpact.com/houston/bay-area/education/2025/08/21/finding-their-voice-ccisd-looks-to-alternatives-amid-speech-language-pathologist-shortage/">https://communityimpact.com/houston/bay-area/education/2025/08/21/finding-their-voice-ccisd-looks-to-alternatives-amid-speech-language-pathologist-shortage/</a>  <a href="https://wota.net/page-18122/13401029">https://wota.net/page-18122/13401029</a>  <a href="https://www.apta.org/news/2025/03/04/workforce-forecast-2022-2037">https://www.apta.org/news/2025/03/04/workforce-forecast-2022-2037</a></p>
Anticipated Medicaid Reimbursement Benefits	<p>Speech, OT, and PT services for students with IEPs are eligible for Medicaid reimbursement. Reimbursement reduces expense, making contracted services financially sustainable. Funding recovered can be reinvested into special education programs.</p>