DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DIVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Continuity of Learning in a Virtual and/or Distance Learning Environment

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Special Education delivered in a virtual and/or distance learning environment

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General Considerations

School districts must provide a FAPE consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students. Exceptional circumstances may affect how all educational and related services are provided. Schools may not be able to provide all services in the same manner they are typically provided (OCR, March 21, 2020).

SCHOOLS MUST:

1. Determine whether and how equal access can be given to the instruction offered to nondisabled students to the maximum extent possible (Section 504/FAPE).
2. Determine whether and how the IEP goals can be addressed to the greatest extent possible (IDEA/FAPE).

KEY ACTIONS:

School staff review student's IEP, contact parent, and discuss individualized proposals for IEP implementation to prevent regression and promote learning.

FIRST CONSIDER,

How successfully the IEP can be implemented remotely (i.e. Grab-n-Learn, Online, or Hybrid):

- Specially Designed Instruction: learning/ behavior/ social emotional/ communication IEP Goals/ objectives
- Related services by alternative means
- Accommodations and modifications
- Home instructional materials individualized to the student's needs
- Providing individual and/or small group instruction for students with and/or without disabilities, as appropriate

THEN CONSIDER,

Are there any new needs resulting from distance learning?

- SDI to access remote learning technology
- Model instruction for parents to practice with their children
- Social skills instruction or opportunities for structured virtual interaction
- Gathering parent's input on needs (e.g., training on remote technology, etc.) and child's progress, as appropriate

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Course of Action

The following key actions should be considered and effected as needed and when appropriate.

KEY ACTIONS:

#1 Implement – If instruction is able to be implemented remotely, the school must implement the student's IEP as written. Continue to consider and evaluate how the student is accessing the general education curriculum.

Tips to Support Virtual/Distance Learning for Students with Disabilities
- ✓ Establish teaching presence (e.g. face-to-face interactions) and external structure early and revisit often.
- ✓ Be open and honest about what is working and what needs to be adjusted.
- ✓ Provide explicit instructions with clear expectations and practice (student/parent) support learning, online participation, communication, and netiquette
- ✓ Use a calendar as a visual representation of assignment due dates, in addition to listing due dates
- ✓ Break teaching/learning into smaller chunks to avoid cognitive overload and provide multiple means of communication and collaboration
- ✓ Be sure that learning content aligns with IEP goals, objectives, and progress monitoring
- ✓ Provide frequent/timely feedback to improve student outcomes
- ✓ Offer alternative means of completing assignments if it does not interfere with assignment outcomes. Example: voice recorded journal entries
- ✓ Provide students with opportunities to interact with peers, such as through discussion and group work.

#2 Amend – If the students' IEP needs to be adjusted, AMEND IEP with parent agreement (outside of the IEP Team meeting) to supplement student's current IEP. When complete, provide a copy of the IEP amendment to the parent and service providers by uploading / emailing the IEP amendments to sped.iepdocs@gdoe.net. **Conduct IEP meeting as soon as possible or within reasonable time, but no more than 30 days after first instructional day of the student.**

Document any changes, as appropriate to current IEP and service delivery remotely: School staff/parent discussion
- Accommodations, modifications, supplemental aids, and services to be provided (nature, frequency, provider, begin date, etc.)
- Technology needs

- Qualified personnel to deliver SDI
- Data points that require ongoing progress monitoring
- Ongoing communication Document that amendments are only in place during school closures due to COVID-19 Document parent agreement

#3 Revise – The IEP must be revised and an IEP Team meeting held (by alternative means if necessary) if the students' parent is not in agreement to amend the IEP. Implement the IEP only after PWN is provided. If parent cannot participate in an IEP meeting, then no IEP meeting is held and the team delivers those services on the IEP which can be reasonably implemented in a virtual environment without changing the program or placement. **Conduct IEP meeting as soon as possible or within reasonable time, but no more than 30 days after first instructional day of the student.**

Beginning and Sustaining Instruction and Service Delivery

Beginning and Sustaining Instructional Special Education and related services delivered in a virtual and/or distance learning environment. The IEP Team analysis for determining whether a student requires additional/different services is fact-specific.

SCHOOLS MUST:
- Consider a non-exhaustive list of factors:
  - Data on the student's progress during the school closures (progress monitoring)
  - Data on the student's ability to recoup skills and make progress on IEP goals
  - Length of school closure, including time without any instruction and time with virtual and/or long-distance learning
  - Documentation of accommodations and/or services provided (e.g., amount of instruction and services including dates, times, and duration)
  - Accommodations and/or services the IEP team was unable to provide
  - Additional special education needs that result from the extended school closure
- Note the following:
  - Missed services do not automatically result in a one-for-one compensatory award.
  - Decisions regarding Extended School Year (ESY) services and compensatory services are made by the IEP team, on a case by case basis, to address the individual needs of the student.

KEY ACTIONS:
- Follow a consistent schedule/routine
- Document activities and services provided (contact log)

- Monitor and track student progress based on student's response to services provided during school closure

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Recovery Efforts (Return to Normal Operations)

Once there is data to determine whether there was a loss of skills and/or progress during school closure, the IEP team determines whether additional/new/different services and accommodations are needed to address the impact of school closure