



## Factsheet: An IEP Addendum During School Closures- Know Your Rights

As families and schools make back-to-school plans for the Fall, 2020, in order to ensure everyone's health and safety, as well as optimal learning environments, there are many factors to consider, including the option to have in-person instruction, remote instruction, or a hybrid modality.

For students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), there is the added consideration of ensuring that the student's needs specific to their disability are able to be met, no matter what modality is chosen.

Most school districts' IEP teams met last spring during the initial stage of the school closure to develop a plan specifying what types of services would be offered during remote learning; this plan was then included in the IEP as an addendum, or documented in some official way (these varied a bit from one district to another).

Here are a few suggestions to ensure that your student's needs are being met:

- Communicate by email with the school team. If you have concerns about a new diagnosis affecting your student's education, email the teacher and principal to request a Multidisciplinary Evaluation.
- IEP meetings may be held remotely; required members of the team are: the student's parents, the student (if appropriate), at least one of the student's special education teachers and regular education teachers, a representative of the district (Local Education Representative/ LEA), other people with knowledge or expertise (therapists, social worker, advocate, etc.)
  - Parents can request accommodations - what platform works for you; join by webcam if possible, to facilitate communication with the team.
  - Get advance copies of everything, and ask how to send signed documents back.
  - Ask for as many meetings as you need to get the IEP right.
- Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) for the IEP addendum during remote / hybrid instruction: consider adding these to the SDI, based on the student's needs in order to access their education. Do they need:
  - Equipment (e.g., a tablet, laptop, stylus/ e-pencil, touchscreen, and/or timer)

- Programs/ software/ apps (e.g., text-to-speech/ speech-to-text, simplified screens).
  - \*Note: If the student does need this type of support, consider requesting an Assistive Technology (AT) assessment (Email this request to the special ed teacher and principal).
- Access to Wifi- are there concerns in your home with access to Wifi?
- Specialized Instruction
  - 1:1 online coaching
  - Timed breaks from screen; movement breaks
  - Online therapy
  - Study groups
  - Live, synchronous teaching
- Modified homework/assignments- With online assignments for every class (including Related Arts, such as Music, Art, and Physical Education), parents may feel overwhelmed with trying to facilitate all of these curricula. Discuss modifications that will work for everyone.
  - Grading/ Testing- second-chance grading (include specific time for second chances, and specific criteria for when it is needed, such as when the student receives below 70 percent for an assignment.)
  - Social Skills- Talk to the IEP team about how Social Skills will be incorporated into Remote Instruction. Perhaps the Speech Therapist or Social Worker can organize some group activities.
  - Organizational skills- If your student struggles with organization, work with the team to develop a plan to address this. SDI could include: checklists, learning to email teachers, weekly check-ins with teachers.
  - Self-Advocacy- If your student needs to learn to advocate for him/herself, then the team can discuss whether a goal and/or SDI (e.g., prompting to ask for help) would be appropriate
  - Positive Behavior Support Plan (PBSP)- Ensure that the IEP team develops an appropriate ABCC chart, goal, and SDI.
  - Transition Planning for students 14 and older- The school's transition coordinator can assist with ensuring that the student's goals for post-secondary education, employment, and independent living are being addressed.
  - Transition to/from fully remote services- If the student struggles with transitions, then consider developing SDIs such as visual schedules to help them adjust to changes.

- Progress Monitoring
  - Specify how goals will be monitored (in person and remotely); possibly ask for more frequent updates than just quarterly.
- PPE Requirements
  - If your student will have problems wearing PPE all day, include accommodations in PBSP, or SDI (e.g., designate a space where the student can take a break unmasked and separated), or consider a medical excuse.
- Discipline
  - Don't agree to "soft exclusion" (e.g., calling a parent to come pick up a child without documentation as to why), unless there are safety issues. If child is being excluded, contact advocate or lawyer.
  - If PPE is incorporated into the school code of conduct, get a copy of the code.
  - You don't have to wait for a 10-day exclusion to ask for an MDR (Manifestation Determination Review) in the case of a behavioral incident during which the student did not receive appropriate supports for their diagnosis.

Remember: Public schools (including charter schools) are obligated to provide each student with a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

*Article adapted from: Special Education in the Age of COVID-19: What is the New Normal, presented by Tiffany Sizemore, Duquesne University School of Law at the RMU Trees Special Education Event, July 28, 2020. lawclinic@duq.edu; 412.396.4704.*

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