

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Diverse Learner Supports and Services during COVID-19 School Closures

Updated March 22, 2020

During the state-mandated school closures in response to COVID-19, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services (ODLSS) is following the special education guidance issued by the [Illinois State Board of Education](#) (ISBE) and the [United States Department of Education](#). For the most up-to-date information regarding the district's response to COVID-19, visit: cps.edu/coronavirus.

My child had an IEP meeting scheduled during the school closure period. Can this meeting still be conducted?

- While in-person meetings are not possible due to necessary health precautions, scheduled IEP meetings can continue during the school closure period through alternate means of communication, such as teleconference or videoconference.
- If it is not possible to hold scheduled IEP meetings through these alternate means of communication, meetings can be rescheduled as needed. Parents are encouraged to contact their child's principal for more information on how to reach their school's case manager.
- To the greatest extent possible, CPS will comply with federal and state law as it applies to timeline requirements during the school closure period.
- For the most up-to-date procedural manuals, please review the ODLSS [IEP manual](#) or [504 manual](#).

What procedures should IEP teams follow in order to conduct virtual meetings?

- In order to hold teleconference or videoconference IEP meetings, the IEP team must follow all federal and state guidelines for notifying parents and guardians **and** obtain parent or guardian consent. CPS is currently exploring ways for parents and guardians to provide consent electronically while schools are closed.
- If a parent or guardian consents to holding a virtual IEP meeting, they must also consent to receive documentation electronically by completing an IEP Document Email Authorization Form in either [English](#) or [Spanish](#).
 - With parent or guardian consent, the IEP team can provide the following electronic documents: Notice of Conference, Evaluation Reports (including draft and final copies of the Learning Environment Interventions Form), IEP Documents (including data collection forms), and IEP Progress Reports and Report Cards.
- **All** IEP team members **must be present** at any IEP meeting, even if held by alternate means, unless the parent or guardian **and** the district representative give consent for the excusal of any member from the meeting. Due to the current school closures, consent to excuse an IEP team member can be given electronically. The case manager will document the appropriate consent using the SSM events and IEP notes sections.

What technology should IEP teams use for virtual meetings and electronic communication?

IEP team members are encouraged to use Google Hangouts via phone or computer to communicate with the rest of the IEP team, and CPS staff members can create and send meeting invitations to the other IEP team members. CPS is exploring additional technology solutions to facilitate IEP meetings in a way that meets our [acceptable use policy](#).

How will the school closures impact IEP timeline requirements?

To the greatest extent possible, IEP teams should continue to comply with federal and state law as it applies to timeline requirements for IEP meetings or evaluations during the school closure period. ISBE has **not** yet released guidance regarding extending yearly timelines for annual IEP evaluations and reevaluations, therefore, the district **cannot yet** determine whether or not extensions can be provided. Please reference the [ODLSS IEP manual](#) or [ODLSS 504 manual](#) for more information.

Will schools be allowed to facilitate IEP meetings discussing student placement within cluster programs, speciality schools, transition programs, or therapeutic day school?

Yes. IEP teams will continue to comply with federal and state law for all educational environment decisions and discuss placement considerations.

How can I request an IEP meeting for my child while schools are closed?

Please email your child's principal with a written request for an IEP meeting, and schools will respond within 10 calendar days.

Can I request an IEP evaluation for my child while schools are closed?

While you are able to submit a written request for an IEP evaluation to your school's administrator and case manager while schools are closed, your school will not be able to respond to this request until schools re-open. Once students return to school, the school will determine whether to move forward with the IEP evaluation within 14 school days. .

How are timelines for early intervention, early childhood transition, due process, complaint investigations, and mediation timelines impacted by school closures?

CPS is continuing to take all reasonable steps to continue with due process, complaint investigations, and mediation using alternate means of communication. The district is currently exploring options to support this process using alternate means of communication. For more information, please contact ODLSS via odlss@cps.edu or visit the [ODLSS website](#).

To the greatest extent possible, CPS will continue to ensure that any child transitioning from an early intervention program has either an IEP or continued Individualized Family Service Plan in effect on the child's third birthday. CPS is also working to ensure that teams are able to comply with the timely child find requirement.

Because in-person evaluations are not currently an option due to necessary health precautions, CPS is exploring additional assessment options, such as parent interviews, childcare provider interviews, parent rating scales, and review of early intervention reports.

What are the district's educational obligations for special education students while schools are closed?

CPS is committed to ensuring that every student remains engaged throughout the school closure period and will continue to provide students with learning resources, such as [grade level resource packets and activities](#) and ISBE's [resource library](#).

Will my child's clinician make up their minutes once school is back in session?

The district is currently working through this question and will update families as soon as possible.

Can my child work with their clinician during the statewide school closure?

CPS is currently exploring teletherapy and video therapy as two potential options and will update families as soon as the district receives further guidance from ISBE.

My child attends a non-public option for special education services at a residential treatment facility or school within Illinois/state-run residential facility/out-of-state facility. Will these services remain open during the school closure period?

Facilities within Illinois with both a residential and education program focus are allowed to keep the residential program running as long as the facility retains the appropriate credentials. Out-of-state facilities will follow that state's requirements regarding any school closures.

CPS will continue to support all residential placements. If you have questions about your child's residential placement, please contact our ODLSS Residential Manager Ms. Nwosu at rrnwosu@cps.edu.

If you would like to receive updates from ODLSS, complete this [form](#).