

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Diverse Learner Supports and Services during COVID-19 School Closures

Updated April 20, 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 most up-to-date 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. If you would like to receive updates from ODLSS, complete this [form](#).

This document is organized by the following topics:

- [Virtual IEP Meetings](#)
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Virtual Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meetings

Can my child's IEP team conduct an in-person meeting?

No. Due to the Governor's stay-at-home order and necessary social distancing recommendations from federal and local health authorities, all IEP meetings will be conducted virtually during the COVID-19-related school closures.

Who must be present at an IEP meeting?

All IEP team members must be present at all virtual IEP meetings, unless the parent or guardian **and** the district representative give consent for the excusal of any member from the meeting. If any members of the IEP team are not excused and are unable to participate in a virtual IEP meeting, the meeting should be rescheduled for a mutually agreeable time.

"District representative" in this case refers to the Local Education Agency (LEA). The LEA in this case is the local school district representative on the IEP team such as the Case Manager or School Principal. 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.

Should we address my child's transition plan during a virtual IEP meeting?

All sections of the IEP, including the transition plan, should be addressed and developed if the applicable data is available.

How can I initiate a virtual IEP/504 meeting?

You can request a virtual IEP/504 meeting through your local school district representative. Schools will continue to follow the CPS [IEP Procedural Manual](#) and [504 Procedural Manual](#) for conducting IEP/504 meetings.

Will compensatory services be considered for the school closure time period?

The District will do its best to ensure that students receive services. However, we do understand that there may be instances where a student has not received services for an extended period of time. When that occurs, compensatory services will be considered on an individual basis following the school closure period.

How will IEP minutes be addressed during the remote learning period?

IEP minutes will be addressed with the best efforts of the school's instructional teams by utilizing each student's IEP in alignment with their school's specific remote learning plan and supported by the approved services of the Related Service Providers.

Should my child's IEP team still consider external services, such as paraprofessional supports, for my child's IEP?

IEP teams meeting virtually should consider all the same supports and services available in in-person IEP meetings and should continue to utilize data to drive the team's decisions.

How can all members of the IEP team access documents during virtual IEP meetings?

To share IEP documents over email, parents or guardians must fill out and submit the authorization form found here in [English](#) or [Spanish](#). Informal consent to share IEP documents over email can also be accepted in any written form. If families do not have access to an email account or do not want IEP documents to be shared digitally, school teams can develop a plan to print and mail documents.

Can IEP/504 teams meet without internet access?

Team members can participate in IEP meetings on Google Meet via the internet **or** by phone. Review this [guide](#) for more information on getting connected to the internet.

What should IEP/504 teams do for IEP/504 meetings that require interpreting services?

Virtual IEP meetings should follow the same process as in-person IEP meetings and should include available staff who are proficient and experienced with interpreting. If CPS staff are not available, schools should contact their district representative to request support from the translation team **or** utilize a [CPS-approved vendor](#).

What are best practices for conducting virtual IEP/504 meetings?

There are many practices teams can implement to ensure virtual meetings are as productive and helpful as possible, including: speaking with participants in advance to discuss any concerns, offering a call-in number, testing the technology in advance and at the beginning of each meeting, muting microphones when you aren't speaking, and keeping background noise to a minimum.

What should IEP/504 teams do if a meeting must be canceled or rescheduled?

The IEP/504 team should document the cancellation of the meeting within the event log. The ITS team is developing an SSM document where teams will be able to record this information.

Do parents or guardians need to give consent to hold virtual IEP/504 meetings?

Yes, parents or guardians must give permission in order to hold virtual IEP meetings. Families can submit this consent via email.

Should external service providers or agencies participate in virtual IEP meetings?

Outside agencies should be invited to participate in virtual IEP meetings to support transition planning. All invitations to external agencies should be documented. If the outside agency cannot attend, the virtual meeting may still proceed.

Can parents or guardians opt out of virtual IEP/504 meetings?

Yes. Parents or guardians can opt out of virtual IEP/504 meetings and should provide their decision in writing if possible. An in-person IEP/504 meeting can be scheduled when school resumes.

Remote Learning

Will young students receive remote learning assignments?

Students of all grade levels will receive remote learning assignments or activities.

How should schools accommodate students who are deaf or hard of hearing during remote learning activities that have a listening component?

All remote learning materials should be available in print.

How should schools accommodate students who are deaf or hard of hearing if teachers are presenting information orally via Google Hangouts or another virtual platform?

If teachers will be using “live voice” to present information virtually, students using assistive-listening devices such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, and bone-anchored systems will need to have good quality auditory access and be able to see the speaker’s face while talking.

If a student requires a sign language interpreter to access communications, schools have two options:

1. The interpreter needs to be signing live during the presentation or class session
2. The interpreter needs to record the lesson in sign language and then send it to the student separately.

Auditory information that is not already captioned can be made accessible by using a CART, Typewell, or C-Print service or by manually creating subtitles. If you are using Google Meet, [turn on closed captioning for live conversations](#).

Will students’ homebound services continue during school closures?

Homebound services will not continue during school closures, and students who have been approved for homebound services will follow their school’s remote learning plan.

Digital Resources

How can staff gain remote access to CPS applications?

Find instructions for accessing CPS applications remotely [here](#). If you have a unique situation that does not match any of the help instructions, contact the IT Service Desk.

How do I use Google Meet and Google Chat?

Review the CPS instructions for [Google Meet](#) and [Google Chat](#).

How can staff ensure student confidentiality during virtual meetings?

All district digital guidance can be found on the [Acceptable Use Policy website](#). Other tips include:

- The person leading the meeting or instruction shall be responsible for confirming participation of appropriate parties. For class lessons or meetings, the person leading the meeting must check the list of participants to ensure that only appropriate participants are present.
- Only use first names or formal names (e.g. Ms.Smith) throughout the lesson or meeting.
- Do not state any personal information during the lesson or meetings (e.g. birthdates, home addresses, student's medical diagnosis).
- At the beginning of an IEP meeting, each team member may verbally confirm that they are not recording the meeting and that they do not consent to video or audio recording.
- At the beginning of an IEP meeting, each team member can verbally confirm that there is no one else in the room that can hear or see the virtual meeting.

Which special education providers can provide 1:1 virtual support for students?

The updated Acceptable Use Policy provides an exception allowing for school counselors, school-based social workers or psychologists and CPS staff in the Office of School Counseling and Postsecondary Advising (OSCPA) and Office of Social-Emotional Learning (OSEL) to communicate directly with students for well-being check-ins via Google Hangouts Meet. The protocols that must be followed for this support can be found at the [Acceptable Use Policy website](#).

Staff

Will related service providers (RSPs) still use the same process for requesting bilingual evaluations during school closures?

RSPs should reach out to their manager for guidance on completing bilingual evaluations.

Do students over the age of 18 who want to delegate their educational rights still need to give written permission during the school closure?

Students wishing to delegate their educational rights must still give written permission. One option for students to give their written consent would be to log-in and send an email from their CPS email account.

How should Special Education Classroom Assistants (SECA) serve students while schools are closed?

SECAs are currently supporting teachers and their school teams under the guidance of their school's administration. SECAs are able to work with teachers to support activities aligned with the student's IEP including attending virtual lessons with classroom teachers, joining morning meetings, and participating in office hours or live streams of lessons to support activities and maintain community.

Will Special Education teachers support students for IEP minutes that exceed the recommended amount of time (i.e 600 mpw of ELA)?

Unfortunately, it may not be possible for Special Education teachers to support students whose IEP minutes exceed the recommended amount of time for remote learning. During this time of closure, we are committed to supporting our CPS families. However, we must work within the confines of the recommended amount of time for daily student engagement with remote learning. Special Education teachers should utilize the resources within the [Supplemental Remote Learning Resources for Students with Disabilities](#) guide to support students in collaboration with the General Education teacher. Teachers will make their best effort to provide any accommodations or modifications students might need to access the learning activities provided in alignment with their IEP. The recommended time for daily student academic engagement is based on the student's grade level. Special Education teachers will engage with their students within the recommended amount of time for daily student engagement.

- Pre-K: 60 minutes
- Grades K–2: 90 minutes
- Grades 3–5: 120 minutes
- Grades 6–8: 180 minutes
- Grades 9–12: 270 minutes

Will IEP teams still make three attempts to schedule a meeting?

Three attempts should be made to contact the parent in order to conduct the IEP meeting. However if teams are unable to reach the parent or conduct the meeting after the third attempt, teams should not move forward with the IEP meeting during the school closure period. This is also applicable to 504 meetings.

How should teachers monitor student progress?

Teachers can monitor student progress during remote learning by using student work samples and data collected from online assessment resources such as those listed in this [supplemental resource document](#).

How should staff and service providers proceed if all assessments and data needed to develop an IEP are not available?

As stated by ISBE, evaluations and re-evaluations that do not require face-to-face assessments or observations may take place while schools are closed as long as the student's parent or legal guardian agrees. If an evaluation requires face-to-face assessments, or if the parent or guardian does not agree to virtual meetings, then the evaluation must be postponed until schools reopen. This applies to **all** sections of the IEP.

Will IEP report cards still be completed for Quarter 3?

IEP report cards should be completed as scheduled, utilizing the data collected before or during school closures. If the teacher or related service provider responsible for updating the goal's progress determines that the appropriate data is not available, the current mastery level section should be left blank. The comments section should include any additional information needed to inform the parent or guardian of student progress.

How should staff proceed if a parent or guardian declines a virtual IEP/504 meeting?

Staff should make every attempt possible to conduct virtual IEP and 504 meetings. However, if a parent or guardian declines a virtual meeting or staff are unable to make contact with the parent or guardian, the meeting must be canceled and rescheduled. Staff should document efforts to contact the parent or guardian and contact their district representative for further guidance.