

Special Education Talking Points

Re: COVID-19 Outbreak

**NOTE: This information is subject to change as this is a fluid situation and is continuously evolving. We are giving you the best information we have at this time.**

Delivering distance learning for an extended period of time is a new concept for most schools. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), in the wake of the potential spread of COVID-19, is calling public schools and charters to plan for up to seven weeks of distance learning.

MDE defines distance learning as: Students engaging in distance learning have access to appropriate educational materials and receive daily interaction with their licensed teacher(s).

1. March 18-27th is NOT for instruction or meetings that were previously scheduled. The Governor has designated this time for planning and developing Contingency Plans for Distance Learning. All timelines are on hold as are all services. No meetings should be taking place. This again, is designated time for planning for Distance Learning.
2. Should school closures happen after this time, Contingency Plans for Distance Learning will be implemented.
3. What does direct instruction mean in the use of a distance learning model during the COVID-19 emergency?
   1. Instruction may be provided by special education staff, including related service providers.
   2. This can occur through a variety of means which may include
      1. Paper packets or worksheets, text books, telephone instruction, online resources, instruction via the school’s learning management system, instruction via Skype, Facetime or Zoom.
4. What is the district's obligation for due process meetings should schools close after March 27th? (Annual reviews &, reevaluations)
   1. IEP teams are allowed to meet virtually to complete due process activities. Districts can also move forward with assessments and evaluation available online. For activities that are not reasonable to carry out if a school is closed or a student is ill, those activities could be delayed until the district is reopened.
   2. Write the IEP as if school were in session.
   3. Update the Contingency Plan for Distance Learning
   4. Do I need to wait 14 days to start Distance Learning?
      1. No, start upon any school closures after March 30
5. What is the district’s obligation for initial evaluations and initial IEPs?
   1. There will be no initial evaluations started during a school closure.
   2. If the initial evaluation plan was signed & is in process, a Prior Written Notice should be developed communicating that the district has determined that the evaluation at hand is unreasonable to be completed. Once school is back in session, as determined by the district, the evaluation will resume as written on the Prior Written Notice for Evaluation. **Contact your BRIC Supervisor if you have a case like this.**
   3. If the initial evaluation was completed and you were about to write an initial IEP, write it as if it were going to take place as if school were in session. Then develop the Contingency Plan for Distance Learning.
6. DD Students who are due for a categorical evaluation or turning age 3 will be in a “stay put” if school closure occurs. We cannot evaluate for initial eligibility in a Distance Learning environment. We will write a PWN noting their “stay put” until eligibility can be determined. A sample PWN will be provided.
7. ESY
   1. Continue to turn in any ESY paperwork to your supervisor by April 1st.
   2. ESY planning will take place once we have a better understanding of future government directives.
8. Paraprofessionals, SLPA’s, Interpreters & Language Facilitators may be utilized in any manner as determined by building administration. This does not mean that they will only be working with special education.