

# RESTART & RECOVERY

## SERVING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES DURING COVID-19

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### **THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS**

*The purpose of this document is to compile resources and information for state leaders on the education of students with disabilities during the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) global pandemic. States can repurpose this document to meet their needs. If you repurpose, please use the following language: "This resource draws on a resource created by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) that is based on guidance compiled from state education agencies and national and local organizations."*

## FEDERAL GUIDANCE AND RESOURCES

- On October 22, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) within the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services released a [Question and Answer \(Q&A\) document](#) in response to inquiries concerning implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C provision of early intervention services during COVID-19, including guidance on individualized family service plan (IFSP) meetings and notice, the 45-day timeline, and the provision of services.
- On July 6, OSEP issued a [Q&A document](#) in response to inquiries concerning implementation of IDEA Part C evaluation and assessment timelines in the current COVID-19 environment.
- On June 30, OSEP released two Q&A documents in response to inquiries concerning implementation of IDEA for Part B and Part C: [IDEA Part B Procedural Safeguards](#) and [IDEA Part C Procedural Safeguards](#).
- On June 9, ED released a memo regarding waiver requests on the one percent participation cap on students with disabilities taking alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards and requirements for the 2020-2021 school year. Because most systems were unable to complete statewide assessments for this population due to extended school closures, states are encouraged to submit waiver extensions or requests referencing SY 2018-19 data and explaining the impact of disrupted testing due to COVID-19.
- On June 9, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services also released a memo permitting state education agencies and their subgrantees, including local education agencies, to request a waiver to extend their 2018 IDEA Part B grant award funds through September 30, 2021. This action is to assist SEAs in planning for how to resume or continue the provision of special education and related services for children with disabilities and their families.
  - The waiver template in fillable portable document format (PDF) is posted at [www.ed.gov/coronavirus](http://www.ed.gov/coronavirus). If grantees submit the waiver request electronically to [IDEAwaiver@ed.gov](mailto:IDEAwaiver@ed.gov), this will result in an expedited response from the Department.
- On March 21, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services and the Office of Civil Rights issued [additional guidance on serving students with](#) during school closures related to COVID-19 to states, districts, and schools. A few highlights:
  - Ensuring compliance with IDEA, Section 504, and ADA should not prevent any school from offering educational programs through distance instruction
  - School districts still must provide students with disabilities a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in accordance with IDEA
  - Providing for FAPE may include special education and related services virtually, online, and via telephone
- On March 12, OSEP released a [Q&A document](#) outlining states' responsibilities on providing services to children with disabilities during the COVID-19 outbreak.
  - On March 13, OSEP, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and the Council for Administrators of Special Education (CASE) hosted [a joint webinar to review the Q&A guidance from OSEP](#) on the education of students with disabilities during COVID-19 for state and local directors of special education.

## STATE AND LOCAL GUIDANCE AND RESOURCES

*The following examples were culled from state and local education agency websites.*

State:

- The **Arkansas** Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) provided [guidance on special education services](#) for districts during extended school closures. DESE also published supplementary resources on [supports and accommodations for students with disabilities](#) and [supports for students with significant cognitive disabilities](#). To support school restart, DESE released a [Back-to-School Playbook](#) developed by teacher teams, including special education teachers, to guide instructional planning and recover learning for all students, including students with disabilities. DESE asked districts to implement by fall a [Ready for Learning model](#) that focuses on blended learning, guaranteed and viable curriculum, and a student-focused approach. To support implementation, DESE provides resources, tools, and waiver opportunities for districts.
- The **California** Department of Education issued [guidance for districts on special education](#) and [guidance for online learning](#), including the accessibility of resources for students with disabilities and strategies to promote their engagement in a virtual environment. The California State Board of Education and Governor are [permitting small groups of students with disabilities](#) and others with “acute” needs for in-person instruction in the 2020-2021 school year.
- The **Delaware** Department of Education provided [guidance](#) on IDEA, part B and the provision of FAPE during closures related to the novel coronavirus. Additionally, the Delaware Department has identified [learning activities by grade level for students identified for special education services](#), which can be found at the bottom of this page. Activities include accessible books that can be speech enabled and accessed using multiple interfaces and printable picture cards available to promote functional communication in children with Autism.
- The **Florida** Department of Education (FDOE) provided [guidance to districts and schools for serving students with disabilities](#) and tailoring distance learning to meet their needs. FDOE also hosted a [webinar with the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Students Services \(BEESS\)](#) on this topic to provide guidance on students with IEPs, 504 Plans or Gifted Plans.
- The **Indiana** Department of Education released [e-learning guidance on the education of students with disabilities](#), including reflection questions for educators as they seek to accommodate online learning resources and discuss and document students’ IEPs. The Department also developed a [repository of resources](#) on the education of students with disabilities, including resources for students with emotional disabilities, students with autism spectrum disorders, deaf students, and blind students.
- The **Kentucky** Department of Education developed a page [Special Education & Early Learning Resources](#) to answer frequently asked questions and to provide state and federal guidance to districts, educators, and families.

- The **Louisiana** Department of Education (LDOE) released [a guide to providing related and direct services](#) to students with disabilities in distance learning environments along with a [resource for families supporting students with disabilities](#) during continuous learning, including tips and resources on organization, accommodations, and accessibility. LDOE also provided [guidance and tools to help districts maintain compliance](#) with special education timelines and requirements, including up-to-date guidance from ED. LDOE's newest set of "Strong Start" resources includes [guidance for families](#) on ways to support their child's learning, [guidance for special education leaders](#) to prepare to meet the needs of students with disabilities with the return to school, and [guidance for direct service providers](#) to ensure students with disabilities receive the services they need in different learning environments.
- The **Maine** Department of Education developed a [resource repository](#) for administrators, teachers, and parents to support students with disabilities during school closures. Resources are organized by topic area, including accessibility, online learning, academic content, social emotional development and enrichment activities, and additional family and teacher supports.
- The **Maryland** Department of Education published a [variety of technical assistance bulletins](#) that focus on COVID-19 related planning for students with disabilities, including specially designed instruction, monitoring of student progress, recovery planning, teaching and learning in inclusive environments, and supporting students who require extensive, intensive, individualized instruction and supports through alternative service delivery models.
- The **Massachusetts** Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released a [webpage of information and resources for special educators](#), including Zoom meeting conference topics (e.g., IEP timelines, virtual IEP meetings) and two files that contain useful resources for all educators and service providers on instruction, family engagement, remote service delivery, and assistive technology. DESE encourages districts and schools to use reading lists, online lessons, work packets, or other available learning approaches using appropriate modifications and accommodations for students with disabilities and encourages educators, counselors, and related service providers to reach out to students and families by phone, email, and other means of communication during school building closures related to COVID-19.
- The **Michigan** Department of Education developed a [resource repository](#) for students with disabilities including social, behavior, and communication resources, resources for students with significant cognitive disabilities, and universal supports for students with complex needs.
- The **Minnesota** Department of Education (MDE) provided [resources on special education instruction, services, programming, and funding](#) in response to COVID-19. This guidance includes information on teleservices and HIPAA and FERPA compliance related to provision of services during closure related to novel coronavirus.
- The **Mississippi** Department of Education (MDE) compiled a [district and family frequently-asked question resource](#) that includes guidance on individual education programs and the use of distance technology. MDE encourages districts to use distance technology to the extent possible to provide IEP and evaluation meetings if staff and parents are available. MDE also released resources for students in pre-K through grade 12 to support student learning during the extended school building closure, including [resources for students with visual and hearing impairments](#) and their parents and families.

- The **Nebraska** Department of Education created a [repository](#) with resources to support students with significant cognitive disabilities and professional development resources to assist educators with the transition to online instruction and services for students with disabilities.
- The **North Dakota** Department of Public Instruction is [leveraging federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act funding to help ease the state's shortage of special education teachers](#). The Department will award \$750,000 to Minot State University to pay for scholarships for 20 paraprofessionals who have experience working with students with disabilities to become certified special education teachers.
- The **Rhode Island** Department of Education (RIDE) created a [resource landing page](#) for special education teachers, paraprofessionals, early childhood special education, related service providers, and parents for students with disabilities. RIDE also regularly updates a list of [K-12 distance learning resources](#), including accessible online learning platforms and literacy support for students who are blind, students who are deaf, and struggling readers, including students with dyslexia.
- The **Tennessee** Department of Education (TDOE) developed a [school closure toolkit for special populations](#) that includes a district and school checklist for supporting special populations of students, best practices for supporting students with disabilities and additional service needs, recommended schedules and procedures, and a list of resources for district and school leaders. TDOE [announced](#) a Special Education Additional Endorsement Grant “intended to help address special education needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes an additional \$1 million [IDEA Innovation grant](#) to support districts in implementing innovative ways to remediate loss of instruction for students with disabilities, \$5 million through IDEA part B funding formula to [provide compensatory services](#), and a \$1 million [Technology Partnership Grant](#) to address technology needs that are a result of COVID-19 school closures.”
- The **Texas** Education Agency (TEA) developed [resources](#), available in both English and Spanish, related to the education of students with disabilities during extended school building closures. TEA also released [guidelines](#) and [templates](#) for the documentation of temporary services and resources on managing challenging behaviors for both [parents](#) and [local education agencies](#).
- The **Vermont** Agency of Education produced a [memo](#) with resources for the remote education of students with disabilities. This resource blends suggestions around promising practices for supporting the remote education of those with learning differences with practical academic and accessibility resources.
- The **Virginia** Department of Education released a [repository of instructional resources](#) compiled and vetted by Virginia school divisions across the states as they endeavor to meet the continuing learning needs of students with disabilities during school building closures.
- The **Washington** Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) published [Reopening Washington Schools 2020: Special Education Guidance](#) to provide districts with guidance on inclusionary practices and services across a variety of school reopening models. OSPI also provides a list of [online professional learning opportunities for educators](#) on supporting students with disabilities in varied learning environments.

- The **Wisconsin** Department of Public Instruction (DPI) created a [landing page for special education guidance to districts](#), which includes guidance related to data collection and monitoring, telehealth services, and FERPA considerations. DPI also provided a [frequently-asked question resource](#) on supporting students who learn differently during extended building closures including on individualized education programs, evaluations, and early childhood education supports. DPI's Special Education Team developed a [bulletin on determining additional services for students with IEPs](#) impacted by the Covid-19 school closures. This bulletin addresses questions such as what factors and information should be considered, what processes and time frame should be followed, and how services should be documented.

*Local:*

- Arlington County Public Schools in Virginia provided a [list of resources for families of students with disabilities](#) that include general strategies, resources, and online curricula to access from home. Resources cover topics such as assistive technology, occupational and physical therapy, sensory and self-regulation, sign language, social emotional learning, speech and language, and math and literacy across all grade levels.
- The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) created printed packets of learning materials for every grade level from Pre-K through 12th grade that are designed to meet the needs of all learners, including students with disabilities. DCPS also provided a [free online platform for students with disabilities and their families](#) to access lessons, activities, and other resources including resources on inclusion, related services (e.g., audiology, occupational and physical therapy, speech pathology), sensory support, and special education process guidance.
- Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) in Michigan developed a variety of online resources, with [specific resources for the education of students with disabilities](#) including those with hearing impairments, speech and language needs, and autism spectrum disorder.
- Fresno Unified School District in California provided [daily learning plans and sample schedules for students](#), including students with disabilities.

## RESOURCES FROM NATIONAL & LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

- The National Center on Systemic Improvement (NCSI) is a national technical assistance center designated by ED to provide support to states on the education of students with disabilities during COVID-19. NCSI [provides COVID-19 resources for supporting students with disabilities](#), including resources on federal and state policy guidance, distance learning, and tele-practice/tele-therapy. States can submit questions and resources to NCSI using [this link](#).
- The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) is another national technical assistance center designated by ED to provide support to states on the education of children with disabilities during COVID-19 school closures. ECTA provides [daily updates on COVID-19 and tele-intervention and distance learning resources](#).
- The American Speech and Hearing Association has a [variety of resources](#) on the education of students with disabilities during COVID-19. Resources include state-by-state tracking of laws and regulations for tele-practice and licensure policies, mental health resources for audiologists and speech-language pathologists, considerations for using masks and preparing for in-person service delivery, and other setting-specific resources and tele-practice and policy updates.
- The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) developed a [set of resources](#) related to COVID-19, including a summary of state guidance for educator preparation programs on how to navigate challenges resulting from the crisis, voices and perspectives from the field, and resources and tools to support online learning in higher education.
- The American Institutes for Research released [Digital Accessibility: How Schools and Teachers Can Support Students with Disabilities in Remote Learning](#). The resource provides “actionable steps and resources for both teachers and education leaders to improve the accessibility of remote learning activities.”
- Amy Hanreddy, Assistant Professor of Special Education at Cal State Northridge, developed [high-leverage guidelines](#) for virtual instruction of students with the most significant support needs and a [video primer](#) on their use. Hanreddy also gathered [a set of resources](#) on virtual instruction for students with significant needs.
- The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University and Results for America released [Academic Supports for Students with Disabilities](#). The brief shares evidence-based insights and recommendations on how schools can intervene to reduce learning gaps between students with disabilities and their peers, which have likely widened during school closures.
- The Brooklyn Laboratory School released [Back to School Facilities Toolkit](#) to serve as a resource for schools nationwide to create fair, equitable plans to reopen their doors, while protecting the wellbeing of all students, teachers, staff, and their families. The first part of this [toolkit](#) features facility plans for all types of classrooms and staffing configurations for 12:1:1, 15:1:1 classrooms, paraprofessionals, and ICT classrooms. The Brooklyn Lab School also released a [Back to School Instructional Program Scheduling Map](#), which can serve as a resource for school leaders to think about where students will learn this fall, how they will learn, from whom they will learn, and what they will learn.
- The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) developed a [resource repository](#) including strategies and tips for online learning, offline learning, return to school and recovery, and resources for school leaders.

- CAST has [multiple remote learning resources](#) to support states, districts, schools, and teachers impacted by school closures in ensuring continuity of learning for all students while at home. These resources include [supports around executive function in online environments](#), [accessible materials and technologies](#), and [universal design for learning](#).
  - The National Center on Accessible Educational Materials for Learning (AEM Center) at CAST provided [a series of recorded webinars](#) with practice materials and office hours in support of students who need AEM and related technologies while learning at home.
- The Center for Parent Information & Resources offered a [Sample Virtual IEP Meeting Agenda](#), a suggested agenda for a virtual IEP meeting, including roles, norms, and steps with suggested time allocations.
- The Center for Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) provided a [preliminary review of how districts are responding to COVID-19](#), including whether the district provides modified lessons and/or tools for students with disabilities. The site will be updated continuously. CRPE also published [a scan of state's guidance to districts on special education](#), including IEP meetings and timelines, offering support to families, providing specific special education curricular resources, and requiring special education to be a component of districts' remote learning plans.
- The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at the American Institutes for Research released a COVID-19 [sortable resource library](#) that includes a trauma-informed self-care toolkit for educators, strategies to promote positive learning conditions for families and caregivers, and tips on supporting students' mental health and social emotional learning.
- The [Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities](#) has resources on making online learning more accessible, engaging, and effective for students with disabilities, including a:
  - [Brief on considerations for SEA policies and procedures](#) related to online learning for students with disabilities
  - [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\) Scan Tool and supporting resources](#) to ensure that instructional materials and learning experiences are accessible
  - Comprehensive report [Equity Matters 2016: Digital and Online Learning for Students with Disabilities](#), which includes a literature review, policy scan, and suggestions for the online learning of students with disabilities
  - [Report on the Online Teaching Standards and Teacher Certification Workgroup for Students with Disabilities](#) which includes effective remote teaching strategies for students with learning disabilities.
  - The Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) developed a [set of resources](#) on responding to COVID-19 through a PBIS lens, including recommendations for educators, supports for families, a remote instructional framework for instruction, and a resource on getting back to school after disruptions. The Center on PBIS also released [Returning to School During and After Crisis](#), which describes the use of a multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) framework to support students, families, and educators during the transitions back to school, during, and following the global pandemic in a manner that prioritizes their health and safety, social and emotional needs, and behavioral and academic growth. It includes guidance for states, districts, and school leadership teams.

- The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has compiled [resources for special education teachers](#) to use during remote delivery of instruction and services for students with disabilities.
  - On March 19, CEC and eLuma co-hosted a webinar on teaching special education online during COVID-19. A link to the webinar, slide deck, and a repository of free teacher resources can be [found here](#).
- The Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) provides a [resource with considerations for local special education administrators](#), including how students will be provided with special education and related services in a virtual environment. CASE hosted a [free webinar with tips for facilitating successful virtual IEP meetings](#) during the pandemic and beyond. For additional COVID-19 resources from CASE, click [here](#).
- The Council of the Great City Schools released [IDEA Best Practices During the COVID-19 Crisis](#) to offer guidance for districts to be mindful of as they continue to provide instruction and services to students with disabilities during and after the crisis. This includes guidance on outreach and communication with parents; conducting virtual IEP, MTSS, PBIP, and remote eligibility meetings; handling parent evaluation requests and progress reporting; prior written notice procedures; the development of distance learning plans; and a range of other related topics.
- Diverse Learners Coop provides districts and schools with [practical considerations and steps for conducting successful online IEP](#) meetings for students across grade levels.
- The [Educating All Learners Alliance](#) (EALA) is an alliance of organizations dedicated to equity for complex learners. EALA is compiling a [resource library](#) including resources and guidance, technology tools, accessibility tips, and practical examples from the field on how to ensure continuity of learning and services for students with disabilities. CCSSO is a partner.
- Eye to Eye provides [resources for students with learning differences](#) and those with attention issues as well as for their educators and families.
- Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health released [Filling in the Blanks: National Research Needs to Guide Decisions about Reopening Schools in the United States](#). The report provides international lessons to guide the reopening of schools in way that prioritizes the most vulnerable learners, including students with disabilities. For instance, in Australia, Queensland is allowing only vulnerable students and children of essential workers to attend in-person classes during its second term, which runs through late May. Denmark allowed autism spectrum disorder classes and classes of particular age groups to resume in mid-April prior to in-person classes resuming for all students in early May. The Netherlands has a similar policy that allows students with disabilities to attend in-person classes for the entire week, while other students must continue blended or remote learning until early June.
- The Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA) released [survey results from parents](#) across 34 states on learning at home for students with disabilities. LDA also has a [COVID-19 resource page](#) with archived webinars and links to support materials for students, parents, and educators across the country.
- Marshall Street Initiatives, a division of Summit Public Schools, shared [Virtual IEP Meeting Guidance](#), a working document that provides guidance on facilitating IEP meetings virtually.

- Michael Giangreco of the University of Vermont Center on Disability & Community Inclusion published a [brief](#) on the remote use of paraprofessional supports during the COVID-19 pandemic. This resource provides a set of guidelines and reflection questions on how to best leverage paraprofessional support for students and families who need it most.
- The Michigan Virtual Learning Institute provides a [resource to support IEP teams and educators](#) in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of instructional supports and related services for students with disabilities in online learning environments.
- The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) provides [guidance to parents and families on how to talk to their children about COVID-19](#) to reduce stress and misinformation. The resource can support all students, including those with disabilities, and is also available in multiple languages (see sidebar in the link above).
- The National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools (NCSECS) offers a [resource guide for educators and school practitioners to meet the needs of students with disabilities](#) during necessary school transitions due to the pandemic. NCSECS also co-released with the National Center on Learning Disabilities a [paper on disproportionate discipline and COVID-19](#). The paper includes three strategies to ensure that students with disabilities can thrive in new school environments: robust communication, collaborative planning, and a commitment to a holistic approach to behavior.
- The National Center on Education Outcomes (NCEO) released [Five Formative Assessment Strategies to Improve Distance Learning Outcomes for Students with Disabilities](#). The NCEO brief highlights how formative assessment can help improve the distance learning experience for students with disabilities by supporting student understanding and combating a “just get it done” approach to online learning.
  - The TIES Center developed [a framework for building student engagement with distance learning](#) for students who learn differently. TIES also released resources on [morning meetings](#), [collaborative behavioral supports](#), and [effective specially-designed instruction](#).
- The National Center on Learning Disabilities (NCLD) has [resources for parents and educators](#) on best practices for serving students with disabilities in online environments. NCLD also generated two resources that answer frequently asked questions about providing for a [free and public education \(FAPE\)](#) and [family-school collaboration](#). The latest resources from NCLD include:
  - [Promise and Peril: Examining the Role of Ed Tech for Students with Disabilities](#)
  - [School Policy Maker Primer: Responding to Rapid Increases in Ed Tech Demand, Serving Students with Disabilities](#)
  - [Responding to COVID-19 and the Demand for Virtual Learning Challenges, Opportunities, and Actions for Schools to Ensure Responsible Inclusion](#)
  - [The Next Step: What Educators Need to Know and Do to Support Students with Disabilities as They Transition to Online Education](#)

NCLD and 10 other organizations also collaborated on the development of a [district guide](#) to selecting and implementing education technology to benefit students with disabilities during the COVID-19 crisis. The [Inclusive Technology During the COVID-19 Crisis](#) guide names key stakeholders who should be involved in decisions and provides guiding questions for district leaders. An update to NCLD's [original report](#) on inclusive education technology, this new resource builds on the original framework with guidance that reflects the new reality of distance learning due to the pandemic.

- The National Disability Rights Network has gathered a [set of resources](#) including on accommodating online teaching strategies, parent support, and student privacy.
- New Classrooms' Teach to One personalized learning program has [expanded to "include tools for schools currently not in the core program that want to help students learn from home,"](#) including those with learning differences. The free [Teach to One Roadmaps](#) include a virtual assessment with tailored recommendations for courses that meet students where they are.
- Jennifer Kurth, Associate Professor of Special Education at the University of Kansas, has compiled the [Distance Learning for Special Education website](#). The site contains open source materials to support students with disabilities compiled from educators and families from around the world.
- The State Educational Technology Directors Association offers [strategies and resources for ensuring that online learning supports students with IEPs](#), including tools to create and curate accessible educational materials from the National Center on Accessible Educational Materials and tips for implementing Universal Design for Learning from CAST.
- Understood for Educators provides [resources for educators and families of students with disabilities](#), including how to talk to students about COVID-19, strategies for connecting with students during school building closures, and best practices for distance learning. Understood for Educators also offers [resources on assistive technology](#) by different content areas.
- The University of North Carolina has developed [a toolkit to support families and their children with autism](#) during school closures due to COVID-19. The toolkit contains seven support strategies for students with autism and accompanying examples and resources.