



Frequently Asked Questions for parents: Special Education in HPS During the COVID-19 School Closure

Our Special Education Department proudly serves over 1,400 students on Individual Education Programs (IEPs). Below is a list of FAQs that is intended to be a parent resource should you have questions during the closure. This is a living document that the Special Education department will build upon as new questions arise and new information becomes available.

For our students:

- Looking at individual needs of each child's and taking those into consideration when providing services
- Researching alternative ways of providing service and to eliminate a lapse in service. Review data, convene IEP teams, as needed.
- Making individual student determinations!! .
- Considering alternative modes of instruction –are they meeting the intent of the goals in the IEP?
 - Obligation to look at alternative ways of meeting educational needs. (Phone calls, electronic packets sent home, etc)

What are the timelines for completing special education paperwork?

At this time, the U.S. Department of Education is unwilling to waive school obligations to evaluate and assess during school closures:

IEP teams, must continue working with parents and students with disabilities, including conducting informal assessments or formal assessments of the student, including parent surveys and standardized reports, and offer advice, as needed. If an evaluation of a student with a disability requires a face-to-face meeting or observation, the evaluation would need to be delayed until school reopens. Evaluations and reevaluations that do not require face-to-face assessments or observations may take place while schools are closed, if the parent consents, according to the guidelines.

Special Education Staff are looking ahead and reviewing evaluation that occur in the next two weeks and for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year. Staff will reach out to parents now to make a plan.

What is the expectation for completing evaluations that were started but not completed before the closure?

- **Staff will work back with our families to complete upon return to school:** Team notice of agreement to delay the evaluation by the Team.

IEP Meetings

IEP Meetings may be conducted virtually or by phone with proper parent consent, invitation and agreement in writing. The following compliance procedures must be maintained:

- All required team members must be available to participate during the scheduled date and time.

- Complete and update all IEP components as required supported by current data.
- Document all decisions.
- Gain electronic/written documentation of parent participation, informed consent and agreement from all required team members.

What are the expectations for IEP and ER meetings?

- **Modalities:** Virtual meetings, phone, email etc.
- **Signing attendance and approval documents:** Teams may use remote signature process. Upon return to school, we will collect original signatures.
- **IEPs in process:** IEPs being written now should reflect our current remote/virtual learning environment when documenting services and minutes. The Team will consider appropriate modifications and accommodations that will support student success in this new learning environment. Upon return to school, these IEPs will need to be amended.

Consider Overall Accessibility when conducting the IEP meeting

Teams need to make sure that students with disabilities can access material that the school's general population can access:

- Consider whether the particular online resource can be used by students impacted by these various disabilities
- Teams need to consider use of assistive technology, which may include:
 - Enlarging screen or print
 - Speech recognition software
 - Screen reader software that converts information on websites to speech.
- Websites and apps need to be reviewed to address these issues.

What is the expectation for special education and related services during the closure?

- **Modalities:** Live on-line sessions using, Clever, Teams or other platforms, recorded instruction etc. Staff are sharing files and other resources with their colleagues.
- **Para roles for remote learning:** Paras will work under the guidance of case managers and principals, who will define roles and responsibilities.
- **Staff access to online platforms:** Resource teachers have access to district platforms such as Clever and Teams.
- **Service delivery models and collaboration with families:** Remain connected with each family on regular basis (2-3 times per week).
- **Small group service and confidentiality:** Review FERPA guidance and Informed Consent for all students on a teacher's case load with whom they plan to conduct virtual small group sessions.
- **Pulling data on Measurable Annual Goals moving forward:** Data collection on IEP goals is still required under IDEA.

What, if any, changes will need to happen for students' IEPs?

- **Amending the provision of Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** This will be based on service reduction during the school closure. Some services (i.e. some parts of occupational and physical therapy) may not be deliverable.
- **When to amend IEPs:** At parent request, or if the student is not able to access the current learning environment and general education curriculum, with modifications and accommodations. Many students on Individual Education Plans will be able to access our current learning platform with current accommodations.

- **Families who have difficulty engaging in remote learning:** Support families remotely through the modality that works best for the family.
- **How do we support students who have technology access issues?** Work with your building administrator to communicate you are in need of district support. For example, access to Chrome Books, assistive tech, and hot spots.

What is the expectation for 3rd quarter progress reports?

- Progress reports will be emailed home on April 14th in conjunction with 3rd quarter grade reporting.
- **Options for getting progress reports to the families:** Until further notice, we will not be mailing paper copies as per a district directive to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread.

From our OPI Partners:

Special Education COVID-19 Information – Office of Public Instruction, Montana

Greetings,

This quickly evolving situation is generating significant federal attention and new guidance. The OPI Student Support Services Division has created a web site of information and resources to assist districts, IEP teams, and families as they work together to provide the most appropriate services in light of the student, schools, and communities unique individual circumstances. [The COVID-19 Special Education Information](#) web site can be found on the [OPI Special Education web page](#) and has the following areas:

- *Federal Guidance*
- *State Guidance*
- *Resources*
- *Tools*
- *Directors Calls*

Each of the above areas will be updated as new information becomes available.

If you need additional guidance specific to the provision of special education services, please send your question(s) to SPEDCOVID@mt.gov.

Thank you for all that you are doing!

Student Support Services Division, Office of Public Instruction