

Tips for Families with School-Age Children with Individual Education Plans During the COVID-19 School Closures

- **Request an IEP Meeting**

Write your special education administrator and request a (phone or online) Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting as soon as possible. Although some timelines have been temporarily suspended in California, the timeline annual IEP meetings or for parents to request an IEP to be held within 30 calendar days remains in effect. Ask that this meeting focus on developing an individualized temporary distance learning plan (TDLP) consistent with a guidance from US Department of Education issues last month. This guidance notes that special education services should be provided to the “extent reasonably possible” while schools are physically closed.

- **Keep Options for Compensatory Education Open**

Youth and Parents can document in writing that they accept a temporary distance learning plan because of necessary school closures but do not agree that it offers the free and appropriate public education (FAPE) they or their child is entitled to under the IDEA and does not replace the IEP currently in effect.

- **Document What Is and Is Not Being Provided Right Now**

Parents can keep their own “service logs” to track exactly what support and services are (or are not) being provided and how (for example, specialized academic instruction, telemedicine time for counseling, parent consultation and training minutes, online classroom learning) to help in later discussions about what compensatory education services may be appropriate once schools physically reopen. If you need help knowing what your child was receiving in their IEP before the closures, we can help review it with you.

- **Document How Your Child Is Doing**

Keep notes and records regarding problems you are seeing in terms of student regression (losing skills or falling behind where they were before the closures). For example, If your child was receiving specialized academic instruction to address their dyslexia but without it reading skills are decreasing, document this. While most children are going to receive less education right now and it may take some time for everyone to catch up, for many students with disabilities the risk of this regression is complicated by the fact that it may take longer to regain (recoup) skills when IEP services are not being provided as agreed to in the IEP. This is why compensatory education is an important discussion that needs to happen in the future and why documenting the impact on your child is key. Right now we are all in survival mode, but down the road we need to help put our students with disabilities back on track to participating, accessing and learning and the impact may be greater for them.

- **Alert Schools to Barriers**

As you think about what you and/or your child with a disability need during distance learning, consider your:

—access to internet and technology and training you or your child need to use these

- child’s attention span and ability to focus
- child’s behavior, special medical needs, and mental health and self-regulation challenges that require extra supervision or behavior support
- work schedule and availability to help your child and meet your own needs and those of other family members
- ability to provide a distraction free environment for your child to access distance learning
- need for consultation and training and materials you need to help your child
- parent disability or limited English proficiency/language translation needs.
- other concerns

Use this list to write a letter to the special education administrator explaining the barriers that are making it hard for your child to participate in distance learning and deliver to the school or district in a way that gives you proof of delivery, asking for their help solving these problems. For example, you can request that your child receive a laptop, tablet, or other electronic device, plus sufficient internet connectivity, so that they can access remote learning opportunities. Be sure that you say that you want a written response back from the district within a certain number of days so that they have some kind of deadline.

- **Get Support**

This sudden transition to home-based education is challenging, overwhelming and stressful for many of us. Look for support groups and reach out to (local tribe/NCIDC, etc.). You can also contact your Parent Training and Information Center:

- **Warmline Family Resource Center**

<http://www.warmlinefrc.org/>

916-455-9500 or send an email to warmline@warmlinefrc.org