

GUIDE TO DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY IEP SERVICES DURING SCHOOL CLOSURES



In the current educational landscape, providing equitable access to learning opportunities has become the top priority for schools across the country. This raises the question: *how do we translate services in each Individualized Education Program (IEP) into our school's distance learning model?* We'll offer some ideas here.

GOALS FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

For students with disabilities, ensuring access to high quality services during school closures is crucial for maintaining their progress towards academic, behavioral, and social-emotional goals. Schools should [connect with families](#) to identify what supports are needed and understand the family's vision for their child's learning during this time.

GUIDANCE FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

In its [latest supplemental guidance](#), the Department states, “[in] this unique and ever-changing environment, OCR and OSERS recognize that these exceptional circumstances may affect how all educational and related services and supports are provided, and the Department will offer flexibility where possible. However, school districts must remember that the provision of FAPE may include, as appropriate, special education and related services provided through distance instruction provided virtually, online, or telephonically” (p.1).

The guidance encourages school teams to be creative when determining the best method for providing services. Specifically, the Department “understands that, during this national emergency, schools may not be able to provide all services in the same manner they are typically provided” (p. 2).

Finally, the [U.S. Department of Education states](#) that although “federal law requires distance instruction to be accessible to students with disabilities, **it does not mandate specific methodologies**. Where technology itself imposes a barrier to access or where educational materials simply are not available in an accessible format, educators may still meet their legal obligations by providing children with disabilities **equally effective alternate access** to the curriculum or services provided to other students” (p. 2).

FRAMING MINDSETS & QUESTIONS

Key mindsets and questions with which we can approach this work.

MINDSETS TO MAINTAIN WHEN DETERMINING REMOTE IEP SERVICES

Be collaborative.

Connect and plan with other team members frequently, especially general education teachers.

Be flexible.

Use a variety of methods, materials, and team members to deliver high quality services. Get creative with delivery through online and analog methods.

Be consistent.

Check-in often. Students want to hear from you!

Be **calm & clear** in this time of chaos.

Be student-focused by making learning accessible for them.

Utilize multiple support strategies to help students access the available learning opportunities and make progress toward goals.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

While IEP services will not look exactly the same in a virtual setting as they do in a typical school setting, teams can still provide access to the same skill building opportunities through alternative formats. As teams plan for service delivery, here are some key questions to consider in order to determine the most appropriate fit.

In order to implement services, think about:

What is my student's current access to technology?

Can they get online via a computer or tablet?
If not, do they have access to a phone for texting or calling?
If not, should I mail or deliver hard copy materials?

How will lessons be structured?

Will students be completing work daily or weekly?
How & when will this plan be communicated to families?
How will expectations be shared with students?



In considering service design, are the new services:

Providing multiple opportunities for skill instruction? Using modeling, chunking, or checklists

Delivering content through multiple modalities? Using videos, worksheets, or hands-on activities

Offering choice? Using different options to build on students' strengths

Including regular, frequent checkpoints? Using office hours, 1:1 chats, or peer interaction



HATE
FREE
ZONE

SAMPLE SERVICE SCENARIOS

These are sample scenarios of what services *could* look like when provided remotely to a student with an IEP. The services that are typically provided at school will not look exactly the same in a virtual setting, so focus on consistently connecting with students to provide access to learning.

Reading Intervention

IEP Service Minutes: 60 minutes, 5x per week

Skill(s) to Target: Decoding + Fluency

High Technology Option:

- Assign students skill activities to complete on a digital learning platform (e.g. [Scholastic](#), [Starfall](#), IXL, i-Ready) for about 15 to 20 minutes
- Pre-record video lessons of reading intervention lessons for students to access online for students to watch (e.g. 30 minutes 3x / week)
- Schedule a video or phone check-in for 2 times a week for 15 to 20 minutes each
- Track progress through online platform, or create quizzes using Google Forms

Low Technology Option:

- Mail a printed set of worksheets or a student workbook to the student's house, with directions for how often to complete a sheet (spending about 10 to 15 minutes per task)
- Schedule a phone call for 3 times a week (for 15 to 20 minutes each) to review worksheets and practice phonological awareness activities (e.g. rhyming, syllables, blending, segmenting)
- Track progress through oral exercises, or ask students to write words / sentences to send you

Math Intervention

IEP Service Minutes: 45 minutes, 4x per week

Skill(s) to Target: Math Calculation Skills

High Technology Option:

- Assign students lessons to complete on a digital learning platform (e.g. Khan Academy) for a daily amount of time, like 15 to 20 minutes
- Schedule a video or phone check-in for 3x/week for 15 to 20 minutes each
- Track progress through online platform, or create quizzes using Google Forms

Low Technology Option:

- Provide directions via phone call or text for students to write and solve their own math fact problems using objects around the house
- Send pictures over text of a model (e.g. how to solve an addition vs. a multiplication problem) and how students should write out their answers; track progress through response texts
- Call 3x/week for 15 minutes to check in

Inclusion

IEP Service Minutes: 30 minutes, 5x per week

Skill(s) to Target: Content Goals + Executive Functioning Skills

High Technology Option:

- Using an online video service, conduct real-time small group lessons (e.g. using breakout rooms on a Zoom call or Google Classroom session) to extend or re-teach a lesson
- Pre-record a think-aloud in which the teacher models the thought process and steps needed to complete an assignment, and allow students to access online as needed
- Assign tasks online that can be completed with accessible accommodations (e.g. read aloud) then track progress through task accuracy

Low Technology Option:

- Change the service to consult, then collaborate with general education teacher at least weekly to provide feedback on the content and materials provided to the students
- Call 3x a week for 10 to 20 minutes to review work assigned and answer questions
- Provide a model of an exemplar response or completed problem via photos in a text
- Track student progress either through work completion or through accuracy of work that's submitted (depending on the goal)

Social Emotional Learning

IEP Service Minutes: 20 minutes, 2x a day

Skill(s) to Target: Identifying basic emotions, recognizing emotions in people, using coping tools

High Technology Option:

- Students fill out a Google Form daily answering a few questions about how they're feeling, what caused this feeling, and strategies they might use to cope - followed by a teacher check in
- Provide 1:1 counseling using real-time video conferencing tools (with consent)
- Creating pre-recorded videos that align with IEP goals (e.g. breathing strategies at home, read alouds of SEL texts, etc.)
- Have students access and engage with online lessons, such as through websites like TeachTown or Social Express
- Track progress through online platforms or 1:1 communication

Low Technology Option:

- Change the service on the IEP to consult, then collaborate with parents or family members at least weekly to provide goals or tips for helping the student practice specific SEL skills
- Call at least 2 times a week for 20 minutes each time to see how the student is coping and talk through emotional regulation skills
- Students draw a picture in a journal each day and describe how they're feeling, then share with their case manager to track progress
- Sending a text to parents with links to calming videos, like on YouTube or GoNoodle
- Send via picture text or mail a weekly 3x3 choice board of SEL activities for students to do

TIP: For teachers with larger caseloads of students to support, talk with your school team to identify additional personnel who may be able to assist with student check-ins. For example, **paraprofessionals or support staff** could expand opportunities to call or text students more consistently (e.g. a daily check in). The case manager should still prioritize contacting each student at least once a week, but including all team members provides greater access to learning for students with disabilities.

Pre-Vocational Behavior

IEP Service Minutes: 15 minutes, 1x per day

Skill(s) to Target: Completing assigned tasks given a specific number of prompts

High Technology Option:

- Provide 1:1 communication using real-time video conferencing tools
- Check in once a day with students, either at the beginning or end of day, to review learning tasks and set up a checklist for completion
- Encourage students to use online visual timers to self-monitor time on task during assignments
- Create pre-recorded video models of tasks around the house that students can use to replicate the skills themselves
- Create videos of examples and non-examples of pre-vocational behaviors, then have students answer quiz questions about them

Low Technology Option:

- Change the service on the IEP to consult, then collaborate with parents or family members at least weekly to provide goals or tips for helping the student practice specific skills
- Create and send (via picture text or mail) a task analysis for a specific set of skills, like hand washing or completing a household chore
- Create and send (via picture text or mail) a daily schedule with parent input and have the student check off items each day
- Check in via call or text at least 3x per week,; track progress toward goals via parent report

Related Services (provided by an OT, PT, or SLP)

IEP Service Minutes: 30 minutes, 1x per week

Example Skill(s) to Target: Speech + Language Skills

High Technology Option:

- Conduct real-time sessions using a teletherapy platform with individual or with a small group of students (depending on confidentiality)
- Assign students to watch a video online, then answer questions using a pre-made quiz or assessment form; track progress via quiz
- Have students read words, phrases, or sentences and record their voices as they do so to send to the therapist via email or an app (e.g. Marco Polo or voice messaging)
- Track progress through oral or written exercises

Low Technology Option:

- Change the service on the IEP to consult, then collaborate with parents or family members at least weekly to provide goals or tips for helping the student practice specific skills
- Or, call each student 1 or 2 times per week for 15 minutes each time and have them practice skills using specific questions or directions
- For example, for students practicing speech sounds or language rules, have them find an object in their house and describe it to you using specific vocabulary words or sounds
- Track progress through oral exercises



TOOLS for DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY SERVICES

These are tools that could be used to document connections and communications with a student with an IEP. We recommend that a school team's first priority is getting in touch with students and families to ensure that they are safe. After that, connect families to resources and consistently check in with students.

CONNECT WITH STUDENTS & FAMILIES

As you make initial contacts with families, and set up a schedule for further check ins, it's crucial to log all of these communications in a central document. This [Parent & Family Communication Log](#) can assist your team in keeping track of contact with students from the first touchpoint through the duration of school closure. And, this [script for initial phone conversations](#) can help your team assess each family's needs by asking the right questions.

DOCUMENT TEAM DECISIONS

It is essential to document all IEP-related decisions that are discussed and decided upon by a school team, as well as to involve the parents and family in these conversations. This [template letter from case managers](#) can be used to make parents aware of school policies during closure and of proposed services that could be implemented.

In considering new services, teams may find it useful to conduct a [virtual IEP meeting](#) in order to discuss options for service delivery and align on a shared vision for each student's learning. The decisions from these meetings can be documented in this [sample IEP addendum](#) page or using [state-developed templates](#).

Finally, teams will want to determine how to monitor student progress during this time. If technology is available, case managers can consider using a [platform like Google Forms](#) for exit tickets, or can collect data over the phone.

PROVIDE ACCESS TO LEARNING

As staff begin to provide services to students, it will be important to keep track of the ways in which students are being provided access to learning. Using this [Special Education Services Tracker](#), case managers or school teams can monitor students' engagement with distance learning opportunities and [provide accommodations](#) as needed.