



Conducting Virtual IEP Meetings

A Guide for School Teams during the COVID-19 Outbreak

Recent school closures have schools & families working urgently to find the right supports for their children with disabilities. We know that local education agencies (LEAs) will strive to serve students to the best of their ability given the circumstances, and for some students, this means holding an IEP meeting to figure out how services look during this time period. Below, we offer a resource for IEP teams to use as they navigate their meetings to find solutions for their students.

AT A GLANCE: PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL MEETING

TEAM MEMBER AVAILABILITY - Ensure all IEP team members are available to participate in the meeting, including the parent, at a mutually agreed upon time and date. Team members can only be excused with [written consent](#) from the parent, and [multiple methods](#) must be attempted by the school team to promote parent participation in the meeting. The case manager must be available to lead the meeting.

ACCESS TO RESOURCES - Ensure all IEP team members have access to the tools that will be needed during the meeting, including [technology](#) & documents (draft IEP, meeting agenda, Prior Written Notice). Determine whether documents will be shared via postal service or electronically prior to the meeting.

DOCUMENTATION OF DESIRED OUTCOMES - The IEP team should draft & share a meeting agenda that outlines the goals, barriers, and strategies for providing services to students during school closures. This should accompany a draft IEP, and all meeting notes should be documented in the [Prior Written Notice](#).

HOW TO DO IT

As schools plan their virtual meetings, we recommend following these steps to set up for success:



IDENTIFY

- ❑ Who must be involved from the IEP team
- ❑ How the parent will be notified of the remote IEP meeting
- ❑ The technology that is available to conduct the meeting? (e.g. phone vs. computer video conferencing)



PLAN

- ❑ Research options for services aligned with district/state protocols
- ❑ Draft an IEP that meets the needs of the individual student
- ❑ Decide how to share documents, such as via postal mail or via screen-sharing online



IMPLEMENT

- ❑ Follow the meeting agenda to focus on student outcomes
- ❑ Gather feedback from the parent on the proposed service plan
- ❑ Revise the draft IEP to include feedback and strategies for plan implementation



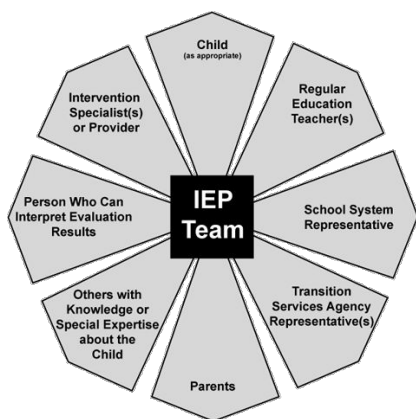
REFLECT

- ❑ Document notes taken during the meeting in the PWN, then send to the parent & team
- ❑ Consider any other resources that may be needed for successful implementation
- ❑ Provide a schedule of virtual check-ins for the parent & team

Every meeting will be unique and teams should anticipate possible outcomes that will help or hinder a student's success outside of school. Case managers can use this sample agenda to guide the team, providing ample opportunity for parents and other team members to contribute to IEP development:

AGENDA	QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER
Introductions & Review of Parental Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each team member introduces themselves. • Have any team members been excused by the parent? • Review a summary of procedural safeguards
Purpose of Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the team be updating all parts of the IEP or focus on service minutes and appropriate settings? • Ensure all team members have access to the agenda and IEP documents
Parent Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are things going at home so far? • Any physical, social, or emotional needs still unmet? (shelter, food, medication, counseling, transportation, etc.) • Any logistical considerations that may be barriers to success? (e.g. parent working from home, or relative supervising children while parent is at work)
School Team Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEA Rep: What decisions have been made regarding virtual or analog learning for all students at home? Will schools remain closed or will schools be providing alternate instruction? • General Education Teacher: What platforms or resources will students be using to access core curriculum? How often will you interact with students? • Special Education Teacher: How will accommodations of curriculum be implemented, and how will progress towards goals be tracked?
Team Discussion: Areas of Concern for the Student's Progress, as related to Present Levels of Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic concerns - any decline in previous progress over extended breaks? • Behavioral concerns - any change in challenging behavior at home? What structures or materials are needed to support the home environment (e.g. visual schedule, token boards, timers, etc.) & is training needed to support? • Social and/or emotional concerns - any difficulties accessing or managing resources to support emotional regulation during this crisis period? • Concerns regarding related services - communication / language, occupational or physical therapy, counseling
Services & Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will IEP services be provided? Will service minutes be in person, virtual, or provided through a computer program? Will they be provided individually, in pairs, or in a small group, and how will times for services be coordinated? • If schools remain closed, will compensatory services be provided upon return? Or will provisions be made for extended school year learning in the summer?
Future Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the IEP team communicate for the duration of the closure? • Schedule dates to follow up with revisions, plans, and/or progress check-ins

These are the team members who should be involved at the meeting:



Click on the logos below to review free features of these virtual options:



MINDSETS TO MAINTAIN:

Be flexible.

While there have been some [precedents for natural disasters](#) in the past, there is no one answer yet for how to best provide services during extended school closures.

Have **empathy** for all team members.

Be an active listener.

Assign one team member to be the meeting leader, then listen carefully for your turn during discussions to ensure all members' thoughts are heard.

Be collaborative.

This will take everyone's efforts to come up with a plan that works!

Remain student-focused & solutions-oriented.

Together, "individualized" is possible and we can set up students for success.

GUIDANCE FROM THE TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Tennessee Department of Education recognizes that during these times, there may be challenges to meeting deadlines associated with special education. A summary of [guidance on timelines](#) is included below.

Initial Evaluation Timelines: Due to the current states of emergency, evaluations initiated or in process on or after March 3, 2020 may be completed within **90 calendar days** of receipt of parental consent, rather than the usual 60.

Re-evaluation Timeline: For re-evaluations due during a school closing, teams should complete the reevaluation as soon as possible upon return. For re-evaluations due while students are attending a virtual instructional setting, cases should be treated on an individual basis, with every attempt made to complete the evaluation given reasonable access to the child.

Initial IEPs and Service Delivery: A meeting to develop an IEP for a child must be conducted within 30 days of a determination that the child needs special education and related services. As soon as possible following development of the IEP, special education and related services must be made available to the child in accordance with the child's IEP. Here, we note that "as soon as possible" takes into account unforeseen circumstances that may delay the start of services.

IEP Reviews: When conducting IEP Team meetings and placement meetings, especially in the case of virtual learning, the parent of a child with a disability and a public agency may agree to use alternative means of meeting participation requirements, such as video conferences and conference calls.

CURRENT FEDERAL GUIDANCE: Links to Planning Resources during COVID-19

[U.S. Dept. of Education \(IDEA\)](#)

Questions & answers on providing services to children with disabilities during the COVID-19 Outbreak

[U.S. Dept. of Education \(FERPA\)](#)

FAQs from the Student Privacy Policy Office about maintaining FERPA during the COVID-19 Outbreak

[National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools](#)

Requirements & strategies to educate students with disabilities during closures

[U.S. Dept. of Education \(Assessments\)](#)

Impact of COVID-19 on assessments and accountability under ESSA

[U.S. Dept. of Education \(Office of Civil Rights\)](#)

Addressing the risk of COVID-19 in schools while protecting the civil rights of students

[National Center for Learning Disabilities](#)

Legal FAQs on coronavirus, school closings, and special education services

In the [supplemental guidance](#) issued on March 21, it is noted that if the annual IEP has already been completed, the team may agree to forgo a meeting and to develop a written document to amend or modify the child's current IEP.