MAC COVID-19 CHAT

FALL SCHOOL RE-OPENING

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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FALL RE-OPENING—STATE GUIDANCE

• Safe return to in-person school learning for as many students as possible

• Specific school health and safety requirements

• Parent input, communication, and engagement are essential

• Prioritize students with complex and significant needs and preschoolers for full-time in-person learning
HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS
FALL RE-OPENING

• Desks at least 3 feet apart (6 feet if possible)
  o desks facing forward
  o no class size limits
  o no limit on total number of students in school

• Divide students into small group “cohorts” that are isolated from others
  o middle and high school minimize mixing student groups
• Mask or face coverings required, provided by family
  o not required for 1st grade and younger
  o not required to accommodate disability or health needs
  o encourage transparent masks for students Deaf or hard of hearing
  o mask breaks
HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS
FALL RE-OPENING

• Handwashing required

• No temperature checks

• Facility cleaning protocols
  o students needing hands-on assistance, staff must be trained and wear additional protective equipment
SCHOOLS MUST DEVELOP 3 FALL RE-OPENING PLANS

1. In-person learning for all students
2. Hybrid: in-person and remote learning
3. Remote learning
   • Students must receive all IEP services with any re-opening plan
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN-PERSON LEARNING

• Must receive as much in-person learning as possible

• Services must be provided in the least restrictive environment

• IEPs may be implemented differently in school because of safety requirements
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
IN-PERSON LEARNING

• Teletherapy may be needed for speech therapy, OT, and other therapies provided in the classroom

• Flexibility to reduce mixing of student groupings

• Student groups and cohorts that support IEP goals prioritized
IF FAMILIES ARE WORRIED ABOUT HEALTH AND SAFETY OF IN-SCHOOL SERVICES

• Parents can choose to continue remote learning at home

• Schools must implement IEPs through remote learning

• In-person home or community-based services can be considered with safety requirements
  ◦ Particularly for students with complex and significant needs
• Educators should first contact parents to discuss how IEP services might be delivered differently for their child

• District must notify each family in writing about any changes in how IEP services will be provided, including:
  o how, where when, and what specialized services are being provided

• IEP team members should provide regular 2-way communication with parents
IEP Team must consider parent information about their child’s experiences during COVID-19:

- child’s primary areas of need
- ability to access remote learning
- other information to meet student’s needs with re-opening
• School closure can be traumatic, students may have regressed, and may have developed new disability-related areas of need

• Partner with parents to support transition back to school
  o students who have difficulty with changes in routine (e.g. autism)
  o students experiencing anxiety

• Consider social stories, video building tours, video introductions to new teachers, practice bus, visit building, etc.
• Districts must communicate in parent’s primary language
• Interpreters and translators provided if needed
• Provide parents with specific contact person(s)
POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS & DISCIPLINE

• Check in with parents proactively to plan for the transition

• Discipline should be “last resort” in response to noncompliance with masks, social distancing, etc.

• Before disciplining schools should consider if behaviors caused by the pandemic or from being away from school

• Positive behavioral support approaches, restorative justice, and other alternatives to discipline
Students who should still receive full-time in-person learning

• Pre-school age students with disabilities

• Students with complex and significant disabilities
Students with complex and significant needs

- Students identified as “high needs” on IEP form
- Students can’t engage in remote learning due to their disability
- Students primarily use AAC (Augmentative Alternative Communication)
- Students who are homeless
- Students in foster care or congregate care
- Students with disabilities who are English Learners
• **Students must** receive direct instruction and services
  - Structured lessons, video-based lessons, teletherapy, etc.

• **Districts can not** rely on “resources and supports” (i.e. packets, assignments)
Remote learning must **now** include:

- Regular schedule of IEP classes, instruction, services, and therapies
- Frequent, regular interactions with educators
- If student’s IEP requires special education most of the school day
  - school can provide supplemental work if student can complete independently with teacher guidance
FALL RE-OPENING

• Transition services for older youth

• Evaluations, re-evaluations, and IEP meetings
• Preschoolers with disabilities
• Students with high risk medical conditions
• Students with visual impairments
• Students who are Deaf or hard of hearing
WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

• Contact district if you think your child needs support or services to transition back to school in the fall

• Inform district if your child was unable to access remote learning, experienced regression, has new areas of need, or other areas of concern to help plan for fall services

• Ask any questions you have about health and safety
WHAT ELSE CAN PARENTS DO

• Document what school is offering and how your child is doing
• Email the principal or team leader
• Email the special ed director or superintendent
• File a PRS complaint or BSEA mediation
• Contact MAC’s Helpline at 617-357-8431 ext. 3224
• Will be evaluated case by case

• Guidance expected soon

• Remote Education Log (https://log.education/)
EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR SERVICES

• Keep Track of Your Child’s At-Home Learning
  o Remote Education Log

• Sample Emails
  o In-Person Services this Summer COVID-19/2020

• COVID-19 Q&As
  o Summer Extended School Year (ESY) Services
  o Compensatory Services
  o Evaluations and Re-evaluations
  o IEP Team Meetings
  o Remote Learning Plans
RESOURCES

• Helpline: (617) 357-8431 or massadvocates.org/helpline
• Visit massadvocates.org/covid19
• Sample E-mail: In-Person ESY Services for Summer 2020 during COVID-19
• View Q&A on Special Education and COVID-19
  o Q&A: Summer Extended School Year (ESY) Services for Students with Disabilities
• Previous Chats (Recordings and Presentation Materials): massadvocates.org/events
• Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram: @MassAdvocates
• Additional questions & topic suggestions? Contact communications@massadvocates.org
DESE Special Education Coronavirus website:  
http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/sped.html

Problem Resolution at DESE:  File a complaint

Bureau of Special Education Appeals Mediation:  Click here

Bureau of Special Education Appeals Hearing:  Click here

DESE  Timelines Technical Assistance Advisory:  Click here

Updated DESE Q&A: Click here