



March 17, 2020

Hello Special Education Surrogate Parents. We hope you are all well during this challenging time.

As directors in partnership, we have been actively compiling information being made available around the provision of special education services during the COVID-19 outbreak. As districts across the state have announced closings, many for an extended period of time, we felt it appropriate to make a statement to all our dedicated SESP's and pass along resources that may be helpful. These links can be found below. We expect additional guidance to be released from the U.S. Department of Education as well as from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in the coming days. We will forward these as they become available.

As the student's special education decision-maker, we know that you are on the front lines of special education advocacy. This will be a difficult time for all involved. Social workers will be focused on the health, safety, shelter, and daily nutritional needs of the children in their care. District administrators will still be seeking guidance on many issues and may not immediately have all the answers you seek. Both DCF and districts may be suffering staffing shortages. These are extraordinary times that call for patience, understanding, and flexibility.

A few concrete suggestions we would like to pass along as we all navigate our way through this:

- Make sure school districts have your contact info, as well as DCF social workers and education coordinators. Email is a convenient way to stay in touch.
- Check district websites frequently for new information. Consider following their social media accounts for timely updates.
- Talk to your student's district liaison on how extended school closures will affect team meetings, evaluation timelines, etc. (We expect official guidance on this to be forthcoming)
- Consider how an extended absence will affect the academic and social/emotional needs of your assigned student and how this may impact IEP services when school is back in session.

As always, you are welcome to contact us to discuss your concerns, ask questions, or seek guidance on appropriate courses of action. Thank you all for the important work that you do, and stay healthy!

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Resources

These resources are primarily targeted at school staff and administrators, but contain useful information for any individual involved in the education of students.

CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for schools and Districts Regarding Special Education [DESE Statement 03/17/20](#)

COVID-19 ("Coronavirus") Information and Resources for Schools and School Personnel
<https://www.ed.gov/Coronavirus>

Questions and Answers on Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak
<https://cec.sped.org/~media/Files/News/OSERS%20Coronavirus%20FINAL%2031220.pdf>

Fact Sheet: Impact of Covid-19 on Assessments and Accountability Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act
<https://cec.sped.org/~media/Files/News/COVID%2019%20ESEA%20FINAL%2031220.pdf>

Questions around special education and related services and virtual school attendance:
<http://www.centeronlinelearning.res.ku.edu/resource-documents/>

MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: Information and resources regarding school closures
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/emergencyplan/covid19.html>