



A Military Child Education Coalition® Initiative

MCEC COVID-19 Resources for PARENTS

FAQ by Parents of Exceptional Needs Students

“What is the plan for families who have a special needs student?”

Children with an IEP or a 504 Plan still have the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). The [Department of Education guidance](#) and [supplemental fact sheet](#) address a serious misunderstanding that has recently circulated within the educational community. It states the following. “As school districts nationwide take necessary steps to protect the health and safety of their students, many are moving to virtual or online education (distance instruction). Some educators, however, have been reluctant to provide any distance instruction because they believe that federal disability law presents insurmountable barriers to remote education. This is simply not true. We remind schools they should not opt to close or decline to provide distance instruction, at the expense of students, to address matters pertaining to services for students with disabilities. Rather, school systems must make local decisions that take into consideration the health, safety, and well-being of all their students and staff.

To be clear: ensuring compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act should not prevent any school from offering educational programs through distance instruction.”

While the federal guidance does provide flexibility, it does not specify methodologies. According to the [supplemental fact sheet](#) special education and related services and modifications can be provided through distance instruction virtually, online or telephonically, as appropriate. These may include, for instance, extensions of time for assignments, videos with accurate captioning or embedded sign language interpreting, accessible reading materials, and many speech or language services through video conferencing. Certain services to some students may be provided in person if feasible and safe.

Please check [Common Sense Media](#) for a list of accessibility settings for electronic devices that can help children with special needs including: Vision; Hearing; Auditory Processing, Reading Comprehension, and Dyslexia; Autism. Also, read these tips on [configuring electronic devices](#) to make them more usable for children with special needs.

Check [Education Week](#) for state-level information about future school closures.

We also recommend checking your [state department of education](#) and your local school district as well as the [Department of Education coronavirus](#) website for current information pertaining to your location.



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“How is the IEP meeting going to take place? Can it be done remotely?”

Yes, the IEP meeting can be held remotely. Under IDEA’s Sec. 300.328 Alternative [Means of Meeting Participation](#) it states that “the parent of a child with a disability and a public agency may agree to use alternative means of meeting participation, such as video conferences and conference calls.”

As a parent, you have the right to request an IEP meeting. Reach out to your school for specifics.

“Our school district is not providing anything. No lessons, no assignments. I’m concerned that my son who has special needs is going to fall further behind. Can I request the school to provide services for my son?”

The [U.S. Department of Education](#) has put out the guidance that, “if a school district closes its schools and does not provide any educational services to the general student population, then a school would not be required to provide services to students with disabilities during that same period of time. Once school resumes, the school must return to providing special education and related services to students with disabilities in accordance with the student’s IEP or, for students entitled to FAPE under Section 504, consistent with any plan developed to meet the requirements of Section 504.”

Reach out to the school to ask if teachers would provide lessons, print out worksheets, or suggest virtual learning platforms that are best for your child. Also consider checking out the [MCEC resources](#) for parents with special needs/exceptional learners. Other resources to consider are from the [American Federation of Teachers](#) supporting students with disabilities during COVID-19, [Understood.org](#) resources and information, [Common Sense Media](#), [National PTA](#) special education toolkit, [Military OneSource](#) online learning resources, or [Great Schools](#) grade-based toolkits.



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"We suspect that my daughter has dyslexia. We had already scheduled a meeting with her teacher to talk about our concern, but then schools closed.

Now, we just heard that schools will not open at all for the rest of the school year. By the time schools open up again in the fall, she will be so much behind in reading. What can we do at home to help her?"

We suggest getting in touch with the teacher and ask if the meeting can be held virtually to discuss your concern. Ask what resources are available. When school starts, ask for an evaluation, where your child's reading skills will be measured. If it is determined that your daughter has dyslexia, your school district should recommend a plan that fits the needs of your child.

At the same time, check out the following examples of resources to help your daughter:

Reading Rockets has many resources on dyslexia, including [How to Talk to Your Child's Teacher about Dyslexia](#) or [Strategies for Summer Reading for Children with Dyslexia](#)

Understood.org offers comprehensive advice and tools on dyslexia, including [How Dyslexia Is Diagnosed](#) or [Ways to Help Your Child at Home](#)

The Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity has information on how to [Prepare for Your First School Meeting](#) as well as [Tips for Struggling Readers](#).

Learning Ally has dyslexia resources including [Multi-Sensory Learning](#) or [Audiobooks](#)

The Dyslexia Resource discusses [Common Signs & Challenges](#) and [FAQ](#) page for parents.

"My son has ADHD. He actually did okay with the new routine of learning at home but lately my son is getting really frustrated with lessons. Do you have a tip?"

A suggestion is to try more frequent breaks, especially as soon as you notice your son is getting frustrated or loses focus. Typically, school-aged children need about a five-minute break after concentrating for about 10 to 15 minutes, whereas older students can typically work for about 20 to 30 minutes before needing a break. Tailor the breaks to fit your child's needs. Some kids need to move around; others prefer to sit and do an activity they like, or just relax.

An idea is to come up with a list of different break activities that your son likes, then letting your son choose which break activity to do. Or, let your child choose beforehand what activity to do after the lesson as a motivation to stay on track. Some children benefit from using a timer (Pomodoro Technique) to stay focused for a certain amount of time, before having a break. Make sure, though, that you also limit the breaks, so five minutes will not turn into 30 minutes. Additionally, a suggestion is to check out some [tips on self-regulation](#) and how to use a [learning menu](#) to motivate kids to complete a task.

