



Guidance for GALs/Caregivers of Student's with Special Education and/or 504 needs

April 9th, 2020

If your student has special education needs, it is important that you and the caregiver understand what the student's needs are, what the student's goals are and what services are being provided to address those needs and meet those goals.

Because of the COVID-19 crisis, schools and districts will not likely be able to meet provisions of IEPs that require in-person services or accommodations. Similarly, many families will not have access to certain resources necessary for services and accommodations, and schools and districts may not have the ability to reasonably provide those resources under the current crisis circumstances. While it is not yet clear what federal or state law says in terms of whether it is legal for schools or districts to 'waive' obligations to meet IEP service and accommodation requirements, creating a record of the student's progress on their IEP goals is essential moving forward. Creating a record of how a student was meeting IEP goals, a record of what parents or other providers are doing to support a student during school shutdowns and during the enforcement of stay-at-home orders, and a record of how the student has progressed or regressed in meeting IEP goals after the crisis passes will be essential to preserving students' and families' rights to vindicating their rights under the IDEA moving forward. Some students may be eligible for compensatory services or ESY, and presenting an argument for these interventions will be easier with a good record.

As parents and caregivers are supervising the student's education and made responsible for ensuring academics happen, the GAL plays a critical role in helping these caregivers understand the guidance below and the importance of their role.

- 1) Review the IEP. Ideally, review each of the items below in this section 1. If you do not have the time, at a minimum, look at the highlighted items to understand what the IEP requires.
 - a. **Date of the IEP**—Look at the date of the IEP—where is your student in the process, beginning, middle or towards the end? This will frame how your review the remaining part of the IEP. Is your student's IEP or triennial evaluation due before August 2020?
 - b. **Present Levels of Educational Performance Summary**. This should tell you the Student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance and the results of any initial or most recent evaluations. In other words, what could the student do when the IEP was written.

- c. **Students Needs and Impact of Disability.** This is a short statement describing how the student’s disability affects his/her involvement and progress in the general curriculum... For student’s of transition age, how does the student’s disability affect his/her attainment of the postsecondary goals. What are the students needs?
 - d. **Special considerations of Special Factors-** Does the student have a communication plan, are there specific communication needs, does the student need assistive technology devices or services, does the student have limited English proficiency.
 - e. **Annual Goals**—these are academic and functional goals designed to meet the child’s needs that result from the child’s disability.
 - i. Look for how the student’s progress will **be measured** and **when periodic reports** will be provided. This is important!
 - ii. Review the last periodic report to see where the student was performing.
 - iii. You can use the education tracker to organize
 - f. **Accommodations & Modifications**
 - g. **Extended School Year**
 - i. **If it says the team will reconvene this spring to determine if the child qualifies for ESY or to make a plan for ESY ask the case manager about a virtual IEP meeting to discuss ESY.**
 - h. **Service Delivery Statement-**This is a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and service, to be provided to the student and a statement of the program modifications or support for school personnel that will be provided to enable the child to enable him/her to advance toward attaining the annual goals and be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum.
 - i. **Service Delivery Grid—Special Education and Related Services in the Least Restrictive Environment.** The who, the when and the what. This is what the Student should be receiving if possible.
- 2) **If you have not been provided a plan for how special education and related services will be provided to your student, make a written request to the special education case manager and the Director of Special Education requesting a plan for alternate access. Request a “virtual” meeting to discuss ways to provide services.**
- a. Note: If there are concerns regarding the current plan, make a written request to the special education case manager and to the Director of Special Education.
 - b. This plan should include what services general education is providing and how this can/will be supported by special education.
 - c. The plan should include expectations, how students will be graded and how/if attendance will be documented.
 - d. Schools must provide **needed** assistive technology to students the same for students in school-based program.

- e. Possible options for service delivery include but are not limited to Google Classroom, Videos, Teletherapies, 1:1 Video chat, Face Time, online learning, work packets.
 - f. If your student is receiving private services, provide written notice to the Special Education Director if the family will be incurring financial costs to provide alternative academic or related services during the time of school closure, including a statement that the family requests reimbursement for such costs.
 - g. The plan should NOT be a modification of the IEP. What they can provide during the shutdown should not change the child's IEP.
- 3) Gather information—(it is recommended you designate a space or folder for the information you gather)
- a. Document “present levels” —how the student was performing academically and functionally prior to school transitioning to on-line schooling (you can use the Education Tracker).
 - i. Examples of where to get that information
 1. Review and possibly print from campus portal/schoology/etc. for each of Student's classes up to spring break;
 2. Gather and save some of the student's school work, especially in the area of need;
 3. Reach out to teachers to ask how student was doing prior to the switch to on-line schooling;
 4. Ask your student to write down how they were doing prior to spring break;
 5. Look at the previous progress monitoring report
 - a. If you haven't received the most recent progress report, request it now. If progress reporting is due at the end of the semester, ask the case manager to provide a progress report based on third quarter. If they want do an early progress report, ask them to at least provide an update on levels. Do this in writing preferably, so you can document if they refuse or don't follow through.
 - b. ****Document consistently**—use a notebook, the Education Tracker or develop you own. What to document (this list is not exhaustive):
 - i. Contacts with school professionals/providers, duration and what occurred during the contact;
 - ii. Observations regarding behaviors, access, benefit (e.g.is the contact benefitting the student, is the student having a difficult time engaging with the provider/lesson, how much time is the student spending on lessons, how much support is needed for the Student to complete assignments, are you noticing a regression of skills, what's working....)
- 4) Remind caregivers to have you review any waivers, etc. that need a signature.

- 5) Consider that some services are not going to be productive if they are done online due to the student's disability. If something doesn't seem to be working, you, or the caregiver, should talk to the provider/school professional to see if they can try something different, otherwise you may want to decline until it can be done face-to-face as compensatory education.
- 6) For students with a 504 Plan:**
- a. Review the listed accommodations. Some, like provide a quiet place to work, won't be relevant in a virtual setting.
 - b. If you have not been provided a plan for how 504 accommodations will be provided to your student, make a written request to the 504 coordinator requesting a plan. If necessary, make a written request for a "virtual" meeting to discuss ways to provide the accommodations.
 - i. Note: If there are concerns regarding the current plan, make a written request to the 504 coordinator.
 - c. Keep a record of which accommodations are being provided or examples of how accommodations aren't being provided. (E.g. no one is checking for understanding or this large assignment wasn't broken into smaller parts or no one provided the student with a copy of notes.
 - d. Gather information on how the student is doing in his/her classes. Follow steps 1-4 from 3(a) above.