**COVID-19 and Special Education**

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| **COVID-19 has created new barriers for students with disabilities.** Students receiving special education services toward learning or behavioral goals are already at elevated risk for falling behind in school.Approximately [7.9 million students](https://www.educatingalllearners.org/) with learning, behavioral, or developmental disabilities are among the [most impacted by COVID-19](https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2020/04/special-education-goes-remote-covid-19-pandemic/610231/). They comprise 14% of all public school attendees and often require intensive academic support and related services (e.g., speech therapy). [Their parents](https://west.edtrust.org/ca-parent-poll-covid-19-and-school-closures/) are especially concerned that they may fall behind in their schoolwork during the pandemic and their teachers feel helpless trying to instruct them remotely. Some districts are not currently providing online special education services and few schools are prepared to provide supports or services mandated in student Individualized Education Programs (IEP). In California, just 24% of parents of nearly 800,000 students who receive disability services have received supplemental instructional materials. Complex learners from [low-income families](https://tcf.org/content/report/students-low-income-families-special-education/?agreed=1&agreed=1) are most impacted, especially those with [vision](https://www.afb.org/research-and-initiatives/education/open-letter-osers), hearing or physical impairments that require costly specialized devices and those with severe cognitive impairments that require multiple 1:1 supports. During extended periods of remote learning, as mandated by the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/secretary-devos-declines-to-seek-congressional-fape-lre-waivers-to-idea-requirements), we seek solutions to *enable all students to be successful*, regardless of disability status or income level.    |
| **PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND LAWMAKERS*** ***Connect Students and Families with Technology, Resources and Support***
	+ Loan computers, webcams, headsets and other equipment to students in need.
	+ Loan assistive technology devices to students with vision, hearing, or communication impairments and provide guidance for their use in the home environment.
	+ Connect families to companies offering free or low-cost Wi-Fi in response to COVID-19.
	+ Help families download relevant software (e.g., HIPPA compliant video conferencing, reading software), access local libraries, and educational and support resources (e.g., STRYDD).
	+ Provide technical assistance in multiple languages to support student learning and IEP goals (e.g., parent phone hotlines, see Philadelphia and Miami-Dade for examples).
* ***Allocate funds to support ongoing delivery of special education services including:***
	+ Online trainings and links to webinars (e.g., Council for Exceptional Children) for providers on how best to serve and engage students with disabilities remotely.
	+ Online systems to document family contact (e.g., IEP goals, progress reports).
	+ Remote evaluation for students who may be eligible for IEPs or 504 plans
	+ Support schools in using fully accessible virtual platforms for remote learning.
	+ Ready-to-use digital accessible instructional materials for 1:1 and small group instruction:
		- Encourage students to use household routines and items for learning at home
		- Access to online books for children in grades K-5 (e.g., Tumblebook Library)
		- Build e-flash cards for supplemental learning via [Quizlet](https://quizlet.com/features/flashcards)
		- Modify homework and tests for students with attentional difficulties (e.g., limit questions per page, indicate places for more frequent breaks)
* ***Additional Policy and Practice Recommendations from the*** [***National Center for Learning Disabilities***](https://www.ncld.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Part-1-Providing-a-Free-Appropriate-Public-Education-FAPE.D3.pdf)

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