**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](about:blank) 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](about:blank) feel helpless trying to instruct them remotely. Some districts are [not currently providing](about:blank) 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](about:blank) of nearly [800,000 students who receive disability services](about:blank) 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](about:blank) 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.](about:blank)   + Help families download relevant software (e.g., HIPPA compliant [video conferencing](about:blank), [reading software](about:blank)), access local libraries, and educational and support resources (e.g., [STRYDD](about:blank)).   + Provide technical assistance in multiple languages to support student learning and IEP goals (e.g., parent phone hotlines, see [Philadelphia](about:blank) and [Miami-Dade](about:blank#!/fullWidth/3097) for examples). * ***Allocate funds to support ongoing delivery of special education services including:***   + [Online trainings](about:blank) and links to webinars (e.g., [Council for Exceptional Children](about:blank)) 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](about:blank))     - 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)   A close up of a logo  Description automatically generated | |
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