



ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS DURING TIME OF UNCERTAINTY

MARCH 25, 2020
12:00 PM AND 7:00 PM

Interact with us - Guidelines

- If you have a question that you would like answered, type it into the “Question” pane.
 - We will respond during the webinar to those that we are able to or afterward
 - We may have to reach out and get answers from partners
- If you have information or resources you want to share with everyone, type them into the “chat” box and chat to everyone
- We will also periodically be asking you to respond to polls during the webinar – these questions are primarily targeted to the family members who are participating today.
- Let’s start with a couple of quick polls to see who has joined us



Participants will be able to:

- Describe strategies families can use to monitor their child's progress and support learning while schools are closed
- List and describe resources available on PEAL website to support families during this time
- Share information about their current needs and priorities
- Get answers to some of their questions

Important to Remember

- Health and safety are the first priority for everyone
- Mental health is included!
- There is no playbook for the COVID-19 pandemic – things are rapidly changing
- Districts are going to try to make whatever adjustments are needed for each student with an IEP
- Good faith efforts are what we should expect and attempt to deliver
- Some things might not be possible during this time and will have to be sorted out later

PEAL Priorities

- Ensuring that families understand their rights under IDEA while encouraging collaborative problem solving and creative solutions
- Encouraging LEAs to provide educational services that most students can access at home while recognizing that there will be some students who will not be able to meaningfully engage
- Identifying ways to provide instruction in the home, with a focus on those who have complex and unique needs
- Identifying ways we can help to address the concerns that families are facing about regression, skill loss, behavior and others



Resources and Information

- PEAL has gathered and organized information as well as no-cost resources and posted them on our [website](#) so that they are easily accessible to families. This page will be updated frequently to reflect the most current information and to add new resources.
- Remember your local resources, informal and formal parent networks
- PEAL Facebook page – posting new resources and information immediately, then adding to website

Families should expect to:

- Be involved in the planning process for individual students with disabilities
- Be included in virtual special education team meetings
- Receive written notices about any temporary educational services
- Have students with disabilities provided with equal access to the same educational services and opportunities as other children
- Have English as a second language (ESL) services provided to students who need them



Transition Age Students

Opportunity to engage transition age students in their own education

- Review components of their IEP with the student
- Involve students in developing creative solutions and supports
- Practice person-centered planning with students
- Build self-awareness about disability, needs, supports and accommodations
- If unable to replicate education at home, practice self-advocacy skills

Special Education Key Points

- Federal and State Departments of Education are updating their guidance as the situation evolves
- It is likely that school closures will continue longer, perhaps until the fall
- Many schools are not providing educational services to any students, in fear that they will not be able to meet every student's needs under IDEA
- PDE/BSE provided training about **continuity plans** to Intermediate Units on 3/23/2020 that they will “turn around” to schools over the next period of time

PDE Guidance (updated daily)

- When a school is closed because of COVID-19 response efforts and **provides educational services to the general student population**, the school must ensure that **students with disabilities have equal access to the same opportunities, including the provision of FAPE.**
- In addition, schools must ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, each student with a disability can be provided the special education and related services identified in the student's IEP or Section 504 plan.

PDE Guidance continued

- Once school resumes, a child's IEP team (or appropriate personnel under Section 504) must **make an individualized determination whether and to what extent compensatory services may be needed**, consistent with applicable requirements, including to make up for any skills that may have been lost during the closure within a reasonable timeframe.

PA - Continuity Plans for Education

- Planned instruction – which is similar to what typically occurs in schools using distance technology – teachers leading instruction, grading work and students earning credits
- Enrichment: providing virtual and/or print resources to review and practice learned skills
- Whatever plan a school develops, it must address the instructional needs of students with disabilities, English learners, those who do not have internet access and other technology





Monitoring Progress at Home



Data starts with you!

- Collecting data at home is not new -- many families collect data over summer and holiday breaks
- “Data” can include:
 - notes about your child's progress, regression and behavior
 - Video, photos and/or audio recording
 - Work products/samples (written work, math worksheets, art projects, etc.)
- Share your thoughts about simple data and information you can collect while your child is at home during this closure – type ideas and “chat” them so all can see and share

Monitoring your child's progress

- Review your child's most recent evaluation, IEP and progress reports so that you understand your child's progress toward goals at the time school closed.
 - If you have questions, reach out to your child's teachers and/or to PEAL info@pealcenter.org and we will try to assist you.
- When you are familiar with the IEP, observe and collect data related to the IEP goals. This information will be helpful in understanding the skills your child is able to perform at home. It will also tell you if their performance is different than the skills they were showing at school.

Monitoring your child's progress

- Keep records of any regression or skill loss you see for your child while not in school.
- It may be helpful to keep track of this information on a calendar of some kind so it's easier to see patterns.
- Depending upon your child's strengths and needs, keep track of:
 - Academics – such as reading, math, writing, etc.
 - Social Skills – such as turn taking, communicating with others, etc.
 - Behavior – such as coping skills, replacement skills, etc.

Here is a link to a [nice article](#) specific to progress monitoring during this unexpected school closure.

Interim Educational Services

- If general education students are being provided with educational services (such as on-line learning, Flexible Instructional Days and/or supplemental instructional materials sent home), you may want to request to have a phone conversation to **discuss potential amendments to your child's IEP.**
- Amendments can be made to the IEP without holding an IEP meeting with all required team members
- Think creatively when identifying ways that your child can be taught
- Recognize your family's limits and capacity



Virtual Specially Designed Instruction

- It is important to know that there are resources and ideas for how specially designed instruction can be provided virtually.
- Synchronous on-line instruction
- Assistive Technology
- Computer Based Platforms

FERPA Q & A for Administrators

- Health or safety emergency exception is part of FERPA and COVID-19 may necessitate implementing this exception
 - Schools may disclose the information that a student has been diagnosed with COVID-19 without consent – but only in a “non-personally identifiable form”
 - In rare situations, schools can release specific info about a specific student to another family (e.g., student with virus that has had close contact with another student, they can share info with other student’s family)



Healthcare



Telehealth Considerations

- The PA Department of Human Services announced a preference for use of Telehealth for necessary behavioral health services
- Some agencies are continuing to send staff into homes if families are comfortable.
- You can try Telehealth if it is offered, take notes about how it works and communicate with your agency about the effectiveness and cooperation of your child/youth.
- While Medicaid has temporary approved Telehealth, not all private insurers pay for Telehealth. Consult your insurance provider about visits to the doctor.

Maintaining eligibility for services

- If Telehealth is offered and you do not participate, you should NOT lose or have a reduction in services.
- If you receive a notice that prescribed services are going to be reduced or eliminated as a consequence of NOT accessing Telehealth when it was offered, contact the PA Health Law Project and file an appeal.
- If you appeal within 10 days of the notice, services stay in place until the appeal is processed.

Healthcare Considerations

- Contact your doctor ahead of your visit if you or your child is sick
- Many dental practices are only providing emergency dental work. The American Dental Association has published a [toolkit that includes information for patients.](#)

Finally...

- Surgeon General's message was - 15 days to stop the spread, what we are doing in PA seems to be having an effect in slowing the spread; other states are quickly surpassing our numbers.
- We know this is difficult.
- Be patient and do your part. In the words of Dr. Rachel Levine, Secretary, PA Department of Health, "Stay calm, stay safe, stay home"

Resources



- [CDC](#)
- [OCR Short Webinar on Online Education and Website Accessibility](#)
- [Email and Student Privacy video](#)
- [PA Health Law Project](#)

Thank You!



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Serving families across PA
with offices in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia