

Virtual IEP Meeting Guidance

Currently, the federal government has not waived requirements under IDEA ([CDE](#)) to hold IEP meetings. Therefore, during COVID-19 and school closures, LEAs need to do their best to adhere to the legal timelines. This working document provides guidance on facilitating IEP meetings under these circumstances virtually. ***It is critical that all LEAs consult with their local SELPA representatives and attorneys when navigating virtual IEP meetings during school closures.***

The following topics will be covered:

- Review of the Law
- Adjusting IEP Meeting Process
- Using technology equitably and purposefully
- Emphasizing professional behavior and appearance

Audience: Special Education Teacher, Special Education Directors, and School Leaders

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act - [Section 1415](#)

“When conducting IEP team 2 meetings and placement meetings pursuant to this section, section 1415(e) of this title, and section 1415(f)(1)(B) of this title, and carrying out administrative matters under section 1415 of this title (such as scheduling, exchange of witness lists, and status conferences), the parent of a child with a disability and a local educational agency may agree to use alternative means of meeting participation, such as video conferences and conference calls.”

[Adjusting the IEP Meeting Process to Our New Virtual / Distance Normal](#)

Although the location of the IEP meeting has changed, the purpose and content remains the same. Continuing to schedule and hold IEP meetings within the legal timelines will ensure LEAs are providing up-to-date services and support to students. Continue to communicate with key stakeholders (i.e., SELPA reps) and follow your LEA and site IEP checklist to convene IEP teams. This may include these critical components:

Provide families with content ahead of time, if applicable. Send home:

- Meeting confirmation in advance in writing through meeting notice by email or mail
- Draft agenda to IEP team members (~24 hours) ahead of time by email for review
- Draft IEP to parents/guardian (~24 hours) ahead of time by email
- Procedural Safeguards/Parental Right (via email or certified mail)
- Parent/guardian input forms ahead of time (via email or certified mail) or schedule a phone call to gather information

To the best of the LEA’s ability, collect student information. This can include:

- Present-levels of performance from student, teachers and related service providers

- Reviewing student work and data (i.e. benchmark assessment, progress monitoring, etc)
- For transition planning: [O*Net Interest Profiler](#) on My Next Move provides virtual ways for students to identify their interests when creating a Transition Plan in the IEP

Ensure there is a clear process before and following the IEP meeting. Make sure to:

- Have **all** required participants
 - Continue to follow the protocol of written consent to excuse members {24 hours} in advance
- Have the notes/minutes capture the location of the IEP Meeting, status of parent/guardian consent and how they will receive the final IEP
 - [Getting Signatures using Zoom](#) with a [PDF Version](#)

Connect with your school team regarding Triennial assessments

- SELPA representative and attorney are best to provide guidance on adhering to the timelines
- [Per the National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools](#): assessments that need to be conducted in person can be delayed until school is back in session
- However, if your school is continuing to administer assessments, consider assessments online, while keeping in mind some of these programs may require a separate account to access assessment protocols digitally. Common academic assessments can be found here for more information on virtual administration:
 - [The Wechsler Individual Achievement Test | Third Edition](#) (WIAT III)
 - [Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement | 3rd Edition](#) (KTEA)
 - [Woodcock-Johnson | IV](#) (WJ IV)
- School Psychologists may also have information and resources regarding online administrations

Send out any needed consent or parent/guardian agreement forms

- Because services may now be provided through virtual learning, it is important to ensure the privacy of students. Here are two sample Teletherapy Consent Forms that schools may reference if creating their own:
 - [Sample - Teletherapy Consent Form - A](#)
 - [Sample - Teletherapy Consent Form - B](#)

Use Technology Purposefully and Equitably

Facilitating IEP meetings virtually has become a standard practice in the past few weeks of school closures. Creating standard facilitation strategies can ensure that the meetings run smoothly. In addition, we know that families who do not have reliable access to internet/wifi and technology devices will face particular challenges engaging in virtual meetings. This section provides tips for educators to facilitate IEP meetings virtually, as well as resources for engaging families.

Determine which technology will be used and ensure that all attendees are set up to participate. Such as:

- Zoom, Facetime, Google Hangouts, or any other devices or platforms that families already have access to or are familiar with
 - [Tips and Tricks for Teachers Educating in Zoom](#)
 - [Schedule meeting with Google Hangouts](#)
- If possible, download the tool ahead of time and test it out with the family

- Ensure the facilitator of the meeting can share a screen during the meeting
- Ensure families have access to the devices and wifi or internet access
- There are companies and organizations nationwide helping to provide [access to devices and broadband](#).
- If families are unable to join the IEP meeting virtually, IEP teams can offer holding the meeting over the phone.
 - For more information, [Understood.org](#) provides additional information in the section titled “Does the school have to reschedule the IEP meeting if I can’t attend?”
 - All considerations under section “Adjust the IEP Meeting Process to Our New Virtual / Distance Normal” still apply

Put technology norms in place to facilitate a strong meeting

- Ensure everyone charges devices to 100% in advance of the meeting or has the device plugged in, as many of these programs can drain the battery quickly
- If you have consent from **all participants**, recording the meeting may be beneficial for those unable to attend and if a parent/guardian needs more time to think about the IEP
- Establish a team norm that participants mute themselves when they are not talking
 - The IEP team may want to ensure technology norms are posted at the top of the IEP meeting agenda

Emphasize Professional Behavior and Appearance

While the location has changed for IEP meetings, the expectation for professionalism and collaboration is as important as ever. Make sure to maintain a professional appearance and conduct meetings collaboratively.

Appearance

- Continue to dress professionally
- Ensure the room you are in is quiet and that there are no distractions

Behavior

- Be on time
- Being able to potentially see participants’ faces and their expressions is beneficial. Pay attention to non-verbal cues and adjust as needed if you notice a reaction indicating that a particular topic may need to be discussed more in-depth
 - [Difficult Conversations, Virtually Speaking](#) provides three principles to help navigate difficult conversations online.

Final Word

The federal government has not waived requirements for holding IEP, therefore, schools must still adhere to those timelines. We recommend: (1) continuing to follow standard protocol for gathering IEP related documentation, (2) Ensuring every participant has equitable access to technology for attending virtual IEP meetings (3) ensuring that professional demeanor and behavior are of a high priority.

References

[How to Rock a Virtual IEP Meeting \(blog\)](#) (March 25, 2020)

[Special Education Guidance for COVID-19](#) (March 24, 2020)

[How to Prepare for Virtual IEPs](#) (March 18, 2020)

[COVID-19 School Closures and Services to Students with Disabilities](#) (March 13, 2020)



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