Best Practices for School-Based IEP Team Functions During Remote and Blended Learning

On this page...

The use of a comprehensive data-driven model was launched in Spring 2020 to support the assessment process during remote instruction. We have fostered successful partnerships between teachers, clinicians, parents and students to gather and analyze multiple sources of data to gain information regarding the reason for referral, evaluate student progress, glean information regarding student's academic strengths and weakness, and plan for the needs of individual students through this special education evaluation process.

Our purpose in continuing in this direction is to provide a means for assessment of students who are participating in school exclusively remotely, to assess students in blended learning to limit face-to-face interactions, and to provide additional qualitative data to use in conjunction with other sources of data. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) suggests caution in interpreting traditional standardized assessments, as the norms do not apply to students that have experienced a 5-6 month disruption in school-based learning; therefore, the flexible comprehensive data-driven model will also be used to supplement traditional standardized assessments.

Clinicians should refer to the SOPM as needed for further detail throughout the evaluation and IEP process. This guidance and the best practices document supplement the SOPM during remote/blended learning and will be updated as needed throughout the school year.

Open Cases

At the beginning of this school year, clinicians will create a case management structure that will address each student on their caseload for SY 19/20 and SY 20/21. The Case Management Framework gives concrete guidance for the completion of open cases from SY 19/20 and how to best move forward with open cases for SY 20/21. On a monthly basis, a case management log must be sent to your supervisor with a CC to the associated school principal. Guidance regarding case management can be found here.

To minimize risk, remote comprehensive data-driven assessments must be the primary mode of assessment and used for all evaluations requiring a psychoeducational. If the school psychologist – in consultation with the family and supervisor of school psychologists – determines that face-to-face assessment(s) are necessary to answer the referral question, the school psychologist should seek to conduct the assessments. Comprehensive data-driven assessments can be conducted remotely (e.g., developmental history, review of existing data, web-based rating scales, student pre-assessment forms, response to intervention data and information gleaned from consultation with teachers and parents) and through socially distanced social interviews. The Supervisor of Psychologists may assist in making the determination of whether a remote (virtual) or face-to-face assessment is required through individual case consultation. The family should also be consulted to get their input into whether a face-to-face assessment is necessary. In making such determination, the school psychologist and Supervisor of School Psychologist will consider all relevant factors. Final determination of whether an assessment will be conducted in person will be the sole discretion of the school psychologist.

Assessment

The SY 2020-2021 assessment policy can be found here. Note that students who participate in remote-only instruction and for whom face-to-face assessments are necessary should be offered the option of face-to-face assessment through a Request for Assistance (RFA).

At this time, the following activities will continue to take place remotely:

- Comprehensive data-driven assessments
- Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings
- Social History Interviews
- Manifestation Determination Reviews (MDRs)

Definition of psychoeducational assessment:

A process by which a New York State-certified school psychologist or licensed psychologist uses, to the extent deemed necessary for purposes of educational planning, a variety of psychological and educational techniques and examinations in the student’s native language, to study and describe a student’s developmental, learning, behavioral and other personality characteristics.

Definition of comprehensive data-driven assessment:

A flexible form of assessment that can be conducted remotely using developmental history, review of existing data, web-based rating scales, student pre-assessment forms, response to intervention data, and information gleaned from consultation with teachers and parents through socially distanced classroom observations and clinical interviews if needed.

Comprehensive Data-Driven Assessment

The Comprehensive Data-Driven Assessment is used in all evaluations requiring a psychoeducational. Upon completion of a data review, interpretation, and analysis, the school psychologist must prepare a written report documenting the eligibility determination of a student suspected of having a disability. This report shall include the basis for how the decision was made and should specify if and/or how the student has participated in the RTI process.

A comprehensive data-driven assessment will be detailed in a written report. The written report will accurately describe the student's academic levels, functioning and performance on the following areas: Oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading fluency skills, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, mathematics problem solving and adaptive behavior.

To develop the written report, the school psychologist will collect multiple sources of information and multidisciplinary data and then conduct an analysis. The report will include the following:

- Results of classroom assessments(Open external link) over a period of time (informal and formal assessments such as benchmark, curriculum-based assessments, benchmark assessments and end of year assessments)
- Teacher reports

- Summary of progress monitoring data associated with the intervention process (academic and/or behavior)
- Completed Student Pre-Assessment Teacher Report
- Aptitude and achievement tests (if available)
- Parent input related to the suspected disability
- Student’s physical, mental and emotional condition
- Social or cultural background information relevant to the suspected disability
- Adaptive behavior skills
- Prior testing data such as a psychoeducational (if applicable)
- Results of the Social History Evaluation
- Classroom Observation(s)
- Results of most current NYS assessments (ELA, Math, NYSESLAT, Regents)
- Educationally relevant medical reports and findings
- Attendance history, including participation in remote instruction
- Results of standardized assessment, when appropriate

A comprehensive written report integrates a variety of psychological and educational techniques and examinations to study and describe a student's developmental, learning, behavioral and other personality characteristics. The results of the written report will support in determining a student’s eligibility or continuing eligibility for special education services. In some instances, the results from the comprehensive data-driven assessment may support the need for targeted face-to-face assessment(s) in the area of cognition (selected subtests of a psychological assessment) or achievement (selected subtests of an educational assessment) as a necessary component of the assessment process. If a face- to face assessment is deemed necessary after the completion of a written CDDA, subsequent targeted face-to -face testing should be uploaded to SESIS using the appropriate report template in SESIS. That is, the psychological report template of the targeted assessment if focused on areas of cognition and educational template if the area of focus is academic functioning. It is recommended that an event be created in SESIS that indicates the area of targeted assessment.

Student Pre-Assessment Teacher Form

The first required component of data collection associated with comprehensive data-driven assessment will include the Student Pre-Assessment Teacher Report. The Pre-Assessment Teacher Report serves as a tool to learn about a student's current level of functioning in multiple areas, strengths, weaknesses, access to core instruction and response to interventions. This source of data should be completed as a team and/or by the multiple stakeholders who currently or previously work with the student. The sections of the form include: Identifying information, cognitive functioning, academic/classroom functioning, participation in pre-referral interventions, social emotional functioning and a summary. To support teams in completing the form, training is available through the Special Education Office. The training includes examples and assessments for teachers to capture the student's current performance. As a reminder, the data collected through this form will inform eligibility determinations for students. As such, it is crucial that teachers completing the report respond accurately and fully. To access the elementary form click here(Open external link) for middle/high school click here(Open external link).

Functional Behavior Assessments during Blended and Remote Learning

The shift to a new environment, whether fully remote or blended, requires us to collect new data on student behaviors. The new data will help to identify if the same behavior(s) are still occurring or if a new behavior is occurring.

- If the same behavior is occurring in the new environment, the team will use the data along with the Considerations of a Student's Need for Positive Behavioral Supports, FBA, or a BIP [link] to determine if an FBA does not need to be conducted, but the intervention strategies in the BIP need to be adapted. See below for guidance on adapting the BIP for the new environment.
- If the behaviors are not occurring in the new environment, or if the behaviors are different than in the past, the team will use the data

along with the Considerations of a Student’s Need for a Positive Behavior Supports, FBA, or a BIP to determine if an FBA needs to be conducted.

When appropriate, families and caregivers should be included in the planning process to obtain data to inform the FBA.

Classroom Observations during Blended and Remote Learning

As part of an initial evaluation, an observation of the student in the student’s learning environment is required and must be conducted during this period of remote and blended learning. Additionally, classroom observations are a necessary component of Functional Behavior Assessments. Guidance on the completion of classroom assessments can be found below:

Learning environment observation

Observations of live (synchronous) remote learning sessions can be conducted through the remote learning platform in use by the school. To arrange the remote observation, take the following steps:

- Contact the student’s school or agency to determine if live instruction is being provided and to make logistical arrangements.
    - For K-12 students attending DOE schools, reach out to the student’s classroom teacher via email to schedule a lesson to observe. You may alternately reach out to the special education liaison or school administrator to schedule the observation.
    - For K-12 students attending NPS or charter schools, reach out to the school’s special education liaison or administrator to schedule the observation.
    - For T5 students who are engaged in remote learning, contact the agency or school providing these services to schedule the observation.

- Note that for observations of students attending bilingual classes, the observation should be conducted by an observer who understands the language of instruction. If that is not possible, contact your supervisor.
- Ensure that the parent’s consent for assessment has been sought and obtained and that the remote assessment process (including a description of the remote observation process) has been explained to the parent.
- Conduct the remote observation on the remote learning platform in use by the school. The staff member should log into the live instruction classroom. They should mute their audio and turn off their video to ensure there is no disruption to the learning environment. Depending on the live remote learning platform in use, the observer should “pin” the student in the platform to ensure they can continue to observe the student for the duration of the class. If possible, the teacher should ensure in advance that the student’s audio and video will be turned on for all or part of the lesson and the teacher can organize the lesson to facilitate select interaction to take place involving the student. The goal would be to permit the observer to see student to teacher participation or student to student participation. If instruction sessions are short (e.g., under 30 minutes), a second observation may be scheduled (when warranted) to ensure sufficient opportunity to gain a meaningful understanding of the student’s functioning in the live remote classroom.

When completing the observation report, in the Classroom Observation in SESIS, state the following in the “Findings” section:

The following observation has been conducted during remote instruction. Information gathered from this observation should be interpreted with caution, as this is a novel learning environment for the student and teacher and there may be multiple variables (e.g., COVID-19, home environment, alternative learning format) that impact this observation. This observation should be used in conjunction with other evaluations, school-based assessments, teacher input, and most importantly, student performance prior to school building closures.

In-Person classroom observation

If a student is participating in blended learning, an in-person classroom observation may be completed if it is clinically warranted and necessary (e.g., initial referral, functional behavior assessment (FBA). When possible, clinicians should plan to group observations of students in the same class on the same day in order to reduce the number of classes entered.

- In-person classroom observations should only be completed when necessary and appropriate (e.g., initial referral, functional behavior assessment (FBA).
- All classroom observations – including observations for FBA data collection – should be scheduled with the classroom teacher or designated staff member at least 24 hours prior to the observation.
- The clinician should request that a chair be designated for the observation that is 6 feet from all students, but within visual range of the student to be observed. The chair should not be used by anyone prior to the observation or after it, unless it has been disinfected.
- Clinicians should schedule observations in a limited number of classrooms each day. The clinician may observe multiple students in one class per day, but it is best practice to refrain from observing in more than 2-3 classrooms in a single day.
- Clinicians must wash or disinfect hands prior to entering the classroom and after leaving the classroom.
- Clinicians must wear, at minimum, a face mask throughout the observation.
- Clinicians should bring their own supplies (e.g., pens, paper, computer) to the observation and take all these items out of the room once the observation is complete.
- Observations may not be conducted during lunchtime, when students are not wearing masks.

Assessment process and eligibility determinations for the 2020-21 school year

Students are facing unprecedented challenges as they acclimate to the new school year, routines, and expectations. When making special education eligibility determinations, IEP teams should consider the impact on students and families of the school building closure, transition to and from remote learning, and other environmental changes. When making an eligibility determination, an IEP team should consider whether a student's academic challenges existed prior to school closure or emerged as a result of the change to instruction during remote learning and/or environmental factors or personal factors related to the pandemic. Social and academic challenges may not necessarily be indicative of a disability, as they may emerge for many, if not most, students, when in remote learning and/or readjusting to a blended or in-school learning environment. However, the referral process must not be delayed to allow the student to readjust to classroom routines and expectations. Further guidance and considerations for eligibility can be found here.

Referrals and Consent

Guidance on the remote process of referrals can be found here(Open external link).
Fax Bypass is currently available for the following SESIS documents:

1. Initial Referral
2. Request for Reevaluation
3. Social History Package
4. Prior Notice Package for Placement
5. Prior Notice Package for Placement/Parentally Placed
6. Case Closing

Please note that the parent may consent to the initial evaluation or additional assessments by stating in an email that they consent to have their child evaluated. If a parent does not have access to their own email account:

- Consent can be received from the student's email account, as long as the email states that consent is being given by the parent; or
- Consent can be received by text message from the parent from a phone number associated with the parent. If consent is received by text, a screenshot of the text received should be forwarded to the DOE staff's email address and then uploaded to SESIS.

If the parent is unable to provide consent through the student's email account or by text message, contact your supervisor for support in identifying another available method. When contacting the parent to discuss the referral and consent, if the parent's preferred language is other than English, ensure that interpretation is provided.

All social history meetings should be conducted remotely regardless of whether the student is engaging in face-to-face instruction.

If the school-based members of the IEP team – in consultation with the family and supervisor of psychologists – have determined that face-to-face assessments are necessary to determine eligibility, the student's parent must be contacted and informed that the team has made this determination. The face-to-face assessment process must be reviewed with the parent, including the extent to which social distancing and PPE will be used, as well as any concerns about reliability of the results based on the testing environment. The school members of the IEP team must also address any parent concerns. While no additional consent form is required beyond the consent for initial evaluation or additional assessments, the school members of the IEP team should seek the parent's agreement for this mode of assessment to take place. To the greatest extent possible, the social history meeting or the social history update meeting should be utilized to inform parents of the assessment options.

While the referral process must not be delayed, consideration when determining eligibility should be given to the transition to and from remote learning and allowances made for the student to readjust to classroom routines, expectations and regaining foundational skills.

Initials and Re-evaluations

For all initial evaluations and reevaluations, the student's teachers must provide the case manager and parent with relevant, up-to-date information regarding the student's functioning, performance, and behavior prior to the IEP meeting. [See SOPM page 45 and 53.] This information must include (but is not limited to) the pre-referral teacher form, data and comprehensive information regarding literacy skills. In addition:

- If the student has been served by a literacy coach, IEP teacher, or speech literacy teacher, among others, those teachers should make available information concerning the student's literacy skills.
- Others who deliver additional supplemental instruction (e.g., AIS and RTI providers), and/or student support services (e.g., guidance, counseling, attendance and study skills), should make relevant information available prior to the IEP meeting, regarding the student's functioning, performance, and behavior.
- For reevaluations, the teachers should provide the most recent progress reports, if any exist from the last 6 months. They should also report updated information regarding the student's functioning, performance, and behavior during the period of remote and blended learning.
- For initial evaluations and reevaluations for which there are no recent progress reports, each of the student's teachers should compile relevant information regarding the student's functioning, performance, and behavior, including up-to-date information regarding the student's functioning during the period of school closure in addition to using the elementary(Open external link) and middle/high school teacher report f(Open external link)orm. The school-based members of the IEP team or family

worker must notify the teacher(s) at least 15 school days in advance of the IEP meeting that this written information or progress report is required. The teacher(s) should complete the written information or progress report and provide the report to the school-based members of the IEP team and case manager with enough time so that the report can be provided to the parent at least 7 days before the IEP meeting.

- As part of the assessment process, school teams should conduct social history interviews, gather teacher progress reports, and assess students as needed using remote web-based assessment scales and observations of live remote learning sessions to make informed decisions in IEP meetings, in addition to any other assessments that can be conducted remotely as agreed upon by the DOE and UFT.

Considering this information, the school psychologist must submit a comprehensive report, integrating information gathered through assessments and data collection, that describe the student's developmental, learning, behavioral and other personality characteristics. The CDDA report should be uploaded to SESIS using the psychoeducational assessment template. If a face-to-face assessment is deemed necessary after the completion of a written CDDA, subsequent targeted face-to-face testing should be uploaded to SESIS using the appropriate report template in SESIS. That is, the psychological report template if the targeted assessment is focused on areas of cognition and educational template if the area of focus is academic functioning.

If the clinician determines during this process that additional face-to-face assessments are needed, they should bring this to the attention of their supervisor of school psychologists to explore whether those assessments should occur at this time and to develop a targeted assessment plan. If the targeted face-to-face assessment cannot be completed at this time, create an event in SESIS to indicate the area of targeted assessment(s) needed.

If, at the IEP meeting, there is not sufficient evaluative information to make a program(s) or service(s) recommendation in a traditional, comprehensive manner, the IEP team should determine the student's eligibility and recommend any programs and/or services that can be appropriately recommended based upon the evaluative information available. Clinicians should consider appropriate classifications based on the evaluative information available. As additional testing becomes available, the team should revisit cases and determine whether the student meets the criteria for the classification that was considered, as well as the modification of services, but for which sufficient data was not available.

The IEP team should also:

- Inform all team members (including the parent) that, while recommendations can always be revisited, failing to make recommendations now will delay provision of appropriate programs and services;
- Provide the school with intervention options and strategies that will address the student's learning, behavioral, physical and/or management needs pending completion of the evaluation.

There may be rare cases in which a student is participating in remote learning and the family declines a face-to-face assessment. At the IEP meeting, the IEP team determines that no appropriate programs or services can be recommended based on the evaluative information available. In those rare cases, the IEP team should not finalize a determination that the student is ineligible. The IEP team must record an event in the SESIS Events Log specifying that there is insufficient evaluative information to make an eligibility determination and that it was not possible to conduct an in-person assessment at this time. The team should provide the school with the intervention options and strategies that will address the student's learning, behavioral, physical and/or management needs pending completion of the evaluation process. The case should not be closed. In no case may any DOE staff request or advise that a parent withdraw a referral or consent. Consult with your supervisor if you think it is necessary to take this action.

IEP Meetings

IEP teams should continue meet remotely. When conducting IEP meetings using an online platform, teams should use Microsoft Teams, Google Meet or Zoom to conduct IEP meetings. These platforms are compliant with FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act).

Microsoft Teams

Clinicians will be able to schedule meetings using their Outlook calendar from Office 365. They will use the Teams meeting toggle to set their location to conduct meetings using the Microsoft Teams Video conferencing. In addition to allowing for video conferencing, Microsoft Teams allows for telephone participation by any IEP team member by also providing a dial-in phone number and PIN for each meeting.

Google Meet

Clinicians will be able to schedule meetings using their DOE Outlook account. They will be able to have video conferences and audio conference when selecting the “Meet” application. They will find the “Meet” application in the Google waffle grid. Once they select “Meet”, they will be prompted to join or start a meeting. To start the meeting, enter a nickname (name) for the meeting. Then select Continue and Join. The clinicians will have the option to join using a phone for audio. IEP teams will send meeting invites to participants by email once they have been added to the meeting. Google Hangouts Meet creates a dial-in phone number and PIN for each meeting allowing each participant to communicate via phone conference. For security purposes all video and audio streams in Meet are encrypted.

Zoom

Clinicians will be able to schedule meetings using central account access to Zoom. When using Zoom, all staff and students must use the new DOE central account to access Zoom. All NYCDOE Zoom users will sign onto nycdoe.com.us(Open external link) with their DOE user credentials to be able to use the full complement of Zoom features.
Please visit the Zoom for Remote Learning page to learn more about accessing Zoom, including:

- How to access DOE Zoom
- How to schedule or join a meeting
- Participate in live or prerecorded training
- New security settings and instructions for use
- Contacts for technical support
- The summary of the new agreement between the NYCDOE and Zoom
- Details of the original concerns with the Zoom platform
- The official NYCDOE press release

The IEP Process

Prior to IEP Meeting

1. To the greatest extent possible, ensure and maintain the privacy and confidentiality of information, files, and communications. Conduct telephone calls and meetings in a place where confidential information will not be overheard or viewed by individuals who are not involved in the meeting. Use Microsoft Office 365 online tools and approved platforms, which provide appropriate safeguards for maintaining the confidentiality and security of DOE information and records.
2. Contact parents and schedule meetings at a mutually agreed upon time. If parents require an interpreter, arrange for an interpreter to be present for the meeting, and follow the SOPM with respect to arranging for translation of documents upon request.

3. Inform all participants that they should be present for the entire duration of the meeting and that they will be actively participating throughout the meeting.
4. Contact school principals and administrators if contact information is needed for required participants. Meetings must not be held without the participation of mandated IEP members. All outreach efforts must be documented in the SESIS Event Log. Document School/Non-Public School/Private School requests to reschedule meetings due to COVID-19 related unavailability by creating an event in SESIS. These meetings will be rescheduled to the extent feasible.
5. Clinicians with clerical support will oversee that at least 48 hours prior to the meeting, families are contacted to confirm attendance and to ensure that parents have and can utilize the dial-in phone number and PIN for the meetings. For video conferencing, confirm that parents have access to a smartphone/tablet/laptop/desktop computer with webcam and speakers, and that parents have video and audio components for the entire duration of the meeting.
6. Discuss video conferencing and audio conferencing with parents and select the method of conference with proper consideration given to the parent's comfort with and access to the necessary technology. Supervisors are currently setting up trainings for clinicians on how to effectively hold meetings on Microsoft Teams.
7. Be prepared for IEP meetings. Review all pertinent documentation, evaluations and reports that will be considered during the meetings and ensure that all participants have all pertinent information/ documentation to make appropriate IEP recommendations prior to the IEP meeting.
8. Ensure that parents and DOE IEP meeting participants have access to the content of the meeting. Send evaluations and reports that will be considered during the meeting to parents electronically at least 7 days prior to the IEP meeting and inform DOE participants that all pertinent documentation and records are available in SESIS or electronically prior to the IEP meeting. If the parent does not have an email address, ask the parent if they

consent to the material sent to them via the student’s email address. If they decline to receive the materials by email, contact your school leadership for assistance in mailing materials to the parent.

Sending special education records to families via email

The parent may elect for special education records to be sent to them by email. During blended or remote learning, you may accept a parent's email requesting materials by email as their consent.

To send a document stored in SESIS to a parent, the user should follow these steps:

- Print or save the document as a PDF on the DOE network (Information available in the SESIS Wiki)
- Attach the saved PDF to an email to the parent using Outlook in Office 365
- Select "Encrypt"
- Send to the parent's email address

Special education records include any meeting notices, prior written notices, IEPs, assessments, progress reports, or other material requested by the parent.

**If the user does not have access to the DOE network, the user should save to an encrypted flash drive. If the user does not have an encrypted flash drive, the user may save on their local drive into a private folder. All contents of that private folder should be deleted as soon as the clinician has access to the DOE network.

Best practices for holding remote IEP meetings

1. To the greatest extent possible control background noise before starting the meeting. Find a quiet location, minimizing external noise, and dedicate uninterrupted time for the duration of the

meetings. The space should be quiet and free from distractions (e.g., noises, other conversations, other persons in the space).
2. Ensure that the background of the location is appropriate and professional for all video conferences.
3. Present in the same professional manner as if it were a meeting face-to-face meeting.
4. Establish the online video conferencing connection several minutes before the meeting start time and test the dial-in phone number and PIN for the meeting before the conference call (15 minutes are recommended).

Holding IEP Meetings

The DOE members of the IEP team must arrange for families, teachers and/or services providers to participate in the IEP meeting via Microsoft Teams, Google Classrooms or Zoom. All IEP attendees will be notified 7 days prior to the date of the meeting. SESIS contact information will be used to identify the families preferred method of remote communication and preferred language. The invitation should include the date, time, phone number and access code for each meeting. If the parent’s preferred language is other than English, ensure interpretation services are arranged for the IEP meeting.

School staff should share and update Outlook calendars daily to determine availability to facilitate the planning and organization of IEP meetings.

1. Ensure that all participants can see and hear all other participants. Ask participants to indicate if they are having any difficulties with their video and audio at the start of the meeting.
2. Start the meeting by allowing all IEP meeting participants to take turns introducing themselves by name and title.
3. Ask participants to mute their microphones if their location has background noise and when not speaking. Microsoft Teams and Google Meet support the use of computer audio. If joining a virtual

meeting using a cellular phone or landline use *3 to mute phone and for desk phones use *6.
4. Start the meetings by presenting an overview of topics to be covered and planned outcomes. Confirm that all DOE participants and parents have received and have access to the content of the meeting and will share any pertinent documentation that will be considered during the meeting with any DOE participants or parents as needed.
5. Engage and encourage parent participation and contribution to the discussion, and check for understanding and alignment during the meeting.
6. Listen closely and monitor participant's turn-taking during the meeting to ensure engagement and contribution of all IEP participants.
7. Indicate IEP meeting participation of participants by phone in the SESIS attendance page. For further guidance see: SESIS Fax/Scan Guidance for School and CSE Staff(Open external link).
8. For guidance regarding attendance sheets and Initial Placement/ provision of services see here(Open external link)

Interpretation and Translation

The DOE members of the IEP team will arrange for interpretation services at the IEP meetings and translation of special education documents, as necessary. Schools' language access coordinators can assist in arranging interpretation services during an IEP meeting. For more information about the DOE's Language Access Plan, including information about interpretation and translation please visit the Translation and Interpretation InfoHub Page.

Service Recommendation and Implementation

During this period of time, the IEP team should make the same recommendation of special education programs, services, and placement as they would make if school were in session. If the IEP team believes that different programs/services are needed remotely as a result of the IEP meeting, the school should develop or revise the Special Education Program Adaptations Document (PAD). The PAD along with the student's schedule, documents how key elements of the student's special education program will be implemented during the blended/remote learning period. The PAD should be discussed with the family at any IEP meeting and should be revised as needed following that discussion. If there is a change to the IEP recommended special education program, paraprofessional service or assistive technology, the PAD should be revised to reflect and address the new IEP recommendations. Finalize the IEP before revising the PAD, so that the new IEP recommendations will be auto-populated from the new IEP. For guidance on completing the PAD, please access this training deck(Open external link). For guidance on completing the PAD in SESIS, please access the SESIS step-by-step document.(Open external link) For guidance on completing the PAD, please access Special Education Program Adaptations Document (PAD) for Blended and Remote Learning, this training deck(Open external link), and these PAD Frequently Asked Questions. For guidance on completing the PAD in SESIS, please access the SESIS step-by-step document, The Special Education Program Adaptations Document (PAD)(Open external link).

At the conclusion of the meeting

Prior to the conclusion of the IEP meeting, ensure that families provide IEP teams with a valid email address and agree that special education records, including the IEP, should be sent via email. Teams should make every effort to obtain Consent for Use of Electronic Mail from families during this time, but in the event that the consent cannot be obtained, teams should move forward with the process. At the conclusion of the IEP meeting, if the IEP cannot be immediately finalized and sent to the parent, the DOE members of the IEP team are to provide the parent with a copy of the Recommended Special Education Programs and Services page of the draft IEP from SESIS. This should be emailed to the parent if they have the parent's agreement to do so. The IEP must be finalized in SESIS and sent, along with the Prior Written Notice, to the parent via email no later than 10 business days after the meeting was held. All efforts must be made to ensure that IEPs are completed within the compliance date.

If the parent does not have an email address, ask the parent if they would consent to have the material sent to them via the student's email address. If the parent declines, contact your school leadership for assistance in mailing materials to the parent.

For issues related to SESIS documentation, please see SESIS Guidance during School Building Closure FAQs Working from Home for School and CSE Staff(Open external link).

Prior Written Notice

Guidance can be found here(Open external link).

Placement or Initial Provision of Services

Guidance can be found here(Open external link).
Please note that the parent may consent to special education services by stating in an email that they consent to their child receiving special education services. If a parent does not have access to their own email account, see above for alternatives.

Comparable Service Plan (CSP)

If a student is admitted or readmitted to the NYCDOE and has an IEP from a prior school district, the IEP team may need to create a Comparable Service Plan (CSP). The IEP team should follow the SOPM with respect to the creation of the CSP and opening of the case. The CSP should be provided to the parent via email, with the parent's agreement. Placement or Initial provision of services will be as per guidance below.

If the parent is unable to provide all the necessary documentation electronically, the team should document all the relevant information provided to them via telephone in SESIS events. The team should also reach out to the previous school/school district to receive the appropriate documentation electronically, and to also secure verbal confirmation. If the IEP team is unable to secure sufficient confirmation of previous special education placement/services after contacting the prior school/school district, the parent should be provided with contact information to the Family Welcome Center for General Education admission.

To contact the Family Welcome Centers, click here.(Open external link)

Manifestation Determination Reviews (MDRs)

When making MDR determinations, the team should consider the impact on the student's disability related to:

- The school building closure
- Transition to and from remote learning
- Other environmental changes during the pandemic

These and other issues can impact a student’s disability and the way that disability may manifest in behaviors, including the behaviors that may lead to disciplinary action.

At this time, Manifestation Determination Reviews (MDRs) should be held remotely, utilizing one of the platforms specified in the IEP Meetings section above. The following guidelines should be followed when conducting remote MDRs:

- MDRs should be held at a mutually agreeable time for families and relevant school staff.
- To the extent possible, and with the parent’s consent for electronic communication, provide the parent with any relevant materials in advance of the MDR that will be discussed at the review.
- Discuss the platform in advance with the family to ensure that they are able to access the technology to participate in the MDR. If not, the MDR should be held via telephone.

- During the MDR, when any documents are being discussed, it is best practice to share the screen so that all participants can review them at the same time.
- Control for background noise during the MDR, finding a quiet space that is free from distractions. Ask participants to mute their microphones when not speaking.
- Discuss in the same professional manner as if it were an in-person meeting.
- Ensure that the parent has the opportunity to participate and contribute in the MDR.
- Complete the MDR worksheet as per standard practice.