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**Subject:** Important Update for Parents/Guardians of Students with Individualized Education Programs or Section 504 Plans

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| Important Update for Parents/Guardians of Students with Individualized Education Programs or Section 504 Plans  **Individualized Education Programs (IEP) and services** For the start of school year 2020–2021, it is the goal of all special educators, related service providers, and case managers to document and deliver the services and accommodations on students’ IEPs to the greatest extent possible given the distance learning format and changes to the scheduling structure.  Special education case managers will review students’ IEPs as well as relevant information gathered from the delivery of services and accommodations provided during Spring and Summer 2020 instruction.  The purpose of the review is to develop an Individualized Distance Learning Plan (IDLP) designed to document any changes or modifications that are necessary for the student to access instruction.  Case managers will be initially communicating with families via a letter within the first two weeks of school.  The parent/guardian letter will outline the extent to which the current IEP will be revised and indicate if a conference needs to be scheduled to discuss changes and review the plan for delivery of services.  Prior to this contact, the existing IDLP will continue to be implemented.  Related service provider(s) will coordinate with the student’s case manager to develop the IDLP.  All proposed services will be included in one IDLP.    **Special education teacher/paraeducator supports** Special education teachers will coplan with general education teachers and coteach when applicable.  Special education teachers will collaborate with special education paraeducators to determine what supports the paraeducator will provide to the student.  Support for students with significant cognitive disabilities working towards Alternate Learning Outcomes (ALOs) who receive academic instruction outside of the general education setting will access a schedule and materials designed to meet their unique needs.  This schedule includes designated times for teachers and paraeducators to support students in small groups or individually.  Instructional tool kits may be picked up at the home school of students with significant cognitive disabilities to support distance learning in the home setting.  Students with disabilities who receive service in the general education setting should continue to be provided service in that setting to the greatest extent possible with the understanding that small group or individual sessions may need to be scheduled to meet their needs during distance learning.  **Interventions** Students who require intensive support beyond the core curriculum may receive that support through the delivery of a specific intervention designed to target the area of need.  Academic interventions may include, but are not limited to, *Really Great Reading*, Orton-Gillingham, *Systems 44*, *iReady Math*, and *Math 180*.  **Virtual IEP and Section 504 Meetings** Virtual IEP and Section 504 meetings with critical team members will continue throughout the Recovery Plan until schools buildings are fully reopened.  Meetings will be held via conference call or through an MCPS-approved online platform.  Documents will be sent to families via email before and after meetings.  If families do not have access to a computer, the student’s case manager should be contacted.  Families will receive instruction on how to participate in the virtual meeting and all documents to be discussed at the meeting.  **Assessments and Evaluation** If a student is in the process of initial eligibility or reevaluation, a virtual IEP meeting(s) should be conducted to complete that process.  At the IEP meeting, the team will review and discuss all relevant data currently available.  The IEP team will make every effort to complete the evaluation process by making an eligibility determination using the available data.  Evaluators may contact the parent/guardian to explain that the assessments required can be completed virtually and/or to gather information for the evaluation, such as parent and student interviews.  If, through the course of the IEP team discussion, it becomes evident that additional data is needed which can only be gathered through an in-person assessment, the meeting will be postponed until those assessments can be completed. |
| **Assistive Technology** MCPS is extending access to existing assistive technology tools and offering new technology options for students with more significant disabilities for distance learning.  Additional assistive technology online tools and equipment will allow teachers to engage and support more students with disabilities and allow home access for more of these supports.  All enhancements to assistive technology tools and resources will be distributed prior to the start of the 2020–2021 school year.  Professional development and parent training sessions will be available on multiple topics related to the use of assistive technology tools and devices for students with high- and low- incidence disabilities, including accessible digital instructional materials.  This will build on prior required accessibility training for all teachers completed in March.  The district’s assistive technology teams have extensive experience in remote professional learning and technical assistance over the past ten years and will lead these efforts.  For questions related to technology access, parents/guardians and staff members may contact Ms. Linda B. Wilson, instructional specialist, High Incidence Accessibility Team, via email at [Linda\_B\_Wilson@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Linda_B_Wilson@mcpsmd.org).  **Interdisciplinary Augmentative Communication and Technology Team** Parents/guardians of students currently using assistive technology will have the opportunity to receive devices and equipment required for distance learning at a centrally located distribution site by appointment, prior to the start of the 2020–2021 school year.  Distribution sites will be expanded to coincide with districtwide distribution of materials and equipment.  For questions relating to distribution of materials and equipment, parents/guardians and staff members may contact, Ms. Marilyn Jacobs, instructional specialist, InterACT, via email at [Marilyn\_K\_Jacobs@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Marilyn_K_Jacobs@mcpsmd.org).  **Accessibility Features** Content for students is being developed with accessibility standards.  Students with disabilities will be able to access assistive technology outlined in their IEPs or Section 504 Plans through the MCPS-provided Chromebooks, with such accessibility features such as *Google Read & Write*, *EquatlO*for mathematics, and other embedded features within the Google Suite.  IEP and Section 504 teams will work with families to provide additional assistive technologies if needed during this time period. |
| **Child Find** Child Find continues to conduct developmental screenings through a virtual platform.  Parents requesting a screening should continue with the same referral process, which is specified on the Child Find/Early Childhood Disabilities page on the MCPS webpage.  When a referral is received, parents/guardians are contacted to discuss what to expect during the screening.  The screenings have been successful and students are referred on to either the Developmental Evaluation Services for Children teams, the Bilingual Assessment Team, or the Speech/Language office for full assessments as needed.  Document cameras can be used during assessments.  Development assessments including speech/language, fine motor, and gross motor skills can be conducted virtually using extensive parent interviews, parent rating scales, and direct virtual assessment.  If a psychological assessment is recommended, the psychologist may use nonstandardized measures including videos from families or observations during screenings.  The limitations in conducting standardized psychological assessment measures do not prevent an IEP team from making determinations about eligibility and services.  Hearing and Vision screenings are typically a part of a developmental screening.  These cannot be performed virtually, and some pediatricians do not routinely conduct these screenings at check-ups.  It is especially important to ensure adequate hearing and vision when considering speech and language delays.  Parents/guardians may wish to consult with their pediatricians and share information with their child’s assessment team.  **RELATED SERVICES**  **Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HOH) Services** To support distance learning, staff members of the D/HOH services will work with school teams to provide necessary accessibility strategies including closed captions, interpreting/transliterating, and other visual supports.  We will develop and provide professional development for special educators to develop strategies and skills in multimodal communication using sign language.  D/HOH services will support paraeducators with critical instructional technology strategies to augment support for students during distance learning.  **Speech and Language Services** Students will continue to receive services virtually through an IDLP.  Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) will contact parents/guardians to share information about the services that will be provided through the IDLP in coordination with the case manager.  Students will receive direct speech-language services that are scheduled during the student school day.  The services may include in-class sessions, seeing students in breakout groups within the virtual classroom, or tele-visits scheduled directly with families.  SLPs will provide consultative support to parents and teachers as part of their service delivery in the virtual learning environment.  **Vision Services** To support distance learning, a range of specialized technology and materials will be provided for students who are blind or low vision to more effectively access their instruction during distance learning including Braille and large print curriculum materials, magnifiers, and talking calculators.  Vision services staff members will develop and provide professional development for special educators in the areas of Cortical Vision Impairment and instructional strategies in the new *Eureka Math Pre-K* curriculum. |
| **Special Education Programs**    **Autism Program Services** Autism Program specialists, psychologists, and teachers will be conducting new student intakes, meeting with families, and working with schools during pre-service week.  Autism staff members will offer a comprehensive series of five synchronous parent webinars beginning Monday, August 24.  New instructional resources will be implemented across Classic Autism, Autism Resource Services, Aspergers, and the Darnestown and Carl Sandburg Learning Center classes.  A website has been created to support students in the general education curriculum.  Please visit our original *Autism at Home and Beyond* website for strategies to support your student at home.  **Extensions Program** Extensions Program case managers will be working with families to update distance learning plans; social workers will host parent groups and family trainings.  Behavioral support teachers will meet individually with families, as well as provide office hours.  Family support will be provided to assist access to technology and to create a virtual learning environment at home that aligns with the student’s instructional schedule.  **Infants and Toddlers** All services will continue to be provided in a virtual format, including assessment and family coaching based on Individualized Family Services Plan outcomes established with the family.  Small groups will continue virtually for children transitioning at age 3 and children with intensive needs.  Parent groups for *It Takes Two to Talk*®—The Hanen Program® for Parents of Children with Language Delays and *More than Words* will be offered virtually.  Families may engage in virtual playdates through the Family Involvement Center.  For more information, parents/guardians should consult with their service provider(s.)  **Preschool Education Program (PEP)** Students will continue to receive services virtually through an Individualized Distance Learning Plan (IDLP).  Teachers or parent educators will contact parents/guardians to share information about the services that will be provided through the IDLP.  Parent trainings will be offered for pre-K families to engage with experts on a variety of topics.  Parents/guardians will receive information about dates and topics from their child’s parent educator or teacher.  Virtual home visits will be conducted for all families the week of Monday, August 31, 2020.  Parents/guardians will be contacted by their child’s teacher or parent educator.  **Social Emotional Special Education Services (SESES)** SESES and Bridge Program social workers, psychologists, and behavioral support teachers have developed additional strategies and supports for students and families.  Parent support groups, direct social skills instruction, and counseling services will be provided during distance learning to help parents and caregivers in the home setting. |
| **Section 504 Accommodations** Teachers will implement the 504 accommodations on student’s Section 504 Plan to the maximum extent possible to ensure access to the curriculum.  The existing Section 504 IDLPs will continue to be implemented during the 2020–2021 school year unless the parent/guardian requests modifications or there is data to support that a revision is necessary to support the student.  Copies of the Section 504 IDLPs will be provided to all providers supporting the student.  Any consultative services from related services providers on the student’s Section 504 Plan will continue throughout the 2020–2021 school year.  For any students who are newly identified under Section 504 and require Section 504 plans, during the 2020–2021 school year, Section 504 IDLPs must be developed. |

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