



Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program
Box 870395
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487
O (205) 348-4928
F (205) 348-3909
(800) 826-1675
adap@adap.ua.edu
<http://adap.ua.edu>

Special Education Advocacy Guidance for Families
COVID-19
Version: April 7, 2020

- Be creative when working with your child's school team. Everyone, including you, is under a tremendous amount of stress and anxiety.
- Locate your child's current IEP or 504 Plan, including any behavior plan, speech language plans, etc. If you don't have a copy of these documents, contact your child's school to request that copy/ies be sent to you by email or by U.S. Mail.
- Review the goals, benchmarks, accommodations, and services in your child's current plans.
- Discuss and document the accommodations and services that are not being provided currently.
- Discuss and document any regression or loss of skills to date as a result of the school closure. (Going forward, continue to pay attention and document any regression across your child's academic, functional, communication and behavioral needs.)
- Now and going forward, identify any new disability-related needs, including as related to the COVID-19 closure (ex., emotional trauma).
- Identify your child's education priorities for the rest of this school year. It is unlikely that every special education accommodation or service that your child is currently receiving will be able to be provided in either its current form or, even, at all. **Focus on what is MOST important to your child among all his or her important needs. Plan, as much as possible, around those MOST important needs.**
- Do **not** change your child's 19-20 IEP goals. Now is not the time to be watering down the goals that were set for your child. They might not be attainable right now during this crisis but they were the goals that were deemed necessary to provide your child a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for this year.
- We do **not** recommend writing an IEP for the 20-21 school year at this time. When your child eventually returns to school (yes, it **will** happen!), your child will have very different needs than he or she has right now. Broad re-assessments of your child's skills likely will be necessary to write an appropriate IEP for the 20-21 school year. These re-assessments might include in-class testing or special education evaluations like achievement tests or behavioral rating assessments.
- Most IDEA- and 504-eligible students will need extensive **compensatory and remedial services**. These services should start as soon as they can safely be done, including this

summer, as possible. They might include intensive services (both during and after school) next year, into the summer of 2021, and into the 21-22 school year.

- For parents of graduating seniors: you need to know that your child can return to school to work on any transition needs related to supporting his/her post-high school goals. Do not ignore this opportunity for your child. Also, ADAP is advocating that a student's right to schooling should be extended for any senior who would have otherwise aged out of services this year. This extended eligibility would allow those students, who are likely students with the most significant disabilities, to access not just academic services but critical transition-based services to prepare them for secondary education, employment and independent living.
- Document, in a writing provided to the school, the following:
 - ✓ the extent to which you were involved in developing any distance learning plan implemented for your child
 - ✓ any concerns or disagreements with the services offered to your child in any distance learning plan provided by the school
 - ✓ that any distance learning plan is only a temporary plan put in place as a result of the pandemic and that you are not waiving any right to future compensatory and/or remedial services or waiving your due process rights under the IDEA, even as your child's distance learning plan is implemented. We will post some sample language and forms on ADAP's website soon.

ADAP is greatly concerned about regression, the loss of skills, among all students, especially among "high needs" students including:

- *students with significant cognitive, functional, emotional, and behavioral needs*
- *students with special health care needs*
- *preschoolers for whom early intervention is critical*
- *transition-aged students who are missing out on transition services to help them prepare for work, education, and independent living after high school.*

For these students, we believe that special consideration must be given to providing instruction and related services throughout Summer 2020, through all possible instructional modalities, including in-person if it can be accomplished safely.

This guidance is not offered to encourage any conflict between families and schools, which are working very hard to serve our children during these extraordinary times. Rather, it is being provided to help parents, keep a clear, targeted focus on what their children need right now and how to think about and plan for their needs into the future. Stay safe and stay focused!

To talk to ADAP's children's intake specialist about your child's special education needs, contact ADAP to schedule an intake appointment. WE ARE OPEN FOR BUSINESS. Call (205) 348-4928 or use our online intake form found here: <https://adap.ua.edu/adap-online-intake-form.html>