

Important Reminders/General Information Concerning COVID-19

March 19, 2020

Good afternoon,

There has been a tremendous outpouring of work and care in response to COVID-19 that is emblematic of the critical role educators play on a daily basis. We have had the opportunity to communicate with many of you who are navigating local decisions and the impact and implications they have for students with disabilities. We are closely monitoring guidance from the US Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs, the Office of Civil Rights, professional organizations (e.g., NASDSE and CASE), and states that were in front of the curve in terms of reported cases and school closures. At this time, the guidance we have provided in our FAQs remains consistent and is aligned to all of the guidance provided in the above venues.

We are grateful for the work and communication you are undertaking at the ground level.

Helpful Information and Links:

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has launched a website as a streamlined tool to communicate critical information concerning the response to COVID-19. The website is available at: <https://sites.google.com/dpi.nc.gov/covid-19/home>. However, the ECD will continue to provide the daily update through our ECD listserv.

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services has also launched a website detailing the broad response North Carolina is taking to COVID-19. The website is available at: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-response-north-carolina>

Joint meetings with divisions in the US Department of Education and Office of Civil Rights are being held today and tomorrow afternoons. The Exceptional Children Division will be represented at these meetings and will share up-to-date information about serving students with disabilities in North Carolina during the COVID-19 outbreak as quickly as possible. A Director's Advisory Committee (DAC) meeting is being scheduled tomorrow afternoon to review and respond to any new information.

The Early Learning Sensory Support Program for Children with Vision and Hearing Impairments has assurances with some LEAs to provide services to students ages 3-5. This program, which is under the EC Division, is adhering to the two-week pause in educational services per the Governor. Starting Monday, March 23, 2020, our teachers will be in communication with any LEA with which there is an assurance in place to discuss how the LEA is moving forward with instruction and how specially designed instruction is delivered appropriately to the students they serve.

The National Deaf-blind Center has extended the deadline for the NC Deaf-blind Project to submit census data. If LEAs have not yet submitted census data to Dottie Snyder,

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dorothy.snyder@dpi.nc.gov, the deadline has been extended until COB Monday, April 13, 2020. Please contact Dottie if you need assistance or have any questions.

Due to the volume of questions received via the form on the padlet, duplicate questions that are received by the ECD will not be responded to. If you do not see a response to your question, please review the previous questions to find a response.

The Exceptional Children Division has received several requests to review virtual learning plans and comment on the extent to which it meets requirements of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). This determination will need to occur on a case-by-case basis and the ECD is not able to comment on the appropriateness of specific plans. We will, however continue to provide guidance in line with policies and procedures. The process and procedure has not changed, although the delivery may look very different in the weeks and months to come.

With the OSEP guidance, as well as input from the Interagency Coordinating Council and North Carolina Infant-Toddler program staff and stakeholders, effective immediately, the North Carolina Infant-Toddler Program (ITP) is suspending face-to-face services until March 30, 2020 or until notified of any other timeframe.