

Exceptional Children Information for Parents



Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

<https://ec.ncpublicschools.gov>

Welcome to the 2020 – 2021 School Year!

NC Rethinking Guardianship Initiative Survey (Optional)

North Carolina's Rethinking Guardianship Initiative is working with community partners to reach family members or others who support people with intellectual/developmental disabilities and other issues, such as dementia and mental health disabilities. They are requesting your help in completing a brief survey. This survey is intended for individuals with disabilities of all ages (IDD and others); families providing support to these individuals, and providers that have direct engagement with individuals and families. It is about your awareness and use of various forms of supported decision making and is completely anonymous. The survey will remain open until **September 25**.

Here's the link: <https://forms.gle/Fo9nAgGYsjoCxNS18>

Assistive Technology Expo 2020

This Expo was recently held by the NCDPI Exceptional Children Division. This event was presented virtually and very well attended. If you missed it, you can view some of the recorded presentations by following this link: <https://sites.google.com/dpi.nc.gov/assistive-technology-ec/nc-at-expo-2020?authuser=1>.

Session that will be especially helpful to parents are the following:

1. **Accessible? Assistive? What do They Mean?** This session provides information about the legal definitions of “accessible” and “assistive” and explains the differences between the terms.
2. **AT Tools for People with VI and Remote Teaching.** This session provides information on common AT solutions utilized by individuals with visual impairments, accessible remote tools used while teaching people from a distance, and lessons learned from personal experiences with remote teaching those with visual impairments.
3. **Assistive Technology to Support Social Emotional Wellness.** This session identifies examples of AT to support social emotional wellness for students with autism, the rationale behind such tools, and key guidelines when designing and implementing such tools.

Important Links

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education](#)
- [N.C. Department of Health & Human Services](#)
 - [Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)
- [N.C. Department of Public Instruction](#)
 - [Lighting Our Way Forward \(Summary\)](#)
- [No Kid Hungry](#)
- [NCDPI-COVID-19 Responses & Resources](#)

Technology Tutorials

- [Canvas for Parents Guide](#)
- [ClassDojo for Parents](#)
- [Distance Learning with Office365 for Parents](#)
- [Google for Education Tech Toolkit for Parents & Guardians \(video support\)](#)
- [Google Classroom: A Guide for Parents & Caretakers from NCDPI](#)
- [Google Meet: A Guide for Parents & Caretakers from NCDPI](#)
- [Google Tutorials for Parents & Students \(Teacher Tutorial videos\)](#)
- [Guardian's Guide to G Suite for Education](#)
- [Parent & Caretaker Guide to Chromebooks](#)
- [Parents' Ultimate Guide to Google Classroom](#)
- [Parents' Ultimate Guide to Zoom](#)
- [PowerSchool Parent & Student Resource Center](#)
- [Seesaw for Parents](#)

Check out previous newsletters for other resources.

<https://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/parent-resources/parent-newsletter-2020>

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Contingency Plans During the Pandemic

Many parents have heard the term “contingency plan” as schools begin to re-open, but many are still confused as to what they are and when they are needed. The federal regulations and state policies have not changed and a current IEP must be in effect at the beginning of every school year. Guidance from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)¹, allows IEP teams to consider a distance learning plan in a child’s IEP as a Contingency Plan in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak that requires the school to close. These plans are only triggered and implemented during select times because of specific circumstances, like the three re-opening plans established by NC’s Governor. OSEP has also stated, “it is expected that the implementing of a child’s IEP may look different during the time of school closures and re-opening.” Because transitions through the re-opening of school buildings are anticipated, the Contingency Plan ensures that the student’s unique needs are met and the IEP is implemented without interruption.

When is an IEP Team Meeting needed?

If the IEP can be implemented as it is currently written, a meeting is not needed to discuss changes because no changes are needed. This would include a scenario where the location changes from a school building to a remote setting.

If the service delivery frequency will change because the school schedule for all students has changed (ie. A/B schedule, A/B schedule + remote learning etc), then a meeting is needed.

If the delivery of services in the IEP or the IEP itself will be substantively different than originally planned (ie. goals, accommodations, supports, etc), then a meeting is needed.

A Contingency Plan may be added as an addendum to the IEP without convening an IEP meeting **IF** an authorized school representative and the parents agree not to hold a meeting. If this alternative is used, a prior written notice and a copy of the Contingency Plan must still be given to the parents before implementation of the plan may occur.

These meetings would amend the annual IEP with an addendum to the IEP as changes are being made to the annual IEP. As written in policy², amendments are changes to the IEP made by the entire IEP team by amending the annual IEP rather than by redrafting the entire IEP. Some districts are opting to use Contingency Plans for this purpose as the changes would only be in

effect during the unique circumstances of re-opening school buildings during the current pandemic.

Areas to Address in Contingency Plans

If a Contingency Plan will be used it should adequately plan for and provide uninterrupted, appropriate services during any transition between re-opening plans. These plans may include:

- characteristics of the local plan for the entire districts (A, B, C, or combination of those),
- parental input,
- supports for academic, functional, personal changes, or circumstances,
- supplemental aids and supports (ie: accommodations/modifications, family/caregiver support, training, etc)
- least restrictive environment: services, frequency, schedule, and related services,
- additional relevant information in light of the unique circumstances of the re-opening of school buildings.

Important Information

- Contingency Plans are intended to ensure that a student’s IEP is implemented during each phase of re-opening
- Contingency Plans are customized based on the unique needs of the student and will look different for each student
- Contingency Plans are *not* required but one of the options available to amend IEPs during the transition of re-opening schools
- IEP meetings can be conducted using alternative methods of participation (ie: phone, Zoom, Google Meet, etc)
- Parents can decline an invitation to a meeting but are encouraged to participate
- If the parent will not participate and the school (LEA) has exhausted policy requirements for encouraging participation, the IEP team may meet without the parent
- Prior written notice and final copies of the IEP and Contingency Plan must be provided to the parents prior to implementation of the plan

The plans for re-opening of school buildings will vary across the state. Therefore, questions should first be directed to your child’s teacher and/or principal. If questions remain, contact your local EC Director.

¹[Questions and Answers on Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak](#) (March 2020)

²[Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities](#) (March 2018)