



New Jersey Association of School Psychologists (NJASP)

UPDATE 3/18/20: COVID19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Related to School Emergency Preparedness Plans

Recently, the NJDOE released the following document [COVID19 Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) Related to School Emergency Preparedness Plans.pdf](#)

Along with general information for school closures, there are questions and answers that are specifically related to special education. Please review the COVID-19 FAQ document for the complete information but see below for some highlights that may impact you as a school psychologist.

- **All** students in the district must be addressed in the school closure plan, including students in state funded preschools and/or preschoolers with disabilities.
- All districts must include developmentally appropriate strategies and material to meet the needs of all students, including those in out of district placements.
- Accommodations and multiple means of conducting assignments should be considered for students with disabilities. If students with disabilities do not have access to internet connectivity to participate in remote or online home instruction, the IEP team will need to determine what compensatory instruction a student may require when their school district reopens.
- The NJDOE understands districts will need to exhibit flexibility, that the plan may need to be updated as the situation changes, and that the NJDOE will need to provide individualized support to districts on a case-by-case basis.
- Remote home instruction/services shall be consistent with the student's Individual Education Plan Program (IEP) to the most appropriate extent possible.
- The IEP team should determine the amount of compensatory related services students with IEPs may require, on a case-by-case basis, when school resumes.

- For out of district placements, it is the responsibility of the sending district to ensure students with disabilities attending out of district placements are provided with instruction during school closures consistent with the student's IEP to the greatest extent possible. Districts are encouraged to consult with the student's school of attendance regarding the nature and delivery of instruction (See document for additional guidance re: out of state residential schools).
- Nonpublic schools auxiliary and remedial services - District should consult with contracted service providers and non public schools in developing a plan consistent with Individual Service Plan.
- Statewide testing - testing windows may be adjusted and there will be flexibility for federally required assessments. Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) administration will not start on April 1, and updated schedules and policies will be forthcoming.

NJASP understands that you may have other questions that are not specifically addressed in this document. Given that the federal Q and A is referenced in the NJ document, until other information is provided, NJ school districts are guided by the federal document. Also, scroll down to previous posts for more information on the federal response (USDOE - OSEP).

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

Moving forward, NJASP will update this page as new information is available. In the meantime, we advise our members to look to your supervisors for specific guidance while maintaining the ethical principles and professional standards that inform your practice.

Please feel free to reach out to NJASP at NJASP.GPR@gmail.com if you are directed to perform your duties in a manner that is contrary to legal, professional, or ethical standards. A benefit of your NJASP membership is access to ethics and professional practice experts.

We also realize that the anxiety evoked by this crisis is distributed across a bell shaped curve ;-). Some of you may be experiencing a great deal of angst about the uncertainty and ambiguity regarding providing related services, completing evaluations, conducting annual reviews, etc. Others may feel more chill and have settled in just fine with a full refrigerator and extensive Netflix queue. And guess what? Either response is A-OK - it's just where you landed. We are all coming from different places on the anxiety bell curve. We may have varied non-school challenges, whether it is teaching our own children,

taking care of our vulnerable parents or grandparents, facing family economic ramifications of this shut down, or helping out your friends and neighbors. We may not know the outcome or the course of this health crisis, but we do know that as school psychologists, we have much experience being the calmest, kindest, and most sensible person in the room. You know that calmness, kindness, and good sense that you always give to others? In order to have the physical and emotional resources you need to help others, you must give some of that calmness, kindness, and good sense to yourself.

So are timelines and paperwork important to our jobs? Of course they are but this crisis is unprecedented. When the code was written, I am sure no one could have imagined circumstances such as this. So in the big scheme of our current reality, let's all take a step back and look at what is truly important. Our focus must be keeping ourselves and our loved ones safe and healthy. Any "spare" time we have is better used in supporting those who may be more vulnerable to this virus and need our help today, rather than worrying about what happens over the next months because of a missed deadline that was completely out of our control. Just do the best you can, be happy you are not the "boss" (if you are not), and document, document, document. A year from now, 5 years from now, this spring's timelines will not really matter; but, the ramifications of not taking care of ourselves and others will matter for years to come. And if you are struggling? It is ok to not feel ok (even school psychologists)! Please reach out to family members, a friend, a colleague, a mental health provider, or a crisis hotline if indicated. Be as good of a friend to yourself as you would be for others.

"Self-compassion is simply giving the same kindness to ourselves that we would give to others" - Christopher Germer.

3/14/20:

What we are experiencing in New Jersey, across the country, and throughout the world is uncharted territory. Many of you are not only dealing with closures of your workplace but are also navigating ramifications for your own families. While there are still many things up in the air, NJASP has compiled a number of resources that we hope will be helpful for our members.

With regard to official information, we encourage you to visit the [CDC COVID-19 website](#) for updated information. CDC [Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Childcare Programs](#)

Additionally, the New Jersey Department of Health provides information for schools in order to help schools prepare at [Department of Health | Communicable Disease Service | COVID-19: Information for Schools and Businesses](#)

Many of you are looking for guidance about how to meet IDEA mandates in the event of a long term school closure. Please see the following information from NASP with regard to this.

We have received numerous questions regarding how to meet IDEA mandates in the event of a long term school closure due to COVID-19. Yesterday, the U.S. Department of Education released a set of guidance documents (<http://bit.ly/38OSX4P>) to help guide state and local decision making. There are many questions to which we do not yet have answers. Collectively, schools are dealing with an unprecedented event, and previous guidance was based on situations that resulted in localized, short term closures. Nationwide long term closures, like we are facing now, is uncharted territory. We understand that many of you are rightly concerned about the expectations for meeting timelines for existing requests for evaluations/reevaluations for special education eligibility. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has indicated that they will be issuing additional guidance on this topic in the very near future. This issue, as well as many others, were addressed on a webinar (<http://bit.ly/38N3JIO>) with Laurie VanderPloeg, Director of OSEP for chief state school officers, state special education directors, and local special education administrators. At this time, there is not a transcript or a corresponding FAQ, but if one becomes available, we will share it. We hope you find this helpful. If you have specific questions we urge you to reach out to your state department of education and/or your local special education director. We will continue to share information and formal guidance as it becomes available. Thank you for all you are doing to support our students.

NJASP suggests that you follow the links above if you would like to keep up with the federal response re: IDEA.

UPDATE 3/17/20

From NASP re: federal guidelines. This federal guidance document has also been shared by the NJDOE without additional comment as far as NJASP is aware.

"IEP Teams are not required to meet in person while schools are closed. If an evaluation of a student with a disability requires a face-to-face assessment or observation, the evaluation would need to be delayed until school reopens. Evaluations and re-evaluations that do not require face-to-face assessments or observations may take place while schools are closed, so long as a student's parent or legal guardian consents.

These same principles apply to similar activities conducted by appropriate personnel for a student with a disability who has a plan developed under Section 504, or who is being evaluated under Section 504.

[U.S. Department of Education Releases Webinar, Fact Sheet for Protecting Students' Civil Rights During COVID-19 Response](#)

Additionally, the New Jersey Department of Education is working closely with the New Jersey Department of Health to monitor the situation and provide resources at [NJDOE Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) . The most recent guidance is provided here [Supplemental Guidance Regarding Requirements for Public Health-Related School Closure](#) (March 13, 2020). Currently, specific guidelines concerning special education and related services from NJDOE do not appear to be published as of today (March 14, 2020) but NJASP will keep you updated. For now, we advise our members to look to your supervisors for specific guidance while maintaining the ethical principles and professional standards that inform your practice.

Please feel free to reach out to NJASP at NJASP.GPR@gmail.com if you are directed to perform your duties in a manner that is contrary to legal, professional, or ethical standards. A benefit of your NJASP membership is access to ethics and professional practice experts.

NJASP is also concerned about the impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), on the physical and psychological well-being of students and families, particularly those living in low-income communities. We applaud the school districts who are not only planning for continuation of academic instruction but have developed plans for providing meals for our food insecure students. (The challenge of food insecurity of our students. [N.J. schools feed about 500K kids for free. What happens if coronavirus closes them?](#))

Unfortunately, even in a crisis, we must be vigilant in our advocacy for fairness, equity, and access for our students and families. Racism and stigmatization have increased,

particularly towards the Asian population. Here is a link from NASP for [Countering COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) Stigma and Racism: Tips for Parents and Caregivers](#) . We also refer you to a document from the NAACP Environment and Climate Justice program [Ten Equity Implications of the Coronavirus Outbreak in the U.S.](#)

Last, but by no means least, we want to express our appreciation and concern for you, the New Jersey School Psychologist, and the teachers, administrators, school staff, healthcare providers, and community partners who support children and families every day. We empathize with the inherent anxiety evoked by the outbreak and furthered by the news cycle. As a community, we can support each other by staying committed to our self-care practices. As you care for others, we encourage self-care. One cannot pour from an empty cup. Please take care of yourself!

- Get enough sleep.
- Stay informed but try not to ruminate or catastrophize.
- Check on others who may be more vulnerable to you.
- Be kind - even kinder than usual!
- Go outside if you can maintain enough social distance - get some fresh air!
- Accept that your anxiety is normal.
- Meditate, calm your thoughts, breathe...
 - May you be safe.
 - May you be healthy.
 - May you be happy.
 - May you live with ease.

Also, please see some of the self-care resources provided below :

[CDC Mental health and Coping](#)

[CDC Taking care of your emotional health](#)

[Taking Care of Your Mental Health in the Face of Uncertainty](#)

[Coping with coronavirus anxiety](#)

[Practical tips for coping with coronavirus anxiety in New Jersey](#)

[Care for Your Coronavirus Anxiety](#)

Mindfulness during the corona virus

Additional, but not exhaustive, resources related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis:

Resources from New Jersey Department of Health

Department of Health | Communicable Disease Service | COVID-19: Information for Schools and Businesses

Resources from NJDOE

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-2019)

Resources from USDOE

Secretary DeVos Releases New Resources for Educators, Local Leaders on K-12 Flexibilities, Student Privacy, and Educating Students with Disabilities During Coronavirus Outbreak

COVID-19 ("Coronavirus") Information and Resources for Schools and School Personnel

Resources from NASP and other professional organizations

Talking to children about COVID-19

Responding to COVID-19

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Joint NASDE/CASE/CCSSO Webinar on COVID-19 Guidance for Students with Disabilities

CASEL recommendations and links to help support the social emotional needs of students and adults - Information related to student impact *SEL and COVID-19.pdf*

The challenge of food insecurity of our students *N.J. schools feed about 500K kids for free. What happens if coronavirus closes them?*

Things to consider regarding neurodiverse students - this has some initial information about homeschooling but also includes helpful tips about impact on some of our students. *Mar 13 Start-Up Guide for Schooling at Home Due to COVID-19*

A social story about Coronavirus *Coronavirus Social Story*

Free resources [16 Free Resources for Schools Who are Closing Due to Coronavirus](#)

Resources from Autism Speaks [What should the autism community know about the coronavirus outbreak?](#)