

Frequently Asked Questions About the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) For Parents and Families of a Child who Experiences Disability

DEVELOPED BY:



The world is responding to an unprecedented public health crisis, the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). In The world is responding to an unprecedented public health crisis, the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). In response to this crisis, Governor Kate Brown, has closed schools for students in Oregon. While this closure presents significant challenges, it is the best way to flatten the curve, slow the rate of transmission, and protect the lives of Oregonians.

We understand that the current situation raises some questions and want to assure you that there is an entire community of people who are navigating this with you and seeking to provide you information, resources, and support. You are not alone and we will get through this together. If you have questions about the impact of the school closure due to COVID-19 that are not addressed in this document, please submit them [here](#).

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Impact on my Child's Education

How will my child be able to access instruction?

During extended school closure, learning and the instructional experience will take new shape as districts and programs across the state implement a distance learning model for all students. Distance learning opportunities will center on critical problem solving, collaboration, communication and creativity, while focusing on essential and relevant learning for students. Therefore, while instruction in distance learning will be aligned to the Oregon Standards, it will focus on the most critical standards. Distance learning will focus on student belonging and connection (well-being and mental health).

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) must be provided for students who receive special education and related services during distance learning. Districts, during this time, will begin to implement students' IEPs, to the maximum extent possible, and make appropriate modifications in consultation with a student's IEP team, if necessary. **It is important to note that during the extended closure, IEP services could look different than in a school setting during normal circumstances.** As is the case for all other children, the specific services your child receives during this time will be different than when schools are operating normally. As such, the services your child requires in order to receive FAPE may be different at this time. IEP Teams may need to gather parent input regarding distance learning in order to ensure meaningful parent participation in any individual educational decisions made during this time.

Each district's distance learning plan should be designed to be accessible to as many students as possible from the beginning. Those plans may need to be tailored to meet the needs of some students. School districts and teachers will need to work with parents/caregivers to ensure distance learning is accessible and some will need to work to create new materials; all of this will be based on your child's individual needs and the circumstances of this closure. Schools may provide compensatory educational services and/or extended school year services to maintain and/or recoup skills, as determined necessary by the IEP team.

How should my child's distance learning program be structured?

Delivery models for distance learning will meet local needs and should be differentiated and adjusted to include paper packets, online experiences, blended learning, phone, etc. as it matches student learning needs and technology and connectivity capacity. Distance learning should honor the student's environment, and harness the assets of the student's environment including home language, family (siblings and extended family), and culture. Learning should be connected to the student's environment and allow for student choice and voice when possible.

Distance learning programs should have set schedules with an appropriate amount of instructional time and designated educator "office hours" to ensure consistency and structure. ***ODE is recommending the following maximum daily guidelines for Teacher-Led learning. Since the general education window has been reduced, individualized adjustments of specially designed instruction and minutes for services could also be made in relationship to the general education services during this closure:***

- Grades K-1: 45 minutes

- Grades 2-3: 60 minutes
- Grades 4-5: 90 minutes
- Grades 6-12: 30 minutes per teacher (3 hours in a day)

In addition, ODE is recommending that each teacher maintain “office hours” when they will be accessible (online or via telephone is recommended) for consultation. Office hours should be structured so that all students have an opportunity to contact their teacher.

It will be essential that teachers engage with parents/families/caregivers as critical partners and co-facilitators of learning. Supports, resources, policies, and expectations will be clearly communicated to students and parents/families/caregivers. If the student is under the age of 18, any calls, or other means of contact, should be made to parent/caregiver who is in parental relationship to the student. Norms and agreements for interaction between educators and students will need to be established with the parent/caregiver. However, every student should have contact with school personnel, including a licensed or registered teacher, each session day throughout the school closure for the purpose of connection, instruction, and progress monitoring. Contact could be through telephone, writing, or electronic means.

Will the school year be extended?

That determination has not been made at this time.

How and when will students be able to make up credits?

ODE is developing guidance for districts related to the requirement for distance learning for all that should further address next steps to earn credits. It is possible that guidance will change as the response to COVID-19 changes.

Schools have been asked to provide distance learning for all. What can I expect in that regard?

Though ODE is providing guidance for districts, this determination will be a local decision that is individually determined based on each district’s context (e.g., the district may provide virtual instruction for all students, other graded work projects and assignments, or other forms of distance learning that make sense for the district). Each district will be responsible for determining what that looks like for their individual students.

Are there any exceptions for our most vulnerable students to remain in school?

This school closure presents additional challenges for parents of students with significant support needs, including those with significant emotional and behavioral support needs. Students, regardless of their need, must be engaged through distance learning.

However, at this time, there is no allowance for any classrooms or schools, regardless of type, or the support need of the students, to operate face-to-face programs during this closure. While we absolutely understand that the COVID-19 closure creates challenging situations for many families, it is a necessary response to this unprecedented outbreak.

How will parents remain involved in meetings about their child’s special education services?

Parents remain critical partners in their child’s education during this period of time and must be given the opportunity to participate in any meetings regarding the identification, evaluation, IFSP/IEP and educational placement of their child, and the provision of a free appropriate public education to their child. If IFSP/IEP meetings are held, districts and programs may work with parents, families, and service providers to hold IFSP/IEP meetings through alternative means, such as via conference call or a virtual meeting (e.g., Zoom, GoToMeeting, Google Meet, Cisco Webex). In line with current health recommendations, ODE encourages parents to agree to alternative means of participating that enables the implementation of social distancing recommendations, so long as the alternative means remains conducive to meaningful parent participation in the meeting. It is also possible that, due to COVID-19, districts and programs are unable to hold IFSP/IEP meetings at this time. If that is the case, or if a meeting is proposed through alternative means that is not agreeable to the parent, the district should provide Prior Written Notice to the parent documenting the situation. In those cases, if a child should be receiving services at this time and does not, the district or program should hold an IFSP/IEP meeting upon reopening to determine if FAPE was provided and, if it was not, how to remedy the situation. There is no one specific way that these situations must be remedied. Appropriate remedies must be individualized based on the student’s needs, but could include, for example, additional specially designed instruction, extended school year supports, or compensatory services.

Managing Extended Time at Home

Should I establish a routine for my child during the school closure?

Yes, maintain existing routines as possible, and establish a new, consistent, and predictable routine for your child(ren) for the duration of any school closure. For example, if you typically get up at 6 am to get ready for school, continue to do so. Children thrive with appropriate structure. Even though there is a significant disruption to their typical routine, establishing consistency and predictability will support them as they transition into this significant lifestyle change. Here is a [sample daily schedule](#). Distance Learning for All should become part of their daily routine, with specifics to be determined based on the local decisions made in establishing district learning programs.

Should I take my child into the community (e.g., a playground, ice cream shop) when they get bored at home?

Doctors are recommending that children do not play at neighborhood playgrounds. Maintaining appropriate social distance is hard for children, especially in unstructured situations like those encountered at playgrounds. It may also be difficult to ensure that playground equipment is not contaminated, which could cause children to face additional risk when they touch the equipment. Additional information is available [here](#).

Is it safe for my child to play outside?

If social distancing rules can be maintained, children can spend time outside. Gatherings of people are not recommended. To the extent possible, when outside, children should not encounter any different people than they do at other times. The [Oregon Health Administration recommends](#) that Oregonians stay “at least three feet, but ideally six feet, from one another ... [to] protect themselves from the disease and help slow its spread.”

Maintaining Connection with Others

How can I help my child use technology to communicate with family and friends?

Start simple and stay developmentally appropriate. For toddlers, use a video messaging app with them to connect with loved ones. For older children and teens, they may like to text a friend or use a social media platform for sharing messages and videos. Please take care to [ensure your child is safe while interacting online](#).

Some school districts are providing computers on loan to families who do not otherwise have access to technology used for learning. Check in with your local school district to see if this is a possibility.

Navigating the Situation

How should I talk to my young child about COVID-19?

The University of Michigan published [this article](#) on how to talk to your kids about COVID-19. Among the things they recommend are:

1. Use developmentally appropriate, simple and honest language.
2. Offer reasonable reassurance.
3. Follow their lead and validate their feelings.
4. Bring some control and fun where you can.
5. Take time to yourself to address your own feelings.

The CDC has also [shared information to help people talk with children about COVID-19](#). Included in their information are general principles for talking to children and specific factual information about COVID-19.

How can we protect ourselves?

On [their FAQ page](#), the Oregon Health Authority shared information about how people can keep from getting sick with COVID-19.

There are simple steps you can take to protect yourself and your family from COVID-19 as well as influenza and other illnesses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with sick people or animals.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw it away. If you don't have a tissue, cough into your elbow.
- Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that you frequently touch.
- Avoid non-essential travel to regions listed in [CDC travel advisories](#).

It is also important to keep your body resilient:

- Eat a healthy diet.
- Exercise.

- Get plenty of rest.
- Stay up-to-date on routine vaccines. This includes the flu vaccine. It is not too late to get a flu shot to protect yourself from the flu, which continues to cause illness in Oregon.
- Quit smoking and vaping. Initial research shows that people who smoke may be more likely to develop serious complications from COVID-19. If you'd like to quit, free help is available at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or www.quitnow.net/oregon.

Prevention information is available in multiple languages.

- [English](#)
- [Español / Spanish](#)
- [اللغة العربية / Arabic](#)
- [简体中文 / Simplified Chinese](#)
- [繁體中文 / Traditional Chinese](#)
- [Русский / Russian](#)
- [Af Soomaali / Somali](#)
- [Tiếng Việt / Vietnamese](#)

The CDC also has a page on prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) available [here](#). They also have a page that documents symptoms of COVID-19 [here](#).

What if my child gets sick?

[This site](#) has a page that describes the steps parents should take if their child gets sick with COVID-19. Among their recommendations, they recommend that parents:

- Do their best to stay calm
- Talk to a health care provider
- Keep their child home
- Keep other people and pets away from their child as much as possible
- Have their sick child use a different bathroom from others, if possible
- Wash their hands, clean, and disinfect often
- Help their child get plenty of rest and drink lots of liquids
- Watch for signs that their child might need more medical help

Who can I call if I or my child(ren) are in crisis or experiencing suicidal thoughts?

Emotions like fear, sadness, anger, frustration and anxiety are natural responses to the COVID-19 outbreak. Many of us will experience some or all of these emotions and others as we cope with the novel Coronavirus. It is important to remember that **everyone reacts differently to stressful situations, and that you are never alone.**

If you or someone you know is experiencing severe emotional distress or is suicidal, GET HELP IMMEDIATELY by contacting one or more of the following:

- Call 911 or your local crisis line
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK En español: 1-888-628-9454
- Crisis Text Line (text "HOME" to 741741)
- The [Teen Line: 1-310-855-HOPE \(4673\)](#)

- National Youth Crisis Hotline: 1-800-448-4663
- [Find Crisis Services in Your County](#)
- Substance use help: [1-800-662-HELP \(4357\)](#)
- For Peers: [warmline.org](#) links to warmlines in every state or chat [Lifeline Crisis Chat](#) or [Crisis Text Line](#)
- For Youth: [Oregon Youthline](#) or call 877-968-8491 or text “teen2teen” to 839863
- For LGBTQIA+ Youth: [The Trevor Project website](#) or call (866) 488-7386 for a 24-hour toll-free suicide hotline or [Trans Lifeline](#) at 1-877-565-8860
- For Native Youth: [WeRNative](#), [You are Not Alone Network](#)
- When a Friend Dies: [Guidelines for Students](#)

Additional supports for mental health are listed in the resources document and on the [ODE COVID-19 website](#).

What else do I need to know?

No one group, ethnicity or population in the US is at a higher risk for getting or spreading COVID-19 than others. While people may worry or have concerns about COVID-19, it is important to not let fear lead to social stigma toward friends, neighbors or members of the community or unwarranted paranoia.

What about the most high-need/nursing dependent students?

Since transition from receiving full time 1:1 nursing at school to only at home is a significant transition, schools may need to pay some extra attention in working with families. Families will also be taking on the burden of care for less serious conditions as well.