



Homeschooling Children with Special Needs

Understanding the Differences between “Crisis Schooling” and Homeschooling

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COVID₁₉ USHERS IN “SCHOOL AT HOME”

- March 12, 2020 – State Superintendent of Schools closed Maryland schools for in-person student instruction and extracurricular activities
- MSDE extended the physical closure of schools through the end of the 2019-2020 school year
- HCPSS further extended the physical closure of schools through summer 2020
- HCPSS Recovery Plan proposes a fully virtual first semester of academic instruction, until January 28, 2021

Q: Distance learning in the spring did not work well for my child. Will anything be different in the fall?

ANTICIPATED CHANGES TO VIRTUAL LEARNING

- Many, many details are in planning stages now—much more to come about the delivery of special education services in the weeks ahead
- Significantly more rigorous than the spring program
- Calendar adjustment: school now begins September 8
- Additional chromebooks have been secured
- Students at all levels will engage in 4 days of teacher-led synchronous (live) instruction each week

ANTICIPATED CHANGES TO VIRTUAL LEARNING

- 4x4 schedule for middle and high school
- Daily social and emotional lessons will be provided
- Elementary
 - 1 hour live (synchronous) ELA and Math 4 days/week; 1 hour live support 4 days/week
 - 2 hours related arts and content weekly
 - Wednesdays – small group supports
- Middle
 - Synchronous supports 2x per day, 4 days/week
 - Social-emotional lessons 4 days/week
 - Synchronous instruction of classes with asynchronous assignments
- High
 - Additional synchronous flex time for meeting with teachers
 - Social-emotional lessons 4 days/week
 - Relationship building

Q: What do I do if distance learning is not possible for my child due to his disability? I am anxious about being held accountable if he regresses or does not participate.

WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE?

Each student with a disability must be provided, to the greatest extent possible, the special education and related services identified in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) that was developed according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (34 CFR §§300.101 and 300.201 (IDEA), and 34 CFR § 104.33 (Section 504)). This includes the provision of supplementary aids and services, program modifications, and accommodations required to meet the student's individual goals.

WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE?

- Schools are accountable for providing instruction and FAPE
- If virtual instruction is not working, the parent cannot be held accountable
- Maintain the accountability where it belongs—with schools
- **KEEP IN MIND:** if a parent withdraws their child from school, accountability for providing instruction shifts to the parent

WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE?

- It is the IEP team's responsibility to acknowledge that virtual instruction is not working
- It is the IEP team's responsibility to determine alternative ways of delivering instruction
- Parents should document attempts to participate or to complete virtual assignments
- Parents should document regression
- Parents should document any private services they provide their children

School at Home (distance learning) v. Traditional Homeschooling

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

SCHOOL AT HOME (DISTANCE LEARNING)

- Teacher-led
 - Academic learning developed and prepared by the teacher
 - Requirements set by the teacher
 - Grades determined by the teacher
- Limited amount of time
 - When schools physically reopen, instruction will return to the physical school building
- Technology is provided by the school system
 - Computers for distance learning, WiFi hotspots
 - Assistive technology

SCHOOL AT HOME (DISTANCE LEARNING)

- Meals and healthcare are provided for eligible students
- Special education and related services are provided according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
 - Includes the provision of supplementary aids and services, program modifications, and accommodations required to meet the student's goals
- Continuity of Learning Plan for students with special education services
 - Amended IEP that will be fully implemented in the distance learning environment for the course of the school closure

TRADITIONAL HOMESCHOOLING

Important Regulations to Consider

Q: If a parent withdraws their child from public school, can the child still receive IEP services, speech therapy, or other related services?

TRADITIONAL HOMESCHOOLING

- Children are NOT entitled to special education services other than Childfind (free evaluation) services
 - No speech and language services, occupational or physical therapy services, assistive technology services, adaptive PE services
- Children are NOT eligible for Maryland's Autism Waiver if they are not enrolled in public school and receiving special education services (*the waiver requires public school enrollment and 15 hours of special education*)

TRADITIONAL HOMESCHOOLING

- Parents voluntarily give up access to all resources available from their local school system
 - School issued Chromebooks must be returned, as well as textbooks
 - Access to digital platforms and for-fee learning services will no longer be available

Note: While there is no entitlement or legal right to services when a parent withdraws a child from public school, a local school system may choose to offer some services. It is the school system's choice.

TRADITIONAL HOMESCHOOLING

- Children are NOT eligible to participate in transition programs, such as Career and Community Exploration (CCE), Project SEARCH, or Community Connections
- Children are NOT eligible to participate in school-funded athletics, band/chorus/choir, dance, or other school-funded clubs and extracurricular programs

HCPSS POLICY ON HOMESCHOOLING

The Howard County Public School System recognizes and respects a parent's right to choose home instruction as an alternative educational program. Appreciating a parent's commitment and desire for academic achievement, the Howard County Public School System supports parents by providing information and support necessary to ensure a successful partnership between the home schooler and the public school system.

<https://www.hcpss.org/parents/home-school/>

TRADITIONAL HOMESCHOOLING

- Parent-directed
 - Parents guide their child's learning
 - Parents choose topics within mandatory subject areas
- Extended period of time
 - Intended for an entire grade or more; not for months of closure only
- All financial costs are the family's responsibility
 - Materials, books, technology, subscriptions to learning platforms, etc.

HOMESCHOOLING REGULATIONS

- MSDE regulates homeschooling and requires the following:
 - **Notice:** parents must notify the local school system (15 days prior and then annually)
 - **Supervision:** home instruction program for ages 5-18 must be reviewed and supervised by local school system or a certified nonpublic entity
 - **Attendance:** in compliance with the Maryland compulsory attendance law
 - **Regular, thorough instruction:** English, mathematics, science, social studies, art, music, health, and physical education offered as frequently as would be expected in public schools

HOMESCHOOLING REGULATIONS

(continued from previous slide)

- MSDE regulates homeschooling and requires the following:
 - **Portfolio review:** parents must maintain a portfolio of instructional materials (e.g., reading materials, examples of child's writing, worksheets, workbooks, creative materials, and tests)
 - **Review meetings:** 20-minute meetings during the first and second semester; after four consecutive successful reviews, only one review each spring; student is welcome to attend their own review

Q: Can a tutor or someone other than a parent or guardian be hired to teach a child who is engaged in a home instruction program?

HOMESCHOOLING REGULATIONS

- Home instruction is not limited to a parent or guardian teaching his or her child at home
- Parents may design a program that utilizes a variety of instructors and locations of instruction

Q: Do home instructors need to be certified teachers, or certified to deliver home instruction?

HOMESCHOOLING REGULATIONS

Home instruction regulations do not require the parent, guardian, or other instructor to have teacher certification in order to deliver home instruction

The parent or guardian is considered the provider of the home instruction program and is ultimately responsible for complying with the home instruction regulations

Q: Can I withdraw my child from school now and then re-enroll her when schools reopen?

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE LAW

- The compulsory attendance law states that each child who resides in Maryland and is 5 years old or older and under 18 years old shall attend a public school regularly during the entire school year
- Some exemptions apply, two of which include home instruction:
 - A child is exempt from the law if he or she is receiving regular, thorough instruction during the school year in the studies usually taught in public schools to children of the same age
 - A child is exempt from the law if he or she has completed a home instruction program as verified by the local school system or supervising entity

HOMESCHOOLING REGULATIONS

HCPSS respects a parent's right to withdraw their child from public school at any time they feel appropriate

That said, re-enrolling one's child as a new student will be required once you return them to public school

RE-ENROLLING PROCESS

- The parent must contact the school system for procedures regarding returning from home instruction to enrollment in a public school. The superintendent of designee determines the placement of the child and any credits to be awarded toward high school graduation. The evaluation may include administration of standardized tests, examinations, and interviews with the student.
- Note on placement: a child is not guaranteed a return to the same school in which they were previously enrolled (i.e., school redistricted, program moved to a different school, etc.)

Q: If I withdraw my child from public school, does his IEP go back into effect when I re-enroll him? Or is there a process for getting his IEP reinstated?

RE-ENROLLING PROCESS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- In addition to notifying the home school and enrolling in the public school system, an IEP team meeting will be scheduled
- Evaluations will be scheduled to determine the student's eligibility for special education
- If found eligible, the IEP team will develop a new IEP and determine appropriate services

Q: Does a child receive a Maryland High School Diploma upon completion of his or her home instruction program?

HOMESCHOOLING REGULATIONS

A Maryland High School Diploma is a specific kind of high school diploma that can only be issued by public schools, and which can only be issued after a child has met the requirements. This type of diploma is not available to students who complete their secondary education in a home instruction program.

If a child transfers from a home instruction program to a public high school and meets all graduation requirements, then he or she may receive a Maryland High School Diploma.

Q: What is “Home and Hospital Teaching,” how is it different from homeschooling, and who is eligible?

HOME AND HOSPITAL TEACHING (HHT)

A student may be eligible for HHT if the student is unable to participate in their school of enrollment because of a physical illness or disability, emotional condition (including substance abuse), pregnancy, or chronic illness consistent with COMAR 13A.03.05.04A

- IEP team determines the instructional and related services to be provided as long as the medical restrictions apply
- IEP team develops a plan for returning the student to a school-based program

HOME AND HOSPITAL TEACHING (HHT)

- HHT is a limited number of hours each week (at least 6 but often not more)
- HHT instructors often are not certified teachers

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ?



If parents do not want to homeschool, but do not think their child can benefit from distance learning, what can they do?

- Ask for an IEP meeting to share concerns about distance learning
- Review student progress on the current IEP / ICOL plan
- Based on data from engaging in digital learning, determine if changes need to be made to the IEP/ICOL plan to include supplementary aids, goals and objectives, services
- Discuss alternatives that may need to be provided to support the student's engagement in instructional learning opportunities
 - For example: in-person services provided by the school system in a school building or safe alternative location or the student's home; contracting with an outside provider; or reimbursing the parent for securing an outside provider

Will there be individual Continuity of Learning plans written for the fall?

Governing question should be: is it possible to implement the IEP in its entirety?

If amendments are necessary, then the team may discuss an individual Continuity of Learning Plan (NOTE: this plan does not replace the IEP; it is an amendment to existing IEP)

Who makes the placement decision when a child is re-enrolled in the public school system?

COMAR says it is the responsibility of the superintendent or a designee. In Howard County . . .

General education student: administrator of the student's home school (based on geographic location)

Student with IEP: Department of Special Education

PARENT TIPS ON HOMESCHOOLING

Stephanie Carr, co-chair, Special Education Community Advisory Council

- It is manageable!
- There are many resources on homeschooling available
- Planning in advance is critical
- Some days are not going to work – that's ok!
- Maryland Homeschoolers Association (website)
- Time for Learning (website)
- Facebook pages on homeschooling for tips, curriculum ideas,

RESOURCES

Howard County Autism Society (howard-autism.org) **COVID-19 RESOURCES**

MSDE Technical Assistance Bulletins
Disability Rights Maryland Guidance
HCPSS Updates
Parents Place of Maryland (ppmd.org)

1:1 IEP Assistance is Available!

Howard County Autism Society -- info@howard-autism.org

HCPSS Family Support and Resource Center – fsrc@hcpss.org

Parents Place of MD (ppmd.org) -- <https://www.picktime.com/PPMD>

RESOURCES

MSDE Technical Assistance Bulletin

- Home and Hospital Teaching: Supplement on Students with Disabilities

MSDE Frequent Asked Questions

- Home Instruction in Maryland

Nonpublic Entities Registered with MSDE to Supervise Home Instruction

HCPSS Standardized Testing

HCPSS Parent Guides for Each Grade Level and HS Algebra, American Government, English 9, Biology, and Geometry



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