

# CONTINUOUS EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

## • DIRECT SERVICES •

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## INTRODUCTION

Providing special education and related services during school closure is essential to improving outcomes for children. Additionally, continued support and services are critical to the ongoing development of our youngest population of students. When planning for continuous learning, special education teachers and related service providers should provide special education and related services to students with disabilities, including early childhood special education (ECSE) services, to the extent possible. This Direct Services guide builds on the [Continuous Learning Guidance and Tools](#) and [Guidance for Early Learning at Home](#) which provide information on the development and implementation of continuous learning plans. This Direct Services guide helps school systems develop and implement plans for continuous learning that address direct services (e.g. specialized instruction, speech and language therapy, counseling/social work, occupational therapy) in students' IEPs.<sup>1</sup>

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**\*All new/updated information is highlighted throughout this document.**

1 This document reflects current information gathered and will be updated as new information becomes available.



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# STEP 1: IDENTIFY RESOURCES

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## REVIEW DIRECT SERVICE PROVIDER CASELOADS

- Review current caseloads for each direct service provider to determine any adjustments, if necessary. Pull SER reports (e.g. Report of Services) and other logs to review.
- Review students, including IEP goals and services, for adaptability to continuous learning. **ECSE services**, speech and language therapy, occupation therapy, and counseling/social work and psychology services have established high-tech delivery models for continuous learning **for students with disabilities ages 3 to 21 years.**
- Determine if alternate methods of instruction or IEP modifications are necessary to deliver continuous learning, and document any adjustments.

## IDENTIFY TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES FOR DIRECT SERVICES

- Consider **non-public** platforms like **Apple FaceTime, Facebook Video Chat, Zoom, Duo, Enable My Child, Skype,** and **Marco Polo.** These platforms can require passwords, meeting IDs, or a planned time to connect.<sup>2</sup>
- Consider features needed to deliver direct services such as webcams, screenshare, and interactive features (e.g. on screen drawing, keyboard control sharing).

## ASSESS STUDENT/FAMILY NEEDS

- Understand student and family responses to the **Continuous Learning Survey** questions, including device and internet access.
- Understand **HIPPA flexibilities** for direct service providers and **student privacy** during the COVID-19 extended school closure.
- Understand important confidentiality requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) relevant to direct service providers.
- Notify parents of the potential for inadvertent disclosures of personally identifiable information during continuous learning, and obtain parental consent prior to student participation in small group instruction for students with disabilities.

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# STEP 2: DEVELOP APPROACH

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Once school systems understand caseloads, technology resources, and student and family needs, school systems need to decide on a delivery approach for direct service providers. This approach can be high-tech, low-tech, or a hybrid. It may not be the same for every direct service or every student.

## HIGH-TECH OPTION

Determine if a high-tech or hybrid approach is appropriate based on:

- Student and staff device and internet access
- Adaptability of direct services to alternate methods of delivery through high-tech platforms
- Student IEP goals, need, age, and developmental level

Direct service providers should evaluate the direct services based on each student's IEP, and determine the elements that are adaptable to high-tech continuous learning platforms. Direct service providers should consider the different models or structures of service delivery through videoconferencing:

- **Student Interactive:** Direct services are conducted with interactive audio and video connection in real time to create an in-person experience similar to that achieved in a traditional in-person special education or therapy session.

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<sup>2</sup> Public facing video communication applications that broadcast live or anyone can access should not be used. Ex: Facebook Live, Twitch, TikTok.

- **Capture-and-share:** Images, videos, therapy activities, and special education activities are captured and shared between the student and therapist.
- **Hybrid:** A combination of interactive follow up to capture-and-share methods whenever possible. **ECSE hybrid-services may include distant technology facilitated by a direct service provider that models intervention support for families and caregivers.**

**Document the IEP services that were provided via remote service delivery so that data can be used to determine the need for compensatory services when school resumes.**

## LOW-TECH OPTION

Determine if low-tech options are appropriate based on student and staff device and internet capabilities, as well as individual student IEP goals, need, age, and developmental level.

Low-tech direct service options, **paired with manipulatives sent by school systems, or readily available household materials**, can include:

- **Print Materials:** Printed materials, including readings and books, that act as either the primary way to deliver services or as a way to enhance high-tech service delivery. Materials could be disseminated through meal pick up, email, website, or a combination.
- **Skill Building Activities:** Activities that align with IEP goals to develop targeted skills through weekly phone calls, newsletters, emails, and/or videos.
- **Curriculum-Based Activities:** Reading, math, writing, or other activities that align with core instructional materials.
- **Home-Based Activities:** Activities that build skills at home to the extent possible, such as games, cooking, art, drawing and role-play.

## COMMUNICATE WITH STUDENTS, FAMILIES, AND CAREGIVERS

Whether the school system chooses a high-tech, low-tech or hybrid approach, the school systems should develop a strong communication plan with families. School systems should work with students and parents or guardians to:

- **Identify the most appropriate platforms to provide remote special education, therapy services, ECSE, and activities (e.g. high-tech or low-tech)**
- Verify whether providing remote special education and therapy services and activities through high-tech or low-tech platforms is appropriate
- Establish a plan to answer student questions, submit assignments, and exchange feedback
- Provide technology support, **which is especially critical for young children and students with significant cognitive disabilities who are novice technology device users (e.g. computer, iPad, mobile phone)**

**Family collaboration and guidance for learning at home are important to determine when the student will be ready for a new skill. If introducing a new skill, it may be beneficial to send students and families written directions and/or a short video including demonstrations of the new skill. Families may send descriptions, photos, or videos back to show their child practicing skills. Ensure parents know that students can stop working on activities if they struggle and become frustrated. Young children often demonstrate increased engagement when activities are child-led and reflect their interests. Following a child's lead when they redirect to another activity could have a positive effect on the learning outcome.**

## STEP 3: IMPLEMENT REMOTE DIRECT SERVICES

### SERVICE DELIVERY SCHEDULE

School systems should first establish a plan for training direct services providers on remote service delivery approaches. Once direct service providers are trained, service delivery plans and weekly schedules can be determined.

Before creating a remote service delivery schedule, providers should contact the family of each student in their caseload to:

- Review IEP goals, determine the best way(s) to provide student support,
- Schedule remote service delivery times and session content
- Establish a data collection system for continued progress monitoring
- Answer any questions

Early childhood special education service providers should determine a service delivery plan including session content. Direct service providers can use the example in [Appendix A](#) to prepare and deliver a session.

Direct service providers should determine a weekly schedule for direct services to ensure a consistent learning environment for students, families, and direct service providers during the extended school closure. After contacting families, direct service providers can create and follow a schedule like the example below:

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office Hours for families and students to reach out for assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office Hours for families and students to reach out for assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete therapy documentation, participate in IEP meetings as needed, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete therapy documentation, participate in IEP meetings as needed, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office Hours for families and students to reach out for assistance</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call parents to review schedule and revise therapy time if needed</li> <li>• Create and send newsletter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of therapy time/student(s)/ approach</li> <li>• <b>Example</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» 9:00-9:20                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Student 1:</b> FaceTime</li> </ul> </li> <li>» 9:30-10:00                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Student 2:</b> Google Meet</li> </ul> </li> <li>» 10:05-10:20                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Student 3:</b> Phone Consult with parent</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of therapy time/student(s)/ approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of therapy time/student(s)/ approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review progress to determine student needs and course of therapy for next week</li> <li>• Consult with colleagues</li> <li>• Answer emails/ respond to parents</li> <li>• Design low-tech activities to share with families</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for therapy sessions for the week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete therapy documentation, participate in IEP meetings as needed, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office Hours for families and students to reach out for assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office Hours for families and students to reach out for assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete therapy documentation, participate in IEP meetings as needed, etc.</li> </ul>

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## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Remote delivery of direct services and therapy is a new method of learning for many students. Some students might need help to focus, attend, and stay motivated when they are not in the same room with their instructor or peers. To keep students engaged, direct service providers should:

- Start with a fun game or activity just like during in-person direct service sessions.
- Work toward goals using some of the student's favorite websites, apps, games, books, digital books, music, or stories.
- Incorporate students' favorite in-person direct service activities.

Some students might benefit from assistance during direct service delivery, such as logging into technology and staying at the computer or phone. Direct service providers should clearly understand and communicate when assistance is needed so the provider can deliver the service. **Document** modifications, delays, or adjustments to service delivery during continuous learning.

Direct service providers can provide additional support to students and families during service delivery through:

- **Sharing social stories and visual strategies to help students adjust to changes in routine**
- **Using visual routines to increase structure**
- Instruction or tips on how the student can be supported to practice activities between sessions
- Supplemental activities that target direct service skills and IEP goals, starting with skills that the student has already mastered
- A list of apps to support goals in the IEP
- Weekly consultations

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## ADDITIONAL DIRECT SERVICE RESOURCES

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For additional guidance in implementing remote delivery of direct services or a list of vetted organizations that provide direct services remotely, review Louisiana's [Partnerships for Success Guide](#).

Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) has created a hub of [EC tele-therapy and distance learning resources](#) for service providers and families.

Professional organizations have developed remote direct service guidance for certain areas:

- [Occupational Therapy](#)
- [Physical Therapy](#)
- [Speech-Language Pathology](#)
- [Social Work](#)
- [Counseling](#)
- [School Psychology](#)
- [Clinical Psychology](#)

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) released:

- [Resources for Teaching Remotely](#) for special education teachers and direct service providers
- [Teaching Exceptional Children](#) articles on telepractice
- [Webinars](#) on remote direct service delivery topics

# APPENDIX A: EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES (ECSE) SESSION PLANNING GUIDE<sup>3</sup>

## PROVIDING EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES (ECSE) PLANNING GUIDE

Prior to the Session		
<b>Assess understanding and familiarity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate with the family or caregiver to gauge their familiarity of direct services and what to expect during a session. If the family is unfamiliar with the process, provide information to engage interest and work together to establish an approach that feels manageable.</li> </ul>	
<b>Communicate environmental considerations to families or caregivers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a checklist to help families or caregivers prepare for the session including the following steps:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Prepare your environment to limit noise and distractions.</li> <li>» Ensure your child is ready for the session (i.e. provide ample time for meals and diaper changes prior to the start of the session).</li> <li>» Check the internet connection prior to the start of the session and make sure the camera/speakers are turned on.</li> <li>» Review all materials that will be used during the session to prepare ahead of time and reach out to your direct service provider with questions.</li> <li>» Prepare any questions you may have for the service provider.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Prepare materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider everyday household materials that the family will need to collect prior to the visit.</li> <li>• Consider specific materials and manipulatives that the service provider can deliver to the family prior to the visit.*</li> <li>• Plan for ways to embed session activities into daily routines (i.e. eating a meal, brushing teeth, getting ready for nap).</li> </ul>	
Beginning of the Session	During the Session	Close of the Session
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review IEP goals               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» If this is the first visit, review the child’s IEP goal and desired behaviors to observe or look-for throughout the session.</li> <li>» If this is not the first visit, review specific goals that were targeted during the last visit and identify desired goals for the current session.</li> <li>» If the parent or caregiver is present, ask if there are questions or concerns before the session activity begins.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare to model the activity for the child. If the parent or caregiver is participating, structure to engage both the child and parent or caregiver.</li> <li>• If the parent or caregiver is participating, encourage them to repeat the activity with the child, if appropriate.</li> <li>• Provide positive feedback and reinforcement on how the activity is being implemented.</li> <li>• Closely monitor the child’s engagement.</li> <li>• Follow the child’s lead. If the child loses interest, offer another activity or material to re-engage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reassure parents or caregivers that early childhood special education services can support their child’s development.</li> <li>• Ask follow-up questions to gauge comfort during the session in order to plan for the next session.</li> <li>• Identify modifications to meet the needs of the child and parent or caregiver.</li> <li>• Schedule the next session and identify any support that is needed in between sessions.</li> </ul>

\*An example of tangible materials and manipulatives could include fidgets, scissors, writing utensil grips, and learning tweezers. Materials are used in connection to a high-tech service delivery. Materials could be disseminated through meal pick up or drop off.

<sup>3</sup> Adapted From: Houston, T., Behl, D. & Mottershead, S. (2018). Using Telepractice to Improve Outcomes for Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing & Their Families. *A Resource Guide for Early Hearing Detection & Intervention*. National Centre for Hearing Assessment and Management. Utah State University.