

Special Education Checklist

A GUIDE FOR MILITARY FAMILIES DURING COVID-19



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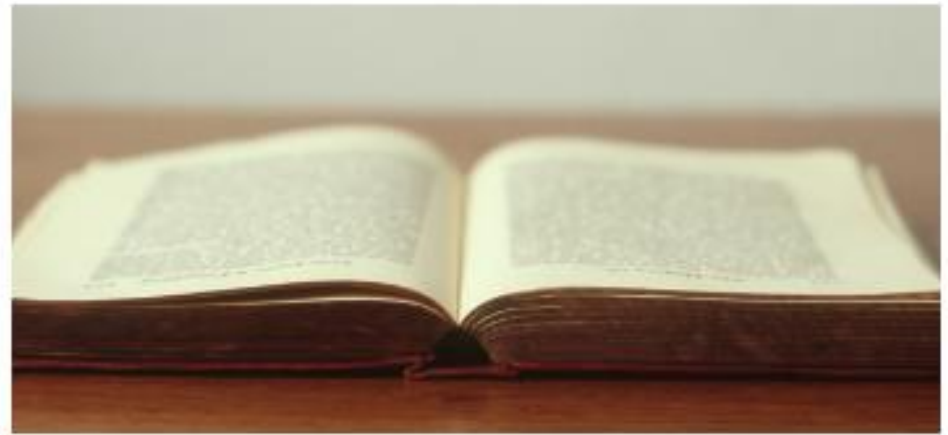


COVID-19 SCHOOL CLOSURES

Partners in PROMISE understands that these are unprecedented times for our military families and the world. Remote learning has been in effect for most school districts since March. Our EFMP families who were already struggling are now faced with assuming the responsibilities of parent, teacher, therapist and protector. Although the US Dept of Education has provided guidance to school districts on handling IDEA regulations, it is primarily left to the states and/or individual school districts to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

We encourage partnerships between schools and families, knowing it is nearly impossible for our children to progress without the same supports and services in place as they receive in the schoolhouse. However, with our partners, we need to prepare to work together to ensure your child gets back on track. Below are some helpful tips to organize and document your efforts during this time so you are prepared to advocate for your child.

RECOMMENDATIONS



1 BE PROACTIVE

Email your child's case manager or special education teacher, if you have not already. Ask what their goal is during the pandemic and how they will be delivering services. Put in good faith effort to work with the case manager on their plan while noting issues with any part of the proposed plan (lack of internet, lack of technology, work schedules, etc). Did your school district print a Temporary Learning Plan and a PWN without holding an IEP Meeting? That information will be important to refer to during this time.

2 DO NOT SIGN

Do not sign any document that waives your child's right to receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education during the school closure period. There has been no waiver of IDEA implementation requirements granted by the federal government during this time. Your signature may be used as evidence that you were in agreement to reducing your child's IEP goals and services during this time.

3 WAIT FOR PCS DATES

If you are scheduled to PCS, do not offer that information to the IEP Team. All PCS moves are on hold until the summer and that is always subject to change. Your child could be eligible for ESY services during the summer and you will want to preserve your child's ability to receive those services.

RECOMMENDATIONS



4

GET DOCUMENTATION FOR PCS

When you do have a scheduled PCS date, you may want to reach out to your current special education teacher or case manager to ask if they will write a letter documenting your child's levels of performance prior to remote learning. This will give the next case manager or special education teacher an idea of what was being learned and where your child might fit in the next school location.

5

GET ORGANIZED

Organize your documents as best you can. Create a pandemic IEP binder specifically for the pandemic period. (It is always a good idea to have an IEP binder for each year.)

Find and print out

- 1) Your child's last IEP
- 2) Your child's last progress report. Build a spreadsheet or use the one attached* to determine what hours your child should have been getting at the start of remote learning. If your child's school was delayed in opening, make sure to notate that as well. Again, this binder should be separate from your normal IEP binder to organize all documents. This will be helpful if you are moving in the next year. If possible, print all communications with school officials for the binder as well, especially if the current school district issued Temporary Learning Plans and a PWN without holding an IEP Meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS



6 DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT

This is when you can really get to know your child's learning style. What is working and what is not working? Go through each goal on your spreadsheet and write down what you think the baseline is when you started remote learning. At least once a week, go through each goal and see if there have been any changes at all, especially with regression. Collect all work samples. Yes, you are not expected to be an expert in any of these professions but you can certainly observe and bring valuable insight and data from your time working with your child in remote learning. Video your child with your phone while you are working on goals with them. This will help when discussing your child's present levels of performance once you get to your child's new school.

7 GET APPOINTMENTS

If there has been no regular communication with your school, be proactive by emailing your child's case manager or special education teacher weekly about what you are witnessing at home. You have your collection of data in your spreadsheet. Before the end of the "school year", request an IEP Meeting as soon as practical to discuss ways forward. Listen to their suggestions. If the data you have collected suggests regression, you may want to discuss what compensatory services might look like. Partner with the school on how to best get those services lined up to get back on track.

RECOMMENDATIONS



8 TRACK OFFERINGS

If your school district offers virtual sessions for instruction and/or related services (e.g. speech) keep a written record of all communications regarding services, scheduling sessions, feedback, etc. If possible, video record sessions to indicate the productivity, progress or lack thereof. Make notes for each session indicating what works, what doesn't, if your child is benefiting from the service or if it is causing regression of skills.

9 KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

If there are disagreements, know your procedural rights. This is an unprecedented time, however, your child's right to a Free Appropriate Public Education is still in effect. We are hopeful that school districts are working hand in hand with families. However, with your documentation and fact-based interactions, you will be set if any further dispute resolution is necessary.

10 GIVE YOURSELF GRACE

Do your best and give yourself grace. This is very difficult to now be the sole provider of all essential life activities! Some parents have stated that they are grateful to see what their child's strengths and weaknesses are first-hand. This information will be key to future discussions for their education. It is hard to have all of this responsibility fall upon your shoulders and it seems unfair. Just remember that you are your child's best advocate and the more organized you can be now will help support them later.



WE ARE HERE FOR YOU

All children receiving special education are entitled to a free appropriate public education.

The data shows there are systemic problems with special education for military families across the US.

LET US KNOW HOW WE CAN HELP