

August/September 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As we look forward to the 2021-2022 school year, I am writing to share with you some important reminders and updates from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“Department”). We recognize that schools and districts, along with families, worked hard to collaborate and ensure students with disabilities received services during these difficult times. This letter is intended to provide clarity to families about existing requirements and policies.

First, schools and districts must continue to provide special education services to students as written in their Individual Education Programs (IEPs). Second, if your child did not receive all of the special education services required by their IEP during any time period of the COVID-19 pandemic, they may be eligible to receive compensatory services from their school or district. Schools and districts are expected to make sure that IEP Teams meet to determine if a student needs compensatory services if a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) was not fully implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is likely that you have already met with your child’s IEP Team to discuss compensatory services. However, if you have not yet discussed compensatory services, your child’s IEP Team should meet as soon as possible.

In particular, IEP Teams should meet to discuss the possible need for compensatory services for the following groups of students that may be more likely to need them:

- Students with disabilities in schools or districts that were fully remote for three or more months during the 2020-21 school year;
- Students with disabilities who were chronically absent during the 2020-21 school year; and
- Students with disabilities who had significant difficulty accessing remote learning offered by the school or district due to the nature or severity of the disability, technology barriers, language access barriers, or other barriers resulting from the pandemic.

If you think that your child requires compensatory services and the IEP Team has not met to discuss your child’s specific needs, you may request to meet with the IEP Team. Also, if you believe that your child has a need for new special education services or if your child has a documented current medical condition that may impact how your child receives special education services, you should reach out to your child’s school or district to discuss how best to address your child’s unique needs.

The Department, together with schools and districts, is committed to partnering with you to best support your child’s learning and growth.

Sincerely,

Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education