



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES/SCHOOLS

What is the role of the COVID-19 Medical Consent and Certification for Distance Learning in planning for the 2021-22 school year?

The COVID-19 Medical Consent and Certification for Distance Learning (henceforth “medical certification”) documents a student’s physical or mental health condition that requires the student to participate in distance learning due to coronavirus (COVID-19). This medical certification is required for any student in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade registering for distance learning for the 2021-22 school year due to COVID-19. Note, this form should not be used for students registering for Home and Hospital Instruction Programs unrelated to COVID-19; such students should adhere to the local education agency’s (LEA’s) or school’s procedures for Home and Hospital Instruction.

What is the LEA’s/school’s obligation related to approval of a request for distance learning?

Local education agencies (LEAs) and schools should accept any complete and legible medical certification that explains how a student’s physical or mental health condition requires the student’s participation in distance learning due to COVID-19. Note, as healthcare providers are making individualized decisions regarding the need for distance learning for a given student, LEAs and schools should not question the appropriateness of the clinical determination, as long as the medical certification is complete, legible and explains how the student’s physical or mental health condition requires the student’s participation in distance learning due to COVID-19.

Is the medical certification required for students requesting distance learning from all grades?

The medical certification is required for any public or public charter student requesting distance learning in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. Adult education schools must provide in-person activities for students who wish to participate but may also provide a distance learning option without the need for a medical certification from students. Adult education charter schools should also consult with the Public Charter School Board on any additional approvals necessary.

What is the role of school nurses in reviewing a medical certification form?

None. As noted above, LEA and school leaders should accept any complete and legible medical certification that explains how a student’s physical or mental health condition requires the student’s participation in distance learning due to COVID-19.

If an LEA or school has a question about the medical certification form, is it allowable to follow-up with the physician or nurse practitioner signatory?

Yes. The parental consent section of the medical certification form provides consent to the school and healthcare provider to discuss, release, or exchange information contained in or related to this form, or release information from the student’s education and medical records concerning the request for registration in distance learning for the referenced student due to COVID-19.

Can a family member’s health condition(s) be documented as justification for the request for distance learning?

No. Only the student’s physical or mental health condition that requires distance learning, as documented on the medical certification form by a licensed physician or nurse practitioner, may be used to approve registration in distance learning due to COVID-19.

For how long is the medical certification considered active?

As articulated on page 1 of the form, the medical certification is considered active for the approval of distance learning for one academic semester (or two terms, for schools on a quarterly schedule). Families are required to submit an updated medical certification form in the event of any ongoing medical need requiring distance learning beyond one semester.

Can pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students approved for distance learning participate in in-person extracurricular activities or athletics?

No. Pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students approved for distance learning may not participate in any in-person activities at the school, including extracurricular and athletic activities.

What deadline has been communicated to families and medical providers for submission of the form?

LEAs should define and communicate to families their own deadlines for submission of the medical certification form.

Can a family request distance learning after this initial deadline?

Yes, with appropriate documentation. As students may newly enroll or develop medical conditions that require distance learning throughout the school year, LEAs should plan for additional opportunities for families to submit the medical certification form and register their student in distance learning beyond the initial deadline articulated above.

Can a family rescind its request for distance learning mid-semester?

This decision will be made at the discretion of the LEA/school. Schools are encouraged to allow their students to return to in-person learning as soon as their operations allow and as allowed by a student’s healthcare provider. Any student wishing to transition mid-semester from distance to in-person learning should submit documentation from their healthcare provider clearing them to return mid-semester to in-person activities, or as otherwise directed by their LEA/school.

Can LEAs incorporate other paths to allow families to be approved for distance learning in the 2021-22 school year?

No. The only path for families to be approved for distance learning due to COVID-19 in a District public or public charter school is via the submission of a COVID-19 Medical Consent and Certification for Distance Learning form.

Will LEAs be asked to report to OSSE regarding students that have submitted medical certifications?

LEAs and schools should retain all records related to medical certifications and their acceptance for at least three years and must be prepared to disclose such records to OSSE, external auditors and other District agencies, upon request, for the purposes of auditing and verification. LEAs and schools must report attendance for students participating in distance learning in accordance with OSSE guidance.