



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

COVID-19 Medical Consent & Certification for Distance Learning Frequently Asked Questions for Families

(Issued Nov. 9, 2021)

[I believe my child needs distance learning for the 2021-22 school year due to COVID-19. How do I register?](#)

Due to the critical benefits of in-person learning and the robust health and safety protocols in place in our schools to support the wellbeing of students, staff and families, distance learning in the 2021-22 school year will only be available to students in specific circumstances. Eligible students include those in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade who meet one of the following criteria:

- 1) Have a documented health condition that *requires* distance learning due to COVID-19; *or*
- 2) Are ineligible for a vaccine authorized for use in the United States to prevent COVID-19 *and* a healthcare provider has recommended distance learning due to a health condition that places the student or a household member at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19; *or*
- 3) Student's parent(s) or guardian(s) have been reported to the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) or the Family Court Social Services Division of the District of Columbia Courts (FCSSD) due to possible educational neglect of the student.

Families must submit either the *COVID-19 Medical Consent and Certification for Distance Learning* ("medical certification form") or the *Request for Distance Learning for Students Possibly Subject to Educational Neglect* ("Educational Neglect form") to be considered.

[What information must be included in the *COVID-19 Medical Consent and Certification for Distance Learning*?](#)

Students requesting distance learning for the 2021-22 school year due to a health condition of the student or a household member must submit a complete the appropriate *COVID-19 Medical Consent and Certification for Distance Learning* form ("medical certification form"). All sections of the form must be completed for the form to be considered.

[Why is there a pathway for parent/guardians who have been referred to District agencies for educational neglect?](#)

In order to support education continuity during the pandemic, the District will permit students whose parent(s) or guardian(s) have been reported to the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) or the Family

Court Social Services Division of the District of Columbia Courts (FCSSD) due to possible educational neglect of the student to attend school through distance learning should the school and LEA have the space to accommodate them. City Administrator's Order No. 2021-6 establishes the process by which a local education agency may provide remote instruction to a student whose parent(s) or guardian(s) have been reported to the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) or the Family Court Social Services Division of the District of Columbia Courts (FCSSD) due to possible educational neglect of the student.

Will all medical certification and Educational Neglect forms be accepted?

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and schools should consider for distance learning any student that submits a complete and legible medical certification that (1) explains how a student's health condition requires the student's participation in distance learning due to COVID-19, *or* (2) documents that a student who is ineligible for a vaccine authorized for use in the United States to prevent COVID-19 is recommended to participate in distance learning due to a student's or household member's health condition that places the individual at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19. LEAs and schools will also accept the Educational Neglect form as another path to eligibility for distance learning.

Students with a medical condition that *requires* distance learning must be accepted for distance learning. For the remaining three eligibility categories, should more families request distance learning in the 2021-22 school year than there are available seats, LEAs and schools will need to determine which student(s) receive the available seat(s) in distance learning. To support LEAs and schools them in making that determination and providing distance learning to students with a need and a high likelihood of success, LEAs and schools should review the parent's/guardian's response to the questions in Part IV of the medical certification form or Part II of the Educational Neglect form.

My child has a medical need for home or hospital instruction, unrelated to COVID-19. What forms do I complete?

Families seeking Home and Hospital Instruction should follow the LEA's/school's standard policies and procedures to request Home and Hospital Instruction.

Are versions of the medical certification form that OSSE released in May still valid?

Yes. Students previously enrolled in distance learning via the medical certification form and process released by OSSE in May 2021 may continue to participate in distance learning for the entirety of school year 2021-22 and do not need to submit another form.

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

Yes. The medical certification for health condition of a *household member* must be used to request distance learning for a student due to a health condition of a household member. Note, under this eligibility criterion, only those students that are ineligible for a vaccine authorized for use in the United States to prevent COVID-19 are eligible for consideration; this eligibility status must be documented by the student's healthcare provider in Part III of the medical certification form.

Can students approved for distance learning participate in in-person extracurricular activities or athletics?

No. Students approved for distance learning may not participate in any in-person activities at the school, including extracurricular and athletic activities.

There are new criteria added to the updated medical certification forms related to eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine. To whom do those apply?

A student whose healthcare provider *recommended* distance learning because of a health condition that puts the student or their household member at high risk for severe illness from COVID-19 is only eligible for distance learning if the student is *ineligible* for a vaccine that is authorized for use in the United States to prevent COVID-19. Healthcare professionals must document in Part III of the new medical certification forms the reason for the student's vaccine ineligibility, including age, medical condition, or other (which must be defined).

A student whose healthcare provider documented that the student has a health condition that *requires* distance learning may be considered for distance learning regardless of whether the student is eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.

The COVID-19 vaccine is now authorized for children down to age 5 years. Does this mean that the new medical certification forms and process for students whose healthcare provider *recommends* distance learning are only applicable to students less than age 5?

Generally yes, except if the student aged 5 or older has another documented reason for ineligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine. See FAQ above for more detail and documentation requirements.

For how long are the medical certification and Educational Neglect forms considered active?

The updated medical certification and Educational Neglect forms considered active for the approval of distance learning for the entire 2021-22 school year. Further, students approved for distance learning under the original OSSE medical certification form and process are now automatically eligible for distance learning through the entire 2021-22 school year.

By when do I need to submit this form to be approved for distance learning in the 2021-22 school year?

DC Public Schools and each public charter LEA will define and communicate their own deadlines for submission of the completed medical certification and Educational Neglect form. Families should contact their child's school to confirm specific dates.

If my child is approved for distance learning, is it possible to switch to in-person learning mid-year?

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 approved for distance learning under the medical certification process that wishes to transition mid-year to in-person learning should submit documentation from their

healthcare provider clearing them to return mid-year to in-person activities, or as otherwise directed by their LEA/school.

What happens if I enroll my child at a new school or develops a new medical condition, or if our family is referred to CFSA for possible educational neglect, after the deadline above?

Families should contact their child's school to learn about opportunities to register a student in distance learning after the deadline above.

I have questions. Whom should I contact?

Families with questions about enrolling in distance learning, including the medical certification and Educational Neglect form, should contact their school.

For resources and information about the District of Columbia Government's coronavirus (COVID-19) response and recovery efforts, please visit coronavirus.dc.gov.