



District of Columbia  
Office of the State Superintendent of Education

# **SERVING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES DURING PERIODS OF REMOTE OR BLENDED LEARNING**

LEA Toolkit

May 2020

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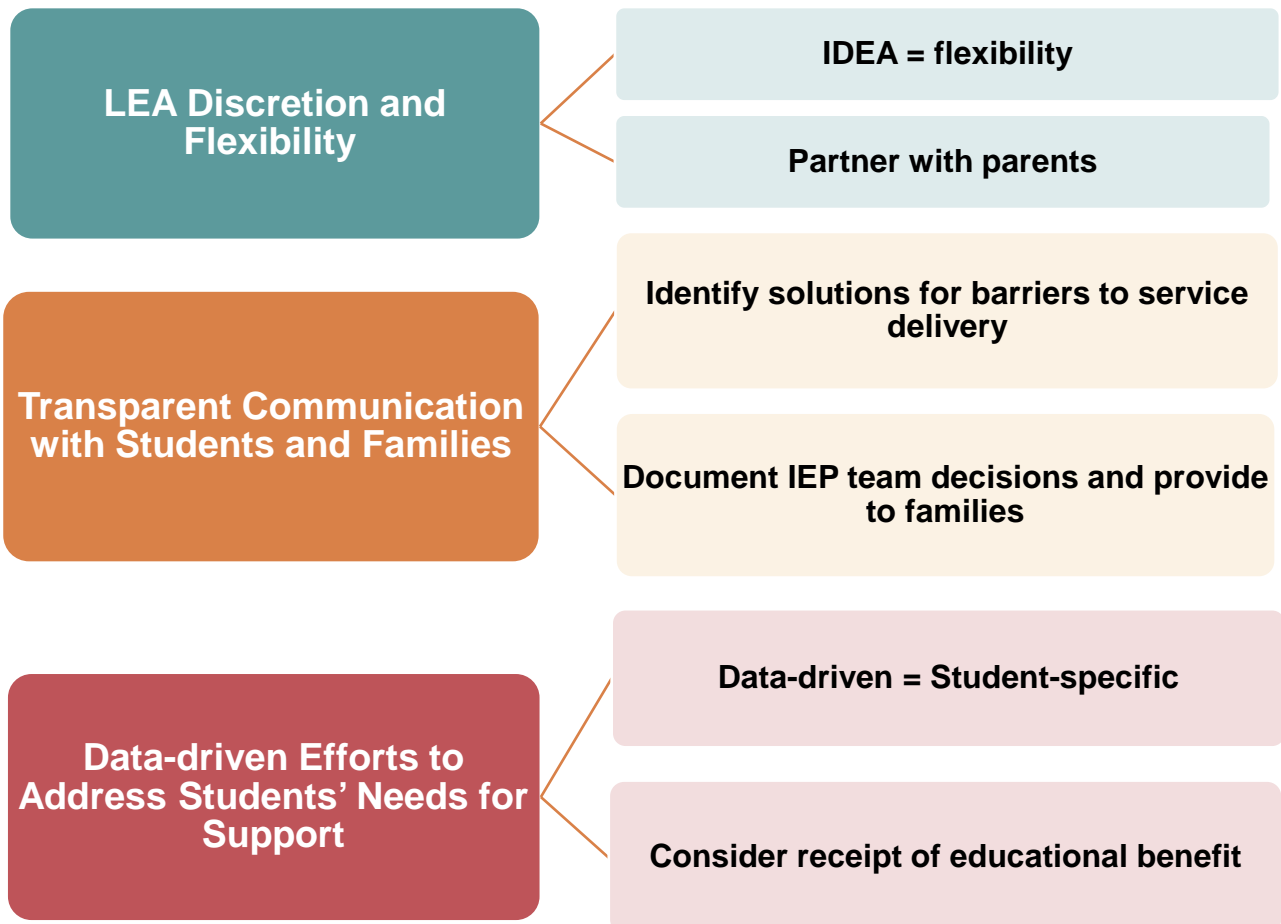
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## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide foundational guidance and concrete, actionable resources for local education agencies (LEAs) as they establish and implement policies and procedures for remote and/or blended learning contexts that are consistent with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirements.

## Key Principles of Special Education Service Provision

The key principles of special education service provision shared here are founded in guidance provided by the US Department of Education (USED) and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). Throughout this toolkit, special education points of contact will find links to this foundational guidance. It is important that you and your LEA's leadership are familiar with these documents as they should guide your decision making and serve as a foundation for transparent discussions with families.

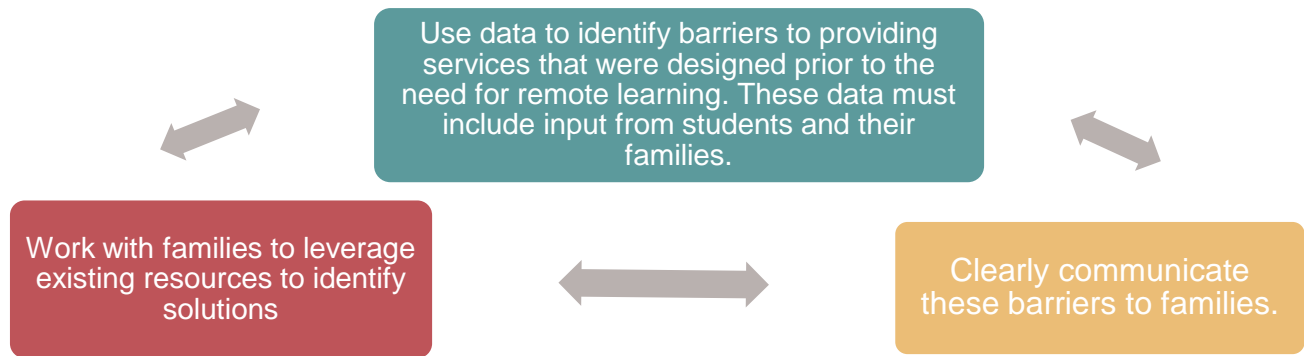


## Balancing LEA Discretion and Flexibility

IDEA allows for the flexibility required to generate novel solutions. In guidance provided on March 21, 2020, USED recognized that the determination of how free appropriate public education (FAPE) is to be provided may need to be different in this time of unprecedented national emergency ([USED Supplemental Fact Sheet](#), p. 2). LEAs enjoy broad discretion, provided their actions are consistent with IDEA requirements. In the absence of federal or local guidance, LEAs are charged with establishing policies and procedures consistent with IDEA requirements. (OSSE FAQs (3/25/2020) (4/15/2020), p. 1) While LEAs have the discretion to be flexible, they must continue to partner with parents ([USED Supplemental Fact Sheet](#), p. 4-5; [OSSE FAQ \(3/25/2020\)](#), Q8). Now, more than ever before, they are truly our co-teachers. Likewise, LEAs must continue to ensure team decisions are based on data that describe the current circumstances of each individual student ([OSSE FAQ 4/15/2020](#), Q2).

### Challenge: Working with Families to Develop Flexible, Creative, Individualized Approaches to Service Provision

In order to successfully partner with families to develop approaches to service provision that are appropriate for remote and/or blending learning contexts and address each student’s unique needs as circumstances continue to shift, LEAs must:



#### Solution 1: Use Data to Identify Barriers to Service Provision

- The [Sample Student Data Tool and User Guide](#) allows you to collect and analyze data regarding student engagement and progress, service delivery and communication with families all in one place.

#### Solution 2: Clearly Communicate Barriers to Families

- Use the [Sample Service Adaptation Worksheet](#) to guide and document IEP Team decision-making around service delivery in the remote learning context.
- Use the [Accommodation Adaptation Matrix](#) to identify potential ways that students’ accommodations can be modified for the remote learning context.

### Solution 3: Leverage Existing Resources to Identify Solutions

- There is no need to reinvent the wheel. Use the [Serving Students with Disabilities During Periods of Remote or Blended Learning: Promising Practice Resource Matrix](#) to find promising solutions shared by experts in the field.

## Ensuring Transparency and Collaboration

### **LEAs should clearly communicate barriers to service delivery and work with families to identify solutions.**

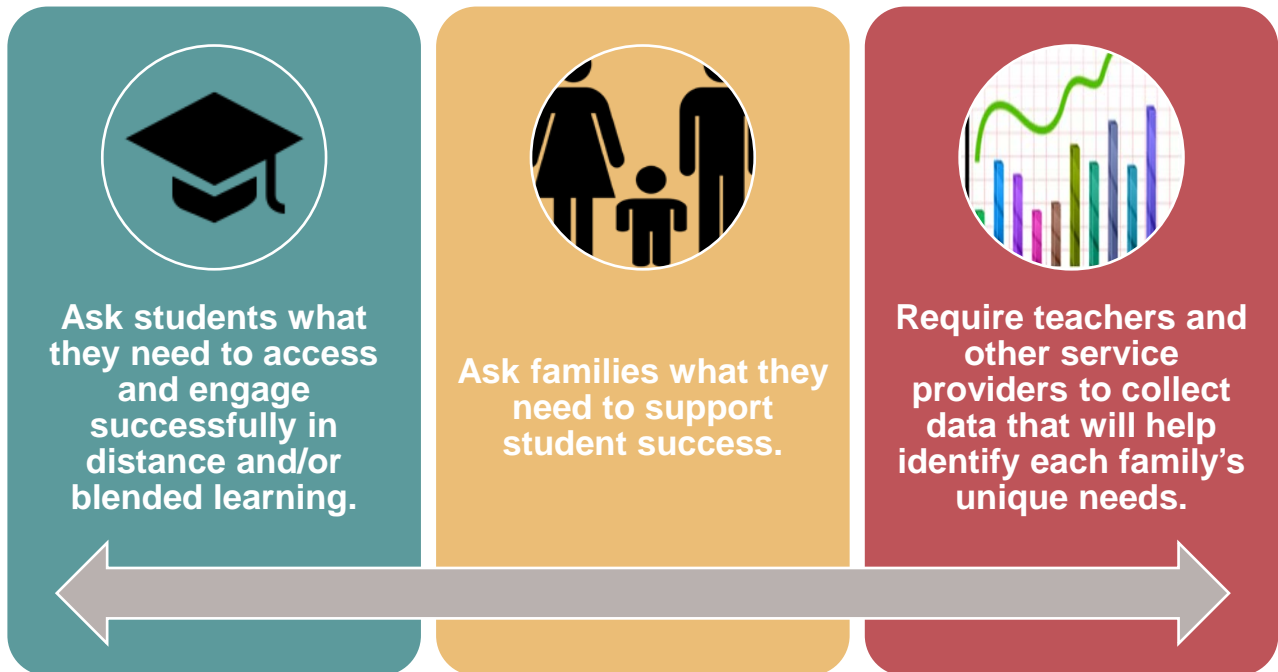
Consideration of alternative means of providing supports is a task for the IEP team that can be accomplished through the IEP Amendment process ([OSSE FAQ 3/25/2020](#), Q7; [OSSE IEP Amendment Policy](#)); ([OSSE FAQ \(4/15/2020\)](#),Q2). To support effective collaboration, LEAs should consider practices that increase parent engagement by communicating that partnering with parents is a priority:

- Ensure parents receive contact information their special education point-of-contact for scheduling and other questions. Consider making a back-up contact available.
- Seek to identify mutually agreed upon appointment times.
- Provide options for parents to choose from when scheduling.

As always, LEAs should use Prior Written Notice to document IEP Team decisions about extensions, including the flexibilities considered and determined unavailable at this time, and any mutually agreed to extensions of time. ([OSSE FAQ \(4/15/2020\)](#) Q6). Likewise, LEAs should document student related service **refusal**. ([OSSE FAQ \(3/25/2020\)](#)) Q4).

### **Challenge: Determining Each Family's Needs for Support**

LEAs can use universal design to plan support for families and work to anticipate barriers families may face in receiving information, communicating their preferences and concerns, and collaborating with school staff remotely. In order to determine individual families' needs for support, LEAs should engage students, their families, and the educators who serve them.



### Solution: Gather Input from Students, Families, Teachers, and Other Providers

Use the Sample Input Surveys below to gather information that feeds directly into the Sample Student Data Tool.

- [Sample Student Input Survey](#)
- [Sample Family Input Survey](#)
- [Sample Educator Input Survey](#)

As an alternative, use the Sample Interview Forms below to gather information by mail, email, or phone. You can enter the data into the survey form upon receipt to keep all of your data in one place.

- [Sample Student Interview Form](#)
- [Sample Family Interview Form](#)
- [Sample Educator Interview Form](#)

## Challenge: Identifying Solutions to Address Gaps in Access or Readiness to Partner for Service Delivery

In order to mitigate regression, promote academic recovery, and support student progress during periods of remote and/or blended learning, LEAs should work proactively to address gaps in access to technology or readiness to partner with schools to provide instruction or other services at home.

Establish a tiered system to ensure communication with and support for ALL families.

Use remote engagement data to help identify families who may need assistance to obtain devices or access technology or serve as instructional partners.

Consider Using a Distance Learning Family Collaboration Protocol to Develop Unique Supports

### Solution 1: Adapt Universal Family Engagement Strategies for the Remote Context

Use the [Sample Remote Family Engagement Brainstorming Tool](#) to reconsider your family engagement efforts and events through the lens of remote engagement.

### Solution 2: Use the Sample Student Data Tool to Develop Tiered Supports

Use the [Sample Student Data Tool and User Guide](#) and the [Tiered Supports Snapshot](#) to develop individualized supports for families who demonstrate the greatest need.

## Developing Data-driven Supports

As always, to meet their obligations under the IDEA, LEAs must offer each student receiving special education services “an IEP reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child’s circumstances.” (Endrew, 2017, p. 16) This calculation must be driven by student-specific data. In circumstances that cause unanticipated interruptions to instruction or shifts to remote or blended models of instruction and/or service delivery, IEP teams must use data to review the **impact of the lapse in services** for **each student** with a disability and to consider receipt of educational benefit ([OSSE FAQ, \(3/25/2020\)](#), Q11; [OSEP Guidance A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4](#), [USED Supplemental Fact Sheet](#) p. 2, [OSSE FAQ \(4/15/2020\)](#), Q3)

## Challenge: Collaborating with Families to Ensure Students Are Available for Instruction, Service, and Ongoing Assessment

Solution 1: Gather Input from Students and Families Regarding Their Availability

- Use the information gathered using the [Sample Family Input Survey](#) or the [Sample Family Interview Form](#) when scheduling student services. Align provider availability with family preference to the best of your ability.

Solution 2: Gather Input from Teachers and Other Providers Regarding Service Provision

- Use the information gathered using the [Sample Weekly Service Tracker](#) to review service provision schedules, document services provided or refused, and identify families who might need more support.

## Challenge: Preparing to Consider Individual Student Receipt of Educational Benefit

The primary purpose of the tools shared in this document is to assist LEAs in using student-specific data for the purpose of developing, implementing, and reviewing the efficacy of evidence-based, individualized supports for students with disabilities. The data that informs student service will also be useful as you consider receipt of educational benefit on a student-by-student basis. Diminished educational benefit could result from extended school closure, IEP services that could not be provided remotely, delay in provision of services, or student’s unavailability to receive services ([OSEP Guidance A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4](#), [USED Supplemental Fact Sheet](#) p. 2) ([OSSE FAQ \(4/15/2020\) Q3](#)).

Solution: Use This Toolkit

Consideration	Suggested Data Source
Has one or more extended school closures occurred?	School Calendar or Notices of Operating Status <a href="#">Sample Educator Input Survey</a>
Are there services in the student’s IEP that could not be delivered remotely?	<a href="#">Sample Service Adaptation Worksheet</a>
Has the provision of services been delayed?	<a href="#">Sample Student Input Survey</a> <a href="#">Sample Family Input Survey</a> <a href="#">Sample Educator Input Survey</a>
Has the student been available to receive services?	<a href="#">Sample Service Adaptation Worksheet</a> <a href="#">Sample Educator Input Survey</a>



## Bringing It All Together

We hope that the guidance and resources provided in this toolkit help you to ensure that the policies and procedures you establish for serving students with disabilities in remote and/or blended learning contexts are consistent with IDEA requirements. In the table below, you will find a high-level summary of the key principles of special education service provision and key takeaways for each, as well as links to the tools that will be most useful as you align your policies and procedures to each key principle.

KEY PRINCIPLE	PRIMARY TAKE-AWAY	ASSOCIATED RESOURCES
LEA Discretion and Flexibility	IDEA = flexibility	<a href="#">Sample Service Adaptation Worksheet</a> <a href="#">Accommodation Adaptation Matrix</a>
	Partner with parents	<a href="#">Sample Family Input Survey</a> <a href="#">Sample Family Interview Form</a> <a href="#">Sample Remote Family Engagement Brainstorming Tool</a> <a href="#">Tiered Supports Snapshot</a>
Transparent Communication with Students and Families	Identify solutions for barriers to service delivery	<a href="#">Serving Students with Disabilities During Periods of Remote or Blended Learning: Promising Practice Resource Matrix</a>
	Document IEP team decisions and provide to families	<a href="#">Sample Service Adaptation Worksheet</a>
Data-driven Efforts to Address Students' Needs for Support	Data-driven = Student-specific	<a href="#">Sample Student Data Tool and User Guide</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Sample Student Input Survey</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Sample Student Interview Form</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Sample Educator Input Survey</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Sample Educator Interview Form</a></li> </ul>
	Consider receipt of educational benefit	The data you collect using the tools below can form the basis for IEP team consideration of receipt of educational benefit: <a href="#">Service Adaptation Worksheet</a> <a href="#">Sample Weekly Service Tracker</a> <a href="#">Sample Student Data Tool</a> <a href="#">Tiered Supports Snapshot</a>