



Information provided by the Disability Law Center of Alaska on 3-13-20

The information is not intended to be legal advice. It is a Public Education resource.

The best source of information for changes related to school district closures or service changes are the school districts themselves, or the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.

During a short school closure, such as the Anchorage decision to extend spring break, a school district may decide not to provide services to students, just as services were not provided over the scheduled spring break week – although some students whose IEPs require special education services during school breaks have been getting those services.

However, this situation is evolving, and special education requirements may change if there are further decisions to postpone school or to move public education to a distance learning model to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Schools remain obligated to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to students with disabilities during a longer-term school closure. Also, during a closure like the current temporary closure in Anchorage, a district may provide home instructional materials, internet-based lessons, or instructional phone calls to ensure continuity of learning.

However, if the school closure lasts for more than 10 days, this may be considered a change of placement and the IEP Team should meet to discuss an appropriate alternative method of instruction that will allow the student to make progress on their goals and objectives while not attending school. Even before a ten-day closure is announced, parents can request an IEP Team meeting to discuss the need for Special Education and Related Services to be provided during the closure. Parents must have the opportunity to participate in IEP Team meetings by conference call or video conference during this time.

In the event that the school moves to online instruction for students, they must plan to deliver instruction to students with disabilities as well. If the student may not benefit from online instruction, the IEP team must discuss alternative methods to ensure that the student can make appropriate progress.

If a student is required to stay home from school on the advice of a physician for an extended period of time, the IEP Team should meet to discuss the need for alternative methods of instruction, such as home-based services or online approaches. In the case of an extended absence, the IEP Teams should discuss compensatory education to make up for the time and instruction that's being lost or postponed.

The United States Department of Education and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have issued further guidance about providing services to children with disabilities during the Coronavirus outbreak. That guidance can be found at:  
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/qa-covid-19-03-12-2020.pdf>.

Additionally, the best source of information for changes related to school district closures or service changes are the school districts themselves, or the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.