

Preparing Your Child with Disabilities for Distance Learning

Preparing to support your child with disabilities for distance learning may seem overwhelming right now. Here are some tips to help you and your child as you transition to this new educational environment.

If you have the need for additional equipment or services (for example, you don't have reliable internet service), contact your Individualized Education Program (IEP) case manager or 504 coordinator and copy your school district's director of special education to request these items and services as accommodations or related services. If the school is using work packets, you may need to request a device to assist in work completion.

- ✓ Make sure you and your child both understand how to use the device or work packet and learning features.

Device features to understand may include:

- Text read aloud to your child (text-to-speech)
 - Timer to remind your child to focus
 - Dictation of essays and answers into the device
 - Calendar and homework organizers
 - Asking of questions or other participation during instructions
 - Recording of instructions in case you or your child need to review the information
 - Note taking during class or while reading
 - Closed captioning
- ✓ Make a list of your child's accommodations and send each teacher an email asking how they will be provided or for direction about how you can assist in providing these accommodations, as well as other ways you can support your child's transition to this learning model. If appropriate, you can agree to provide new accommodations or modifications.
 - ✓ Ask teachers or case managers the best way to communicate with them (email, phone, etc.) and their hours of availability.
 - ✓ Send an email to the principal asking who to contact if you experience technical difficulties or need technical support.

Designate a learning area

- ✓ Find a quiet space with minimal distractions in your home.
- ✓ Equip the space with a desk or small table and some storage for supplies (a box will do).
- ✓ Provide something to place the computer on if your child prefers to stand (a sturdy box will do).
- ✓ Provide a chair (one that allows movement will assist with focus).
- ✓ Organize the area with the device, work packets, other supplies, and textbooks.
- ✓ Provide fidgets, a water bottle, and gum or light snacks to assist with focus.
- ✓ Everything school-related should be kept in this area and not throughout the house.

- ✓ Help your child make a daily schedule (class time, lunch, etc.).
- ✓ Help them set alarms on their phone or other device for reminders.

Before learning time

- ✓ Keep a daily routine: have them wake up and go to bed at the same time each day.
- ✓ A morning routine of bathing, dressing, and eating will help them prepare to learn.

During learning time

- ✓ Check in with your child and be available to help them if they become distracted.
- ✓ Make sure your child takes periodic breaks throughout the day, such as walking around your home for five to ten minutes.

After learning time

- ✓ Allow your child to continue to do homework in the same location as they did while attending in-person school.
- ✓ Return all homework supplies to the designated learning area afterward.
- ✓ Shut down and close the device to avoid misuse and hacking of the camera or microphone.
- ✓ Send an email to the teacher and case manager — call or text if they prefer — about any struggles your child had with homework or classwork during their learning day.
 - Please keep emails, texts, and calls short and to the point. Try to limit them to one per teacher each day.
 - Prepare by making a list of concerns before you contact the teacher.

Be patient and remember this is a new learning environment for the teachers as well as the students and parents.

For additional information, contact PACER Center at (952) 838-9000 or PACER@PACER.org.