

# Preparing for the IEP Team Meeting to Discuss Special Education Recovery Services and Supports for Your Child

A new Minnesota law requires school districts and charter schools to invite parents/guardians of students with disabilities to an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team meeting to **discuss whether special education recovery services are needed to make up for lack of progress or loss of learning or skills due to disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic**. Your child's IEP team is required to send you an invitation to this meeting as soon as practicable, but no later than December 1, 2021. This tool will help you prepare to actively participate in this meeting and work with the school district to determine next steps forward based on your child's unique experiences and needs. You can also contact your child's IEP case manager and request a meeting to discuss recovery services and supports.

## **Before the meeting**.....

Think about how the pandemic affected your child's education. The questions below will help you come up with ideas. Write down specific examples showing how you know what you know.

### **Did your child struggle to make progress toward their IEP goals or in their general education classes during the pandemic?**

- What did their progress reports show? Do you agree?
- Do you have information to share from your own observations that is different from what some progress reports show?

### **Did your child lose skills or learning during the pandemic? Think about:**

- Academics (such as reading and math)
- Social development (like staying connected to friends)
- Emotional and behavioral skills (such as having strategies to calm down)
- Communication (such as using their augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device to talk to people at school and at home)
- Adaptive functioning (like dressing or eating independently)

### **Were there services in your child's IEP that they did not receive or could not access while schools were providing instruction through distance/hybrid learning models? Think about:**

- What specific services did they miss?
- How has your child shown you the impact of missing those services?

### **Is your child struggling in new or different ways? For example:**

- Are they avoiding school or homework when they didn't previously?
- Are they experiencing anxiety, depression, or other social emotional needs for the first time?
- Are they struggling more to stay focused in class or while doing homework?
- Do they feel lost in a certain subject that used to be easier for them?
- Are teachers telling you they have new concerns about your child?

**Were there important reasons why your child couldn't fully participate in school during the pandemic?**

For example:

- Lack of access to technology for distance learning
- Parents working outside the home and not available all day to help with distance learning
- Disruptive experiences, such as losses in your family, changes to family income or your housing situation, or illness in your family
- Other trauma your child experienced

**What would your ideal plan be for helping your child catch up? What do you think would help them the most?** For example:

- Tutoring in a general education subject?
- An increase in services that are currently listed in their IEP?
- New services added to their IEP?
- Counseling or other supports for their overall wellness or mental health?
- Compensatory services (for more information, see: [Understanding Minnesota Special Education Recovery Services and Supports](#))
- Accommodations to support their participation in an extracurricular activity to help them get excited about school again?
- Daily morning check-ins at school with a trusted adult?
- An internship in a community-based setting doing work that truly interests them?

**Email Template**

A strong strategy to set the table at your IEP team meeting for a productive discussion is to email the IEP Case Manager before your meeting and share your concerns. Use this template to help you do that, selecting the appropriate descriptions and filling in the blanks to describe your child's specific needs.

*The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on my child's access to a free appropriate public education. My child:*

- *Did not make progress toward their IEP goal(s) in the area(s) of \_\_\_\_\_.*
- *Did not make progress in the general education curriculum in the subject(s) of \_\_\_\_\_.*
- *Lost learning or skills in the area(s) of \_\_\_\_\_.*
- *Missed \_\_\_\_\_ hours of \_\_\_\_\_ IEP services since the start of the pandemic.*
- *Could not access these areas of services or supports during distance/hybrid learning: \_\_\_\_\_, due to \_\_\_\_\_.*
- *Experienced this loss (or, these losses) during the pandemic which disrupted their education: \_\_\_\_\_.*

*I look forward to working collaboratively with the rest of the IEP team to find the appropriate solutions that will help my child address these losses and catch up.*

**During the meeting**.....

Share your expert knowledge of your child. Use questions like the examples below to work collaboratively with the rest of the IEP team and find creative solutions that will help your child catch up.

**I appreciate having a voice in these important decisions about my child. I watched my child's lack of progress and loss of learning and skills during the pandemic. The impact is clear to me.**

- What information can I give you that would be helpful to our discussion?
- What kinds of documentation would it be helpful for me to share to help us have a productive conversation?

**I have concerns about my child’s new needs in the area(s) of \_\_\_\_\_.**

- How can we gather information about their new needs?
- What kinds of assessments would you recommend?
- Should we talk about a reevaluation for my child?

**I’ve thought a lot about what kinds of services and supports would help my child make up for what they lost. These are my ideas for recovery services and supports for my child. (Talk about your ideal plan.)**

- What ideas do all of you have?
- What services and supports do you think would give back to my child what they missed?
- What services and supports do you think would help my child catch up?

**I realize the Minnesota law gives us many options for providing recovery services and supports, including but not limited to extended school year services, additional IEP services, compensatory services, or other appropriate services. I also know that whatever we decide together must be included in my child’s IEP.**

- How do you think it is most appropriate that we write the recovery services and supports for my child into their IEP?
- What are your suggestions?

**I understand that it’s also important for us to think about the times of the day, days of the week, or times of the year that are most appropriate for my child to receive recovery services.**

- Since my child has more energy and can be more engaged in learning in the morning (afternoon), what options are there for providing these services we’ve discussed to my child before (or after) school?
- What possibilities are there for providing these services during the summer?
- What other providers, in addition to district staff, could most appropriately provide these services?

**My understanding is that recovery services should be ongoing until we determine as an IEP team that they are no longer necessary to address my child’s lack of progress or loss of learning or skills due to disruptions related to the pandemic.**

- How will we know my child has caught up?
- How can we measure that?

## **After the meeting**

You are not required to sign anything at your IEP team meeting. Whether you reach an agreement with the rest of the IEP team that your child is eligible for recovery services and supports or not, after the meeting the school district must send you a **Prior Written Notice (PWN)** explaining their proposal or refusal of any significant changes to your child’s IEP, along with a Parental Consent/Objection form which protects your right to sign your consent or objection to the PWN within 14 calendar days.

If you have any questions or concerns about the school district proposal or refusal of special education recovery services and supports for your child, reach out to:

- Your child’s IEP Case Manager
- **The Director of Special Education Services for your school district**
- A PACER Parent Advocate, at (952) 838-9000 or [PACER@PACER.org](mailto:PACER@PACER.org)
- The Minnesota Department of Education, at (651) 582-8689 or [mde.assistance-compliance@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.assistance-compliance@state.mn.us)

## **Resources**

- Full text of the **Minnesota Special Education Recovery Services & Supports Law** - scroll to line 40.1
- **Use Questions to Find Answers:** A guide for parents of children receiving special education services
- **Top 10 Tips:** Ideas to improve parent-to-professional communication from PACER parent advocates
- **Minnesota Dispute Resolution Guide**, a mobile-friendly overview of your options for resolving disagreements with the school district