

# **Special Education Services During COVID-19 Infants and Toddlers Recovery (Reopening) Plan for 2020-2021**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Kent County Public Schools and the Kent County Infants and Toddlers program provided services to all families through a virtual platform. In light of the current circumstances, IEPs and IFSPs with parental input were amended to provide services. All services were provided virtually to help ensure the health and safety of staff, families, and children. Our children were always our TOP concern during this pandemic.

On June 10, 2020, when Governor Hogan and Dr. Salmon, Superintendent of Maryland Public Schools, announced that schools systems may now begin to bring small groups of students and staff into school buildings, planning immediately began to determine how KCPS and KCI&T would continue to provide services to our students with disabilities. Through collaboration with the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) and Kent County Department of Social Services (KCDSS), Kent County Public Schools (KCPS) developed plans to service students with disabilities to meet their IEP and IFSP goals and objectives through virtual and face to face sessions after July 1, 2020. KCPS also brought in individual students into the school setting to complete assessments that were authorized prior to or during the pandemic.

Questionnaires and screenings were conducted prior to students being served face to face or before entering in the school setting through school based infants and toddlers services. All forms were sent to the central office in case contact tracing needed to take place. On July 22, 2020, Dr. Salmon announced that MSDE will extend flexibility to local school systems to determine reopening schools while instituting procedures and guidelines for in-person instruction.

During this phase of the pandemic, data will continue to be reviewed by the health officer of KCDH and representatives from KCPS and KCDSS to ensure that the health and safety of Kent County citizens, staff, and students are of the utmost priority when providing face to face services. However, KCPS recognizes that equity is an integral part of our reopening plan and not all students benefited or engaged in virtual instruction. Some students who received special

education and/or related services were considered in our most at risk group and could benefit from face to face services to receive their Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), however, some students with disabilities do receive FAPE through virtual instruction and make progress in the general education curriculum.

In order to determine students whom may be considered at a higher risk of not receiving FAPE, case managers will complete a risk form (Appendix A) identifying key factors that help to determine those who may not have received FAPE or did not benefit from to those who did not engage in online learning during the Spring of 2020. This form will be reviewed with every parent, where parents will also have input in how their child did with virtual learning during the Spring and if circumstances have changed in their home. Although a student may be found at a higher risk of not receiving FAPE, parental input will be the determining factor if a child does or does not receive instruction face to face. If a parent does not feel comfortable with sending their child to school during the pandemic, all services will be provided virtually.

After each case manager completes the risk ratio form, a meeting will be scheduled with each parent to review the form and determine how services will be implemented until schools open completely for all students. If a parent does not feel comfortable with their child receiving face to face instruction, the child will receive instruction virtually. The health and safety of staff and students is KCPS top concern, therefore, any child who has severe health concerns that would be significantly impacted by the virus will be offered services virtually.

IEP meetings (formal and informal) will be held for each student prior to the start of SY 2020. The team will consist of the parent, special educator, any related service providers, child (if applicable), and a general educator who taught the student in the previous year. This team will review the risk form and together determine if the child needs face to face services or virtual services to receive FAPE. The approved IEP prior to the COVID pandemic will be reviewed to determine what can and cannot be done during this phase of the pandemic. Of course, all services in the approved Pre-COVID IEP will be reverted to if schools open fully during the life of the IEP.

If in person or face to face services are deemed necessary for FAPE, KCPS buildings will be open to provide services for four hours a day Monday through Thursday. While the delivery

mode, intensity, and frequency of services may vary from student to student, services will be offered at the student's home school in small groups of less than 15 students and teachers in a classroom. Due to the need of services needing to be consistent for some special programs offered through KCPS, the following schedule will be used as a recommendation for classroom instruction as outlined in the IEP:

- Students with disabilities in the language support, life skills, academic support classrooms, and behavior support programs (including the Kent Alternative Program) will attend school for 4 hours per day Monday through Thursday with support from the special educator and instructional assistant.
- Students with disabilities who are found 80% or above using the Rubric for the Risk Form will be brought into school for up to four days per week, Monday through Thursday, for up to four hours per day with support from the special educator and instructional assistant.
- Other students may be found needing face to face or in person services based upon needs on the risk form and determined by the IEP team with support from the special education and/or instructional assistant.
- Students may be found eligible for related services through virtual or face to face services based upon the risk form even if they are not found eligible for face to face services in classroom instruction.

All staff will engage in cleaning procedures between student visits and at the end of the day. This includes using approved cleaning wipes to wipe down all materials, tables, and chairs used. Frequent handwashing is encouraged for students and staff, along with using hand sanitizer. Masks and gloves will be required of students and staff, with changing masks between visits or services. Each room that has been used during the school day for these services will be cleaned and sanitized by staff using approved cleaning procedures. This will be done after all students have departed for the day.

Some students can receive FAPE by accessing their special education and/or related services through a virtual means as determined by the IEP team. Those students may access their

special education and/or related services through using schoology, google classroom, or other virtual platforms where they will receive their specially designed instruction designed by the special educator to make progress in the general education curriculum. These schedules will vary based upon the individual needs of the students as outlined in the child's IEP and consist of utilizing the specially designed instruction the child needs to access and make progress in the curriculum. This may include:

- Break out rooms in small groups provided by a special education teacher or instructional assistant.
- Individually meeting with a special education teacher or instructional assistant.
- Teaching specific goals from the amended IEP that are foundational to the student's mastery of the general content.
- Assisting students to organize their projects and assignments.
- Working through a student's anxiety.
- Pre-teaching a concept that will be covered in the general content in the coming days utilizing SDI the child needs to access and make progress in the curriculum.
- Re-teaching a concept that was recently covered in the general content that proves difficult for the student.

General education and special education teachers will co-plan, co-teach, and co-assess students through the virtual platform used for instruction in the general education classroom. Instructional assistants and or special education teachers will support students with disabilities in these virtual classrooms.

### **IEP Meetings and Assessments**

Due to no extensions in timelines under IDEA, KCPS must meet all IDEA obligations to locate and find children eligible for special education services. Since the June 10, 2020 relaxation of restrictions, KCPS began assessing students face to face and assessments immediately after July 1, 2020. At this point, KCPS will continue to assess students in person to determine eligibility for special education and/or related services.

Precautions will be taken by staff and families to help prevent further transmission of the virus among students and staff. All testing will be completed in a school building located closest

to the child's home when possible. If transportation is needed to complete this testing, case managers must contact the Special Education Office to arrange these services. All participants must wear masks during the assessments and while in the school building. A plastic shield will also be placed between the assessor and student and social distancing is encouraged as appropriate. After all testing sessions, the examiner will wipe down all materials and areas with approved cleaning wipes. Students will not be allowed to travel the building alone. If a student needs to use the bathroom, the examiner must notify the custodial staff that the student traveled to a different part of the building to ensure that all cleaning procedures are followed.

IEP meetings will still be held virtually, unless parent asks to meet in person. The IEP chair will contact the parent to determine his/her preference. Parents will continue to receive all IEP documents as outlined under IDEA timelines. If parents have questions, these questions are to be directed to the Office of Special Education. Through the COVID pandemic, it is important that the IEP team collaborate with the parents/guardians on how to further support the student and if necessary, IEP meetings will be held to re-evaluate the child's circumstances to ensure that he/she is receiving FAPE.

### **PAATH Program (Promoting Adult Achievement through Transition and Health)**

Students in our PAATH Program in collaboration with Queen Anne's and Talbot Counties will have the opportunity to receive their virtual instruction at KCHS with the support from the special education teacher and instructional assistant. Students who do not attend face to face services will still have the ability to access this program with the support of the classroom teacher and instructional assistant. Students will continue to receive all components of the program, including life and wellness, work based learning, employment skill training and career development .

### **Transition Planning and Programming**

- All students ages fourteen and up will continue to receive transition assessments through the virtual setting to drive their transition planning process. Additionally, students will meet with the Transition Facilitator to discuss the assessments and receive coaching to learn advocating skills for themselves and their career goals and needs.

- Case Managers will continue to work with students to complete transition activities outlined in the student's IEP virtually or face to face if necessary.
- KCMS will offer an elective that focuses on career awareness and development to introduce students to the world of secondary transition.
- The Division of Rehabilitative Services (DORS) has paused all in person Pre-Employment Transition Service programs at KCHS which include Work Readiness and Work Based Learning. Paid Work Based Learning Program between KCPS and community partners will resume once DORS has reestablished in person services.
- KCHS will provide an extracurricular virtual work readiness program. In collaboration with the KCPS Career Technical Education (CTE) Department, a virtual job shadowing program will be offered to students to help individuals shape their career goals.

### **Services Plans and Parentally Placed Private School Students**

Students who are placed in private or parochial schools by parents may be eligible for services as outlined in the approved Parentally Placed Private School Students (PPPSS). These students will receive their services as outlined in their approved service plan either virtually or in person as determined by the IEP team. If the private school is not open for in person services or allowing outside community partners in their buildings, services may be provided at the child's home school or through a virtual platform.

### **Infants and Toddlers**

Beginning July 1, 2020, families were given the choice to resume services in person or remain virtual. Although it is still encouraged to provide services virtually when possible, KCPS, KCDSS, and KCHD recognize that some children need direct services from therapists and teachers. While multiple home visits can increase the risk of the virus being transmitted between homes and families, safety precautions were established and will remain to prevent possibly spreading the COVID-19 virus. All staff will be provided with Personal Protective Equipment (hand sanitizer, disposable and individual masks, sanitizing wipes, and gloves). Screening procedures and

monitoring of staff is essential during the delivery of instruction to prevent further transmission of the virus.

In effort to reduce the spread of the virus, when possible and appropriate, families will be encouraged to accept virtual services. KCPS and KCI&T staff will start each visit with the Evaluation of Personal Risk interview. This allows staff to make appropriate decisions about future face to face services and appropriate delivery models of services for our families. Any parent who does not complete this interview will not receive face to face services during this time, instead they will be offered a virtual visit. KCPS and KCI&T program will monitor staff exposure and all staff will complete a COVID-19 questionnaire, along with temperature checks, prior to beginning work or visits that day. Any staff member who does not feel well or becomes ill during their work day will not be permitted to work and will be sent home immediately.

While some services cannot be provided virtually and require face to face interactions, KCPS and KCI&T programs are encouraged to limit the number of staff in a home. If appropriate, the KCI&T interpreter will conduct all visits through a virtual or telephone service. To protect parents and staff, masks will be required during the delivery of services. Any child over the age of 2 will also be asked to wear a mask. To help families prepare for face to face visits and the importance of teaching children to wear masks, social stories and videos will be shared with families ahead of time. Social distancing (6 feet) will be encouraged as appropriate during visits.

After visits, staff will dispose of gloves and masks in plastic bags. A new mask is required to be put on between each visit. Staff will also use hand sanitizer when they are not able to use soap and water to properly wash their hands between visits. Cleaning wipes will also be provided for staff to wipe down any personal materials (books, pens, calendars, materials) and their cars where they or others frequently touch throughout the day.

At the end of each day, staff will submit all evaluations of personal risk forms to the KCPS Office of Special Education. Any concerns that staff should have about a home visit must be reported immediately to the Supervisor of Special Education. If needed, consultation with the Supervisor of Student Services and/or Human Resources will determine if future visits to the home should occur to protect the health and safety of staff and families.

