



COVID-19 & IDEA PART C EARLY INTERVENTION (EARLY START)

In March 2020, the US Dept of Education issued a document, “Questions and Answers on Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak.” It outlines states’ educational responsibilities to children with disabilities and their families, and to the staff serving these children.

This document summarizes information contained in the Q&A and information about early start. Special education is summarized separately.

Neither the Q&A referenced above nor this summary constitutes legal advice. The full document may be found at this link:

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/qa-covid-19-03-12-2020.pdf>.

Q: If the State’s lead agency for Early Start (ES) services is closed, will my child continue to receive ES services?

A: In California, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is considered the lead agency for ES services. Most children receive their ES case management from their local regional center. Some children receive their ES case management from their local school district. Even if a school district is the one doing the case management for your child, DDS is the lead agency. If DDS closes during the COVID-19 crisis, then your child will not receive ES services.

Q: If DDS is open but the agency who provides the direct ES services for my child is closed because there is a COVID-19 outbreak in the area, will my child continue to receive ES services?



A: If the ES provider is closed for health and safety reasons due to a local COVID-19 outbreak, your child will not receive ES services for as long as the provider is closed for health and safety reasons.

Q: If both DDS and my ES provider remain open, but the ES provider cannot provide services to my child in the usual location such as my home, how will ES services be provided?

A: The ES provider should find an alternate location or another way of providing ES services such as providing consultation to the parent.

Q: If the ES provider we usually have is closed or can't provide services for my child and other ES providers in my area are open, will my child receive ES services?

A: Your case manager, whether from the regional center or school district, should ensure that another agency provides ES services for your child.

Q: My child has COVID-19, will he or she continue to receive ES services?

A: Your child should continue to receive services, however the way they are provided will be different. Your case manager should work with you and the provider to arrange alternative ways for your child to be served such as providing consultation to you as the parent.

Q: What will happen if my child's ES services cannot be provided in the way they are described in my child's IFSP?

A: Everyone involved in your child's ES services (DDS, regional center or school district, ES provider) should work together with you to determine the best way to provide services for your child. They will consider what is in the best interest of your child, your family and providers including steps to take to ensure everyone's health and safety. DDS, the regional center or school



district, and the ES provider have a lot of flexibility in deciding how and where to provide ES services while the COVID-19 outbreak continues.

Q: What are some examples of how services might be provided during the COVID-19 crisis?

A: Two examples:

1. The agency that provides your child's ES services decides it is not safe to come to your home, but it is safe to serve your child face to face in another place like a clinic. Your child may be served temporarily at the clinic or other safe location.
2. If the service agency and/or you decide it is not safe to serve your child face to face, another way of providing services can be offered. Most likely the agency will provide you as the parent with consultation and support in doing the ES service with your child. This could be by phone, videoconference, or other electronic means.

Q: What happens with my child's IFSP and services when this crisis is over?

A: The IFSP team should meet to discuss if your child's needs have changed and if he or she will need extra services to make up for the ones lost (called "compensatory services"). Any changes must be documented in a new or modified IFSP.