

This letter was sent via email on April 2, 2020 from the HCPSS Family Support and Resource Center to families in HCPSS who have a student with an IEP or IFSP. Please check your email to make sure that you received it. We know that families will have many questions and concerns as the program rolls out. HCAS is working with the Department of Special Education and professional advisors to help address your questions and challenges as the program develops. Please feel free to reach out to us at [info@howard-autism.org](mailto:info@howard-autism.org) if you have any questions.

Dear Parents,

On behalf of your Department of Special Education (DSE) team, I want to provide additional updates about our effort to provide your child services and support during the implementation of the HCPSS Continuity of Learning plan. Staff returned to “virtual school” on Monday and training sessions are underway. We are all eager to reconnect with our students and families!

We know that families of students with Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) have many questions. The DSE have completed procedures for our special education teachers and providers to begin directly engaging with parents to discuss adhering to mandates in the Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) regulation and ensuring that your child is being supported during this closure. I discussed the federal and state guidance we are following in my previous letter that we have been using to determine and implement the most thoughtful and comprehensive Continuity of Learning Plan in Special Education or Early Intervention services to support your child. For students with IFSPs and IEPs, we will be working directly with each family to discuss individualized plans. More information on that process is included below.

We continue to work on the development of additional parent resources as well and will be sharing a list of helpful frequently asked questions. You will be able to access these items through the [HCPSS website](#) when they become available.

Given the transition to a new digital learning model, special education teachers and providers must become accustomed to this next phase. Therefore, we have taken a very measured and thorough approach to training staff who will be working directly with you to determine the services and supports for your child. Training is taking place from Monday, March 30 – Friday, April 3rd by level and program. General and special educators and related providers are participating in professional development on a variety of topics, including special education compliance, technology tools and instructional materials to support student learning.

One of the questions that you may have is about your previously scheduled meetings to discuss your child’s IFSP and IEP. Please note that meetings previously scheduled from March 13th – April 3rd needed to be postponed due to the school closure. As you hear from your case managers/providers, they will discuss rescheduling needs as it pertains to your child.

In summary, here are a few things to note about the IFSP/IEP virtual conferences you should expect:

- Service coordinators/case managers (teachers or providers) will communicate with you from now through April 24th to begin scheduling/discussing your child’s individualized continuity of learning plan for special education
- Meetings will be held through a virtual conference and coordinated by your administrator/teacher/provider as needed. You will receive instructions for how to participate in the virtual meeting along with all documents to be discussed at the meeting.
- For parents of students with IEPs, documents will be sent to you before and after meetings. The document you will receive prior to the virtual conference will include information to help you meaningfully participate in decision-making for your child’s special education services. For families with children with IFSPs, to ensure meaningful participation, the process will remain the same with your provider making the initial contact to discuss early intervention services. Documentation from the virtual conference will then be sent home.

I want to emphasize that you can expect our special education teachers and providers to begin contacting you on, or after, the following dates:

- April 3, 2020: Special education teachers and providers will begin contacting families with a child in the following levels or programs - High School (including all regional/special programs), Homewood School, and Project SEARCH and Community Connections.
- April 6, 2020: Special education teachers and providers will begin contacting families with a child in the following levels or programs - Elementary and Middle (including all regional/special programs) and Cedar Lane.
- Special education teachers and providers have already begun contacting families with a child in the Infant and Toddler program.

If you do not see your child’s programming reflected, please expect contact from your HCPSS case managers beginning April 6th. Questions should be sent to [Janet\\_Bounds@hcpss.org](mailto:Janet_Bounds@hcpss.org) who will route your email to appropriate staff.

Again, we appreciate your continued patience as we plan for your child’s services and support.

Respectfully,

Terri Savage, Ed.D.

Executive Director of Special Education

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