

Distance learning and disability services for children

Updated 9/16/20

COVID-19 is impacting families of children with disabilities in significant ways. While children continue to receive in-home community services through programs such as home care, Personal Care Assistance (PCA) and waivers (including consumer-directed community supports, or CDCS), you might have questions about distance learning and disability services for children. Here's a collection of frequently asked questions and links to helpful resources.

What are other parents doing during the day or during distance learning?

It falls to parents to support children with distance learning. Many parents are using child care during the day to provide supervision when needed for their own work or other activities. To find child care and other resources, check out [COVID-19 resources for families](#) from the state of Minnesota.

How are special education services provided during distance learning?

Work with your child's school case manager or special education director to develop an education plan that includes options for services and supports during distance learning. See this [fact sheet](#) from the Minnesota Disability Law Center for more information and steps you can take. If you need additional help to develop a school plan, contact [The PACER Center](#) or another family support organization.

Can families that have a choice in learning models — such as in-person, hybrid or distance learning — still use home care, PCA or a waiver?

Parents are being asked to make decisions that work best for their families. Children can continue to use home care, PCA or a waiver (including CDCS) to support non-educational needs within their budget.

Can my child use home and community-based services at home during distance learning school hours or school time?

Yes. You can use home and community-based services — including home care, PCA or a waiver (including CDCS) — for allowable activities within your child's service budget.

Can the services available through home care, PCA or a waiver be used to help with distance learning?

No. Home care, PCA and waiver programs (including CDCS) can't be used to pay for education-related supports that are covered by schools or vocational services. Help with distance learning, educational needs or home schooling is not considered an allowable activity for these services.

Schools are responsible for meeting a child's educational support needs under IDEA and as defined in the child's IEP or 504 plan.

Why can't the program rules be changed or more flexible so I could use home care, PCA or a waiver to help my child with distance learning?

Program rules that identify allowable activities are established by law and would require a legislative action or law to change. These programs didn't receive additional funding due to COVID-19.

If I'm struggling to meet my child's community needs, do I have any options?

Contact your child's case manager (if your child is on a waiver) or your local county social services intake to develop a service plan or explore resources to meet your child's needs. Depending on the program, you might be able to adjust your child's services or use other services within the program budget.

For additional resources, visit:

- [COVID-19: Distance Learning and Special Education Services in Minnesota Public Schools](#) from the Minnesota Disability Law Center
- [Special Education COVID-19 Resources](#) from the Minnesota Department of Education