

## **Distance learning and disability services for children**

updated 11/13/20

COVID-19 is impacting families of children with disabilities in significant ways. Parents are being asked to make decisions that work best for their families. While children continue to use in-home community services through programs such as home care, Personal Care Assistance (PCA), waivers (including consumer-directed community supports or CDCS) and Early Intensive Developmental and Behavioral Intervention (EIDBI), 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.

- 1. 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.
- 2. How are special education services provided during distance learning?** Work with your child's school case manager or special education director and request an IEP team meeting to develop an education plan that includes supports for 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.
- 3. 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 (including CDCS) or services?** Yes. Regardless of the learning model chosen, children can use home care, PCA or a waiver (including CDCS) to support non-educational needs.-In addition, children can use EIDBI services.
- 4. Can my child use home care, PCA or waiver (including CDCS) services 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.
- 5. Can my child use home and community-based services at home during distance learning school hours or school time?** Yes. Regardless of the time of the day or if distance learning is occurring, children can use home care, PCA or waiver services (including CDCS) to support non-educational needs. The allowable activities for these services have not changed due to COVID.
  - [PCA/Home Care](#)- allowable activities may include support with activities of daily living (such as eating, transferring, toileting), assistance with health related tasks, and observation and redirection for behaviors, identified as an assessed need during your child's assessment and

identified in the PCA care plan. If you have questions about what is in your child's PCA care plan, you can reach out to your PCA agency's Qualified Professional (QP).

- [Waiver services](#)— allowable activities may include personal supports, in-home family supports, positive supports or respite and are included in your child's plan. If you have questions about what is in your child's plan, you can reach out to your child's case manager.
  - [CDCS](#)- allowable activities may include services such as personal assistance and are included in your child's plan. If you have questions about what is in your child's plan, you can reach out to your child's case manager.

**6. Can EIDBI services be used to support distance learning?** EIDBI services may be able to offer assistance with educational readiness behaviors as outlined in the child's EIDBI Individualized Treatment Plan (ITP), including but not limited to, increase attending, teaching fine motor skills to engage in handwriting or typing, or helping to manage interfering behaviors that are prohibiting the child from engaging in educational tasks. For more information on coordinating EIDBI with other services, see [EIDBI Policy Manual-Services](#).

**7. Will my child's budget / service hours be increased because my child is not attending school while doing distance learning?** If a child is receiving services through:

- **"Traditional waiver" services:**
  - Traditional waiver services may be increased based on your child's needs and available funding. If your child has unmet needs, contact your child's case manager.
- **Waiver services through CDCS:**
  - There is no increase to CDCS budgets. CDCS budgets are based on the child's assessment and not on the number of hours a child is at school or home. If your child has unmet needs, contact your child's case manager to review/ look for opportunities to adjust your child's services within their budget or consider other program options. Your child may switch from CDCS to traditional waiver services at any time. You can contact your child's case manager to make this request.
- **PCA services:**
  - There is no increase in the service hours. Service hours are determined based on the child's assessment and not the number of hours a child is at school or home. If your child's PCA hours are not meeting your child's needs, contact your county or tribal social services intake and ask about waiver service options.

**8. Why can't the program rules be changed or more flexible so I could use home care, PCA or waiver services 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.

9. **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 or tribal social services intake](#) to develop a service plan or explore resources to meet your child's needs.

If your child is not receiving services, find out more about [Family Support Grant Program](#) and [Consumer Support Grant Program](#) options. These are cash grant programs to families of children with disabilities.

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
- [Disability services COVID-19 FAQ](#)