



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Guidance for Direct Service Providers, Caregivers, Parents, and People with Developmental and Behavioral Disorders

People with developmental and behavioral disorders may live in group homes or interact with Direct Service Providers (DSPs). CDC has provided guidance for [group homes](#) and [DSPs](#) who provide assistance to people with disabilities. Many of the recommendations for COVID-19 preparation and response described in those guidance documents also apply to caregivers and DSPs for people with developmental and behavioral disorders.

Accommodations, modifications, and assistance

Special considerations may be needed for people with developmental and behavioral disorders who have limited mobility, have difficulty accessing information, require close contact with Direct Service Providers, have trouble understanding information, have difficulties with changes in routines, or have other concerns related to their disability. They may need special considerations for communication and preventive actions such as:

- Check with organizations that support people with developmental and behavioral disorders for communication tools and other resources related to COVID-19.
- [Social distancing](#) and [isolating](#) may be difficult for them, and they may require reminders or supervision.
- Wearing [cloth face coverings](#) may be difficult for people with sensory, cognitive, or behavioral issues. Cloth face coverings are not recommended for children under 2 or anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the covering without assistance.
- Covering the mouth and nose with a tissue when sneezing and/or coughing (when not wearing a cloth face covering), throwing it in the trash, and [washing hands](#) afterwards may require assistance or visual and verbal reminders.
- [Cleaning and disinfecting](#) may affect those with sensory or respiratory issues.
- [Hand washing or using a hand sanitizer](#) may require assistance or supervision.
- [Cleaning and disinfecting](#) may require assistance or supervision.

Developmental monitoring and screening of children during COVID-19

Children should continue to have their [development monitored and receive recommended developmental screenings](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Developmental monitoring and screening can occur through a healthcare provider's office, a childcare center, WIC programs, and other early childhood programs. Parents of children 2 months to 5 years of age can monitor their child's development using [CDC's Free Milestone Tracker app](#).

If there are [developmental concerns](#) for a child under three years old, the child may qualify for their state's [early intervention program](#). Evaluations for early intervention and early intervention services are still occurring during COVID-19.

If a child is three years or older, the child may qualify for services through their local school system. These services can include pre-school and K-12 special education; therapies such as speech, occupational, and physical therapy; and more. Contact the local school system's Department of Special Education to see how to access evaluations and services during COVID-19.

Distance learning for college or graduate school students with developmental or behavioral disorders

Encourage students to discuss any necessary accommodations they need for online learning with their school's disability resource center (DRC). If students have internet access issues or new technology needs, the DRC may be able to loan them equipment. [State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies](#) [↗](#) may also be able to help with accessing technology. Advise students to contact their professors to let them know of any new accommodations that the DRC has approved and find out how to access virtual office hours.

Other services may still be offered such as university counseling centers for telehealth visits and academic counselors to help students plan for summer and fall semesters.

Parents supporting children with distance learning

If you have a child who receives special education services, accommodations or services received in school through their 504 plan or Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) should be continued, as much as possible, while learning at home. Many schools are continuing interventions like speech therapy, small group classes, extended time and more. If your child or family is struggling with the challenges of homeschooling, talk with his or her teachers to find ways to help.

For some families, this may be a good time to reassess a child's strengths related to learning and identify areas where a child may need more support. See which interventions and strategies are helpful for your child's learning and which ones are not. Take notes and bring your observations and questions to the next reassessment or IEP meeting.

Children with learning and developmental differences may also experience stress and anxiety. The changes related to COVID-19 can add to their stress. Some children may have more difficulty expressing their emotions and some may need assistance in developing and using coping skills. Learn more about helping [children cope with emergencies](#).

Find what works for your family and set your own goals: eating meals together, exercising, and staying connected with others while working on academic goals. Academic skills, like learning to break assignments in smaller parts, using an academic planner, and working on [transition planning](#) [↗](#) can be just as important as specific assignments. Find [resources](#) [↗](#) to help you participate in your child's [education and development](#) [↗](#) through [your local parent center](#) [↗](#).

More Information

[People with Disabilities](#)

[People with Developmental and Behavioral Disorders](#)

[Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs](#)

[Guidance for Direct Service Providers](#)

[Guidance for Group Homes for Individuals with Disabilities](#)

Page last reviewed: May 27, 2020

Content source: National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases