

COVID-19: How UCEDDS and LEND programs can partner with state and local special education systems during this, and future pandemics

May 12, 2020

Sponsored by AUCD's Early Childhood Special Interest Group.



John Eisenberg assumed the role of Executive Director of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE). Before this new role, Mr. Eisenberg worked in the Office of Special Education and Student Services at the Virginia Department of Education for fifteen years, seven of those as the State Director of Special Education. Throughout his career in special education, he worked in a variety of other roles including Director of the Virginia Deaf-Blind Project, Technical Assistance Specialist with the National Technical Assistance Consortium for Deaf-Blindness and a classroom teacher for students with developmental disabilities and Deaf-Blindness. Mr. Eisenberg proudly served on the NASDSE Board of Directors for over four years and became President in 2015. Mr. Eisenberg earned his M.Ed in severe disabilities from Hunter College at the City University of New York and his B.A. from New York University. He is also a proud graduate of the Virginia LEND program from Virginia Commonwealth University. He comes from a family of teachers and special educators and is very passionate about improving the educational outcomes of children and families across the United States.

How UCEDDS and LEND programs can partner with state and local special education systems during this and future pandemics



John Eisenberg
Executive Director, NASDSE
May 12, 2020

National Association of State Directors of Special Education



VISION

To be a premier membership organization supporting state leaders of special education in ensuring students with disabilities will live, learn, work, and participate in their communities.



MISSION

To improve individual and organizational success for state leaders of special education by providing relevant services that impact positive systemic change and results



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Members are our first priority
- Pragmatic and effective services
- Collaboration produces the best results
- Forward thinking and agile
- Passion for positive outcomes for students with disabilities

State of the States

48 states, 4 U.S. territories, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) have ordered or recommended school building closures for the rest of the academic year, affecting approximately 50.8 million public school students.

Impact on Local Special Education Administrators

Council for Special Education Administrators Survey

76%	Of survey participants reported that they had an evaluation that was overdue because of school closures related to COVID-19.
60%	Of people surveyed reported that parents had requested a delay in mandatory timelines (IEP annual reviews, 60-day evaluations, etc.)
79%	Of survey participants who responded reported that they will not be able to meet the requirements of the State Performance Plans because of COVID-19 related issues. This means that districts will be penalized and will need to write corrective action plans due to the pandemic.
41%	Of people surveyed reported that they had to excuse more members of the IEP team than typical due to the COVID-19 virus.

Impact on Local Special Education Administrators

Council for Special Education Administrators Survey

43%	of our survey participants reported that they had parents in their district requesting that special education services (required by IDEA) cease during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3%	of our survey participants reported that families had filed for due process or had filed a state complaint with regard to a COVID-19 related issue and to date, no hearing officer has heard a case related to this issue.
13%	of those surveyed reported that parents had requested in person meetings (against the wishes of most state governors and the Centers for Disease Control) demonstrating that our parents are concerned about the virus and focused on providing appropriate services, not on compliance issues.
68%	participants reported that they had no requests for initial evaluations or extra IEP meetings during the COVID-19 virus and another 25% of our members had between one and five parents request an extra meeting.

Hot Topics from Members

1. Flexibility in IDEA timelines in needed.
2. Teacher and service provider shortages.
3. Compliance vs. Health and Safety.
4. Parent and Family Engagement.
5. Virtual Education.
 - Accessibility Issues.
 - Equity Issues: Access, Equipment, and variability of comparable instruction .
6. Compensatory Education Discussions.
7. Virtual Related Services and Mental Health Counseling.

Collaboration with UCEDDs and LENDS



Health and Safety



Best Practices in Virtual Delivery of Related Services



Parent and Family Engagement



Technical Assistance and Professional Development and Research for Future Issues



Health and Safety

1. Technical assistance to SEAs and LEAs on COVIDD medical Information and CDC/State Public Health recommendations.
2. Strategies, considerations, and medical recommendations for students with developmental disabilities and chronic health issues.
3. Ideas, tips and strategies for families who have children with severe behavioral issues.
4. Mental health supports and services for students, teachers and families.



Parent/Family Engagement

1. Increase parent/family outreach using virtual resources.
2. Underserved families who don't have access to virtual resources.
3. Tips and strategies for providing home instruction as a “learning coach” – teaching techniques, behavior, communication, AT, etc.
4. Advocacy: IEP meetings, Evaluations, Services, and Dispute Resolution Options.



Virtual Education

1. Best Practices in Special Education - translation to virtual environments.
2. Related service delivery methods – Keeping “medical home” models intact/coordination.
3. Assistive technology integration.
4. Accessibility options and strategies.



Virtual Education

5. Conducting virtual IEP meetings.
6. Instruction methods for teachers and families.
7. What is LRE in a virtual environment?
8. Virtual education for students with developmental disabilities and sensory impairments.
9. Roles of paraprofessionals.
10. Teaching teachers how to teach in virtual environments.



Technical Assistance and Professional Development

1. Survey the needs of LEAS and SEAs.
2. Creating future pandemic plans/templates for students with disabilities.
3. Special Education teacher preparation program – modifications.
4. Best practices and new research.
5. Administrator training – both special education and regular education.
6. Inclusion.
7. Behavioral, medical, nutritional and mental health supports.
8. Trauma Informed Care.

Current and Future Federal Issues

1. USED

- Guidance documents
- Technical Assistance Centers
- Privatization efforts
- Compliance vs. Results Driven Accountability
- Election
- No additional flexibility recommended by Secretary
- Data collection issues
- Accountability issues

2. Congress

- IDEA stimulus funds
- Additional flexibility or waivers
- State and local funding – possible recession
- Impact on higher education

3. Teacher shortages

- Higher Ed
- LEAS
- Licensure

4. Reauthorization of IDEA

- Lessons learned
- Impact of COVIDD
- Virtual issues
- When?

5. Impact of election

- OSERS changes/USED Changes
- Priorities
- Funding

Discussion/Questions