



CHILDREN'S LAW CENTER OF MASSACHUSETTS

NOTICE TO PARENTS AND CHILDREN REGARDING EDUCATION RIGHTS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

We hope this note finds you well during this extraordinary emergency. While attorneys of the Children's Law Center have continued to provide legal aid to hundreds of its existing clients throughout the crisis, we also are working tirelessly to make sure that *all* children have access to legal information, resources, and support throughout this challenging time.

With schools closed and families home together, we know that it can be overwhelming to continue your child's education remotely without the proper support and resources. Even though school buildings are closed, teachers and administrators should be working to provide educational opportunities to all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

The following are important issues regarding your child's rights to education at this time:

- **School Closures**: All public schools and public and private day schools are, by order of the Governor, to remain closed until at least May 4, 2020; this date may be extended. Residential schools have not been ordered to close, but they may choose to do so for health and safety reasons after consulting with local health authorities.
- **Document Everything**: We strongly recommend that all families keep a written record of all communications received by the school, what special education services were offered or were not offered, any regression in skills of your child that you observe during the emergency break, and all of your efforts to communicate with the school to address your child's particular issues. These records could become important as you try to figure out whether your child is entitled to additional services and supports.
- **Remote Learning**: Massachusetts schools are required to provide remote learning and virtual learning opportunities to every student during this emergency break. Remote learning means group or individual video conference calls, printed work packets, projects, and online learning platforms. You should reach out to your child's teacher, special education teacher or IEP Team leader, or principal if you have questions about how to access educational instruction and services.
- **Access to Technology**: If you do not have access to the internet or a computer, please reach out to your child's school. Many school districts are providing Chromebook laptops to students and Comcast is offering two free months of internet access.
- **Special Education (IEP) Services**: If your child receives special education services and has an IEP, your child has the right to receive as many IEP services (including speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, counseling) and accommodations (such as extra time to complete assignments) as possible during the crisis. Your child's special education teachers should be in touch with you and your child regularly to determine how to best meet your child's needs while

he/she remains at home. The way special education services and accommodations are delivered may be different than they are in school, and parents and schools are encouraged to work creatively and collaboratively to develop plans to provide services based on your child's specific needs.

- **Compensatory Education**: If your child is not able to receive special education services remotely, he/she may be eligible for "compensatory services," which means that a school must make up for any services listed in a child's IEP that are missed or denied. When schools reopen, schools will be required to review how the closure impacted your child and determine what compensatory services may be necessary for your child.
- **IEP Team Meetings**: If your child is scheduled to have an IEP Team meeting during the school closure, it should still take place remotely, either via telephone or video conference. If needed, interpreters must still be provided. Families who do not want to or are unable to participate in a phone/video meeting have the option of rescheduling.

Children's Law Center of MA remains open for business during the crisis! Please do not hesitate to call our agency if you have questions about any of the above information, or if you have concerns about your family's ability to access the educational or special education services for your child.

For **new callers** to CLCM, please contact us through our help-line at 888-KIDLAW8 or 781-581-1977, or reach us through our e-mail at: Info@clcm.org.

For **existing clients/parents/caretakers with current cases** at the Children's Law Center, please feel free to contact our staff directly at the following numbers or e-mails:

Yen Cruz (CLCM Intake; Spanish-Speaking): 1-888-KIDLAW8 or 781-581-1977;
y.cruz@clcm.org

Ellie Galer (Immigration; Spanish-Speaking): 774-219-1715; e.galer@clcm.org

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