

## Do's

**Do take care of yourself.** As parents, we often put ourselves and our needs last on the list (and never get to them). It's important to remember that these are extremely scary times that are fueling a great deal of anxiety. Take time for you. You still can do it all—but you don't need to do it all at once.

**Do remember that we are all in this together.** Your child's teachers and service providers are likely experiencing similar financial and emotional stressors. These unprecedented times require all of us to be a lot more flexible, patient and reasonable.

**Do collect data.** You are now in the position to collect a lot of information about your child's academic, social/emotional and behavioral strengths and weaknesses. For example, if your child has frequent outbursts to avoid doing work, document them with short videos. If your child struggles with reading, again a video can tell the story. Save examples of work product so you have proof that he is not performing at expected levels. Your child may be regressing during this stay at home period. Obtain a copy of his academic work or other areas from the beginning of March so that you can compare it to how she is doing now and a month from now. This will help you document skill loss when you demand compensatory (make-up) services in the Fall. Caregivers, parents, or education rights holders can also document what services a child receives from the school district or charter school by using the sample logs made available by [the Alliance of Children's Rights](#) to help prove what services a child may be entitled to.

**Do respond to PWN's.** Many school districts are blanketing parents of children with IEPs with Prior Written Notice (PWN) form letters. These letters inform parents of what special education and related services that the school district will and will not provide. If you do not respond to the PWN, a judge may later presume that you agreed to the unilateral changes to your child's educational programming. Send a short email to your child's case carrier explaining that you received the PWN and either you do not understand what it means or you consent to these services for implementation purposes only but do not agree that they provide appropriate distance learning services during physical school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Don'ts

**Don't give up.** Despair is your enemy. Faced with language barriers or the lack of time, resources and training, many parents have reportedly just given up on even trying to keep up with distance learning for their children. But this can result in even further regression during this period. Instead of giving up, seek help in unexpected places. For example, there is an army of underutilized high school, college and graduate students who are out of school and out of work. Tap into your networks and find help for your child among these eager and energetic young people. Access reputable resources such as the [Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates \(COPAA\)](#) and your [State Department of Education](#). Many school district and private companies are now handing out hardware, software and free internet access for a limited time. There are also free WIFI hotspots popping up in many locations. Locate and access these free resources.

**Don't settle for a one-size-fits-all educational program.** Student's with IEPs have individual needs which don't just evaporate because they are learning from home. The law is clear that school districts and charter schools must continue to provide special education and services pursuant to their IEP to the greatest extent possible. Again, be patient but persistent in holding schools to their obligation to provide a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE) for your child.

**Don't sign blanket waivers.** Parents are reporting that some school districts are only providing special education services if they agree to give up some services or rights. Unless you *fully and completely* understand all that you are giving up for yourself and your child, and are in full agreement to do so, avoid signing blanket waivers. You may want to consult with an attorney or special education advocate in your area for advice.

**Don't agree to an Exit IEP.** Many school districts are taking advantage of the current crisis to exit students from their IEPs. This time of year, we are primarily seeing this in the form of Exit IEPs as a condition of graduation. While it's fine to earn the diploma, it's critical to get the education. If you have concerns that your child is not prepared to transition, avoid agreeing to an Exit IEP without consulting a local advocate or attorney. Remember that, if your child has reached the age of 18, he can sign his consent to the Exit IEP without your permission.