



# Preschool Special Education Updates

## SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC, AS OF MARCH 2021

Preschool special education services are available for children ages 3-5 who have disabilities or developmental delays that impact their ability to learn. These services are provided to eligible children free of charge by the New York City Department of Education (DOE). Children can still get preschool special education evaluations and services during the COVID pandemic. Most evaluations, IEP meetings, and services have been taking place by phone or video since the end of March 2020. However, as child care centers, preschools and schools have reopened, families have more options for in person evaluations and special education services.

This guide is a summary of current options available to families interested in preschool special education services during the 2020-2021 school year. For more detailed information about preschool special education generally, please review Advocates for Children's [Guide to Preschool Special Education Services](#).

### Referrals

If you would like to request preschool special education services, you can make a referral to the DOE by sending a fax or email to the [Committee on Preschool Special Education](#) (CPSE) office in the [school district](#) where your child lives. You should send the referral to the Committee on Special Education Chairperson and CPSE Community Coordinator.

### Evaluations

After you make a referral, the DOE should send your family a packet that includes a list of evaluation agencies. You must contact agencies on the list to schedule evaluations. Some agencies are offering in-person evaluations while others are only offering remote evaluations by phone and video. For example, at this time, the DOE evaluation sites are not offering in-person evaluations.

You can choose to have evaluations take place in-person or remotely through phone and video. Families who choose evaluations conducted by video should have access to internet and a device with a camera that can connect to video, such as a laptop, tablet, or smartphone. If you need a device for the evaluation, contact your [CPSE Community Coordinator](#) to request a DOE iPad. Please contact our Helpline if you are having a hard time getting a device. Please keep in mind that if an evaluation cannot be completed remotely, the evaluation agency may ask for your permission to do the evaluation in person.

If you have evaluations from a private doctor or evaluator that you would like the CPSE to review, you should share them with the evaluation agency and send them to your CPSE administrator. If your child receives Early Intervention (EI) services, your EI service coordinator can send EI evaluations and records to the CPSE with your permission.

## Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting

Families can participate in an IEP meeting remotely by phone.

The DOE may ask for your permission to send you documents by email including copies of evaluation reports and your child's IEP. This will allow them to send you documents more quickly than sending them by mail.

## Programs and Services

Your child has a right to all the special education services on their IEP. Currently, services may be provided:

- in person,
- remotely by phone and video, or
- through a combination of in-person and remote services.

Please keep in mind that there are health and safety requirements that your family and special education providers and preschool programs must follow for all in-person services. This can include wearing masks or face coverings and socially distancing. You can learn more about these requirements by contacting your child's CPSE administrator, special education providers and your child's preschool program.

Throughout the year, in-person evaluations and services may be stopped in areas with a high number of COVID-19 cases. Your child's preschool program should contact you if they must close and provide services remotely until they are able to reopen. Your child's special education service providers should also contact you if they cannot provide services in person and should offer remote services until they can resume in-person sessions.

**NOTE:** Your child's in-person services may be stopped if they receive services in an area with a high number of COVID-19 cases. During this time, your child should receive services remotely.

## ***Special Education Itinerant Teacher (SEIT) & Related Services Only***

If your child's IEP recommends only SEIT and/or related services, then your child's CPSE administrator is responsible for finding providers that can work with your child. SEIT and related services, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and counseling, may be provided in your home, community, or your child's preschool program. These services may be provided in person, remotely or through a combination of in-person and remote services.

You should contact your child's SEIT agency to discuss where and how you would like them to work with your child, for example in your home or your child's preschool, in-person or remotely.

If your child's IEP recommends SEIT and related services but the DOE is not providing these services, then you should contact your CPSE administrator. If services are still not in place, you should contact the [CSE Chairperson](#) and email the DOE at [relatedservices@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:relatedservices@schools.nyc.gov). You can feel free to

copy Advocates for Children at [preschool@advocatesforchildren.org](mailto:preschool@advocatesforchildren.org). You can also use this contact information if your child needs in-person services but is only being offered remote services.

### **Special Class in an Integrated Setting (SCIS) & Special Class**

Your CPSE administrator is responsible for finding a seat for your child in a SCIS or special class. Programs may offer one or more of these learning models: full-time in person services, remote-only services, or a combination of in-person and remote services. If you have questions about your child's services and schedule, you should reach out to your child's school. If the model used by your child's preschool will not work for your child (for example, if your preschool is only offering remote instruction and your child needs in-person instruction), you may contact your CPSE administrator to ask for a different placement.

#### **Your child has a right to transportation to their SCIS or special class.**

You should contact your child's school if you have questions about your child's transportation. If the DOE does not provide transportation to your child on days that your child is scheduled for in-person services, you may be eligible for reimbursement for the cost of taking your child to and from school, including the cost of MetroCards and carfare. You can request information about your child's bus services and reimbursement for transportation costs by emailing [EarlyChildhoodBusing@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:EarlyChildhoodBusing@schools.nyc.gov).

## **3-K & Pre-K for All**

All DOE 3-K and Pre-K for All programs, including programs in community-based organizations and family child care, have been open since late September 2020. Programs that cannot safely serve all their students in person every day should offer blended learning, a combination of in-person and remote instruction where children attend school on some days and receive remote instruction on other days. Programs should prioritize offering in-person instruction every day to students with disabilities and allow a child's special education providers to work with them while in school.

If your child was born in 2017 or 2016 and you would like a placement for them now in a 3-K or Pre-K for All program, you can contact the DOE at [ESEnrollment@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:ESEnrollment@schools.nyc.gov) for help finding a program with an available seat.

To apply for a seat for the 2021-2022 school year, families of children born in 2018 can apply to DOE 3-K programs from February 24<sup>th</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup> and families of children born in 2017 can apply to Pre-K for All programs from February 24<sup>th</sup> to April 7<sup>th</sup>. Learn more about programs and apply online at [MySchools.nyc](https://www.schools.nyc.gov/my-schools) or complete an application by calling (718) 935-2009. Read AFC's [Early Childhood Education Program Guide](#) for more information on the application process and program options.

## **Learning Bridges**

The DOE is working with community-based organizations and other partners to offer free child care options to children from 3K through 8th grade on the days when students are scheduled for remote learning. If your child attends a DOE 3-K or Pre-K program, a SCIS, or a preschool special class that cannot serve your child in-person every day, then you may be eligible for a seat in a Learning Bridges

program on days that your child is not scheduled to go to school. Families who have opted for fully remote learning are also eligible to apply. You can learn more about [Learning Bridges](#) online.

Families are not guaranteed a seat in a Learning Bridges program. If you have questions about the status of your application, you can email the DOE at [Learningbridges@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:Learningbridges@schools.nyc.gov).

Students with disabilities are one of the groups of students who will get priority for these seats and cannot be turned away because they have a disability. If your child needs additional supports at their Learning Bridges program, talk to your child's program or contact the DOE at [childcare@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:childcare@schools.nyc.gov).

If you are interested in a **Learning Bridges** seat for your child, you should complete this [online survey](#) or call 3-1-1.

**NOTE:** If you cannot find your child's preschool program listed in the school drop-down list, leave this question blank.

## Remote Learning Devices

If your child needs an [iPad for remote learning](#), you should contact your child's preschool program to request a iPad. For help requesting a device or for technical support, call the DOE helpdesk at 718-935-5100.

## More information

Options available for in-person meetings, evaluations and services may continue to change over time. Please check the [Advocates for Children of New York](#) and [New York City Department of Education](#) websites for updates.

**We're here to help! Please call the Jill Chaifetz Education Helpline:**

Monday through Thursday • 10 am to 4 pm • 1-866-427-6033 (toll free)

[www.advocatesforchildren.org](http://www.advocatesforchildren.org)

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