



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Special Education Recovery Services

Many students with disabilities had a difficult time making progress in school during COVID and need extra supports and services to get back on track. The NYC DOE is offering individualized Special Education Recovery Services (“SERS”) for students with IEPs who attend NYC DOE schools.

What sorts of services are available?

Services differ from school-to-school. Typically, they include Special Education Teacher Support Services (“SETSS”) or small group instruction and related services, like physical, occupational and speech therapy. The SERS run in 8- to 10-week cycles and started at the end of fall. Schools can offer students more than one cycle of SERS if the school believes the student needs more services.

The DOE told schools that most student’s SERS services for the first cycle should range from 10-20 hours of SETSS and 5-10 hours of each related service for the students depending on their level of need.

Your child’s school should have reached out to you this fall or early winter to talk about what your child needs and what they could offer afterschool, on Saturdays, or, in some cases, before the start of the school day. If you have not heard from your child’s school, reach out and ask to talk about what your child needs. If the schedule doesn’t work for your family, email sers@schools.nyc.gov and ask for another way to receive SERS.

When are the services offered?

Each school sets their schedule for SERS. They can be offered:

- Before school
- After school
- Saturdays
- Remotely

If the times the school offers don’t work for you, let them know. You may be able to set something else up or the school may offer you vouchers called P3s for tutoring and Related Services Authorizations (RSAs) to use with outside providers, but you’ll need to find those providers yourself. If the school does not offer you an alternative that works for you and your student, you should email sers@schools.nyc.gov.

What about busing?

If your child has busing on their IEP, the DOE should provide busing to Special Education Recovery Services. However, to date, the DOE has not done that, and instead offers MetroCards and reimbursement for other forms of travel, but you or another caregiver will need to go with your child.

The DOE has said that they're working to arrange busing for those children receiving SERS during afterschool hours. If your child needs busing to attend SERS, let the school know in writing.

What if you don't agree with what your child is offered?

If you don't agree with what the school offers or the times offered don't work for your child, tell school staff in writing. Be clear about what you are asking for. You can also ask for an IEP meeting to explain what your child needs.

You can also email sers@schools.nyc.gov or call 311 to ask for additional services to make up for remote learning. Finally, you can ask for compensatory services. Compensatory services are to make up for the DOE's failure to provide an appropriate program or services and can include whatever your child needs to make up for that. You can still ask for compensatory services even if you have accepted SERS services. You should ask the school for compensatory services first, but if they don't agree you may have to file for an impartial hearing to get them.

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