

IEPS & PROGRAM ADAPTATIONS DOCUMENTS: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



What is an IEP?

An IEP is the Individualized Education Program for a student with a disability, ages 3-21. It's a map that lays out the program of special education instruction, supports, and services a student needs to make progress and thrive in school. Each program is designed to meet a student's unique needs and is covered by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Are IEPs valid during school closures?

Yes, but Program Adaptations Documents (PADs) are used to identify the instruction and services that will be provided during school closures. It is a separate document that is based on the IEP, but is responsive to the unique circumstances of remote learning. It may be different from the IEP.

Are IEPs changed when Program Adaptations Documents are created?

No, an IEP is created for use in a school setting, not for temporary situations, such as remote learning when schools are closed.

What is a Program Adaptations Document?

The Program Adaptations Document is an alternative plan for providing students with disabilities IEP services and continuity of learning while schools are closed.

Why are Program Adaptations Documents necessary?

School districts in NYS decided to provide remote instruction while school buildings are closed, and the law says that all students with disabilities from ages 3-21 must have equal access to the same educational opportunities provided to all students during school closures. This means that special education and related services must continue to be provided to the greatest extent possible.

Who creates a Program Adaptations Document?

A special education teacher or other school-based staff who are currently working with the student and are familiar with their needs creates the Program Adaptations Document. They will refer to the IEP and consult therapists and counseling providers to identify appropriate teletherapy related services.

Where can I find my child's plan?

The completed Program Adaptations Document should be provided to you electronically or by mail if the school does not have the parent or guardian's email address. Providers are expected to stay in touch with you and keep track of your child's progress. Ongoing communication among teachers, therapists, and the family is very important. While some students do well with remote learning, it is equally important to have honest discussions about what is and isn't working. If you have questions or believe that your child's Program Adaptations Document needs to be modified, work your way up the ladder from teacher, therapist, or principal. If you need help contacting them, send an email to specialeducation@schools.nyc.gov.

Can my child's Special Education Program Adaptations Document be changed?

Yes, the plan will be guided by your feedback and your child's response to remote learning. Your child's progress will be reported to you and will help you understand their response to the instructional strategies and therapies provided through remote learning. It can be adjusted to meet the needs of your student.

Can a Program Adaptations Document be written at an IEP meeting?

The IEP team may create a Program Adaptations Document following an IEP meeting, but an IEP meeting isn't required to create a Program Adaptations Document. The IEP and Program Adaptations Document are separate.

Can parents refuse special education services?

Parents have the right to refuse for their child to participate in services delivered through teletherapy. Although waiving remote learning does not affect the IEP, it is usually a good idea to work with teachers and providers first, so adjustments can be made.

What are some best practices for successful remote learning?

- Stay involved and in the loop. Monitor your email, phone messages, and mail. Be responsive. Some families say they have a better relationship with teachers and professionals now that they are really getting to know each other, but if that hasn't happened, reach out to initiate contact.
- Keep notes and dates of therapy sessions and online learning. Discuss any concerns with teachers and therapists.
- Ask for progress reports.
- Set up space for your child to use for remote learning that considers their unique learning styles.

Remember, staying involved in your child's education protects their rights. Contact INCLUDEnyc's Help Line at 212-677-4660 for support.