

Secretary DeVos Releases New Resources for Educators, Local Leaders

[March 12, 2020--This message was forwarded by Patrick Rooney, Director School Support and Accountability]

WASHINGTON – U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos issued new resources today that will assist education leaders in [protecting student privacy](#) and [ensuring students with disabilities continue to receive services](#) required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the event of school closures due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The Education Department also released important [information for K-12 educators](#) on flexibilities the Department could grant when it comes to the accountability standards required by law under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

The new guidance on student privacy provides clarity about the requirements of the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as it pertains to the COVID-19 outbreak. For example, it advises school officials on working with public health officials to manage COVID-19-related issues while protecting the privacy of students' education records.

In addition, the Department has posted a fact sheet for K-12 schools about their considerations related to assessments and accountability should a school be closed for an extended period. If a school is unable to meet certain benchmarks due to absenteeism or school closure, the Department would consider a targeted one-year waiver so that the participation rate or absenteeism metric would not be factored into the school's Academic Achievement indicator.

In order to ensure that students with disabilities continue to receive the services guaranteed by IDEA and Section 504, the Department has published a Q&A document for state and local educational authorities. This information answers the most common questions schools have about when and how they must provide instruction, including when to consider use of online or virtual instruction and other curriculum-based instructional activities.

"We are working closely with our inter-agency partners to provide state and local leaders the information they need to ensure the health and safety of their students and educators," said Secretary DeVos. "We will continue to work alongside them and provide them the flexibilities they need in order to best support their communities."

This communication is the latest step in the Department's ongoing effort to assist students, teachers, and education leaders as part of the Administration's unprecedented, whole-of-government response to the viral outbreak. It follows the

earlier-released [guidance](#) to institutions of higher education and a [letter](#) on protecting civil rights in schools during this time of heightened concern.

The CDC has issued interim guidance to help K-12 schools and childcare programs plan for and prevent the spread of COVID-19 among students and staff. See Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html>.

Additional guidance will be announced in the coming days and posted at ed.gov/coronavirus.

For more information about the Coronavirus, please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.