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Minnesota State Academies for the Deaf and the Blind Distance Learning Plan

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MINNESOTA STATE ACADEMIES FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND

615 Olof Hanson Drive, Faribault MN 55021 (507) 384-6600 www.msa.state.mn.us

Minnesota State Academies COVID 19 Distance Learning Plan

In accordance with Governor Walz's mandate on March 25th, 2020, Minnesota State Academies will be implementing distance learning March 30- April 30th, 2020.

Distance Learning Defined: Students engaging in distance learning have access to appropriate educational materials and receive daily interaction with their licensed teacher(s).

It is important to note that distance learning does not always mean e-learning or online learning. It is critical to provide this learning in a format that can be equitably accessed by all students.

Ensuring Students Access to Appropriate Educational Materials and Technology

Minnesota State Academies is dedicated to working together with families to provide services to all of our students.

Distance Learning may include but not limited to online and at-home activities through various means of communication, including but not limited to, email, phone calls, video conferencing (i.e. Zoom, FaceTime), YouTube videos, or other online interactive platforms such as Flip Grid, Google Classroom. It may also be in the form of a project or a packet of materials that do not require technology. Each student's distant learning plan will be tailored to meet their individual learning needs. .

No face-to-face or 'in-home' services may be provided at this time.

If there are any questions or concerns regarding technology, please contact your student's case manager or the Campus Director.

Ensuring Students Receive Daily Interaction with their Licensed Teacher(s)

Our staff are prepared to deliver content and make daily contact with students and/or families, beginning March 30th and continuing through April 30th. Teachers and service providers will be contacting students and families via email and/or phone calls to share their distance learning plans, expectations, and plans for daily contact.

Teachers and service providers will be available via email and/or virtual meetings. Teachers and other staff are working full time on distance learning. Work hours may vary amongst staff or extend outside of the conventional school hours. We appreciate your flexibility and patience as we transition over into the distance learner model. Your student's IEP case manager will be your primary contact at the school. Feel free to contact other teachers and support services staff with questions specific to their work with your student.

Access to school phones is limited at this time. Please contact the main office if you need to leave a message for school staff. We will get back to you as soon as possible.

MSA empowers every student to achieve, care, and thrive in an ever-changing world.

Supporting the Mental Health Needs of Students

Our mental health team will contact students and their families to establish Zoom, videophone, or other virtual meetings with students on their caseloads on a weekly basis. The mental health team will work with families to provide additional support to individual students such as social stories, making videos with role-playing, and so forth. They are also planning proactive activities to assist students in coping with all of the news and changes; communication barriers; distance learning frustrations; and/or self-advocacy needs

Needs of Students with IEPs

Student Support Services will work closely to review Distance Learning and the impact on the delivery of special education and related services. Teachers and related service providers (examples: occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech and language pathologist, ASL specialist, school nurses, school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers.) will collaboratively plan instructional activities that align with student needs and to ensure equitable access to educational content to continue to demonstrate progress towards education standards and IEP goals.

- Case Managers and Related Service providers will connect with students individually based on their individual needs and services documented in their Individual Education Programs (IEP).
- No face-to-face or 'in-home' services may be provided at this time.
- Instruction and services may be provided by licensed staff, including related service providers. This can occur through a variety of means such as:
 - Paper packets, worksheets, hands-on-manipulatives
 - Textbooks
 - Telephone instruction
 - Online resources
 - Instruction via video
- Communication with parents/guardians will include virtual meetings, phone conferences and use of the US Postal Service when necessary.
- Families who speak a language other than English or American Sign Language will have the support of interpreters to facilitate communication.

IEP meetings: Based on the IDEA and MN Statutes/Rules, the district must hold annual IEP meetings prior to the date of the last annual IEP meeting. Therefore, MSA clerical staff will organize team meetings with parents virtually to conduct any annual IEP meetings that become due during the next few weeks.

Special Education Evaluations: If a student is currently being evaluated for a 3 year re-evaluation to determine continuing need for special education services, a member of the student support services team will contact parents if they need to postpone or alter the evaluation plan.

Ensure Students have Internet Access

When access to technology and/or internet access is not available, adaptations to send materials home in a different format will be made available to the student. Please share any issues that you may have with your student's teacher.

If you are concerned about access to the internet, there are a variety of resources that are available to families. For more information, [click here](#).

Free Internet Access at Home:

Some internet service providers are offering free Internet access to families for 60 days to help during this time of remote learning.

- Comcast – Making their [Internet Essentials](#) offering for low-income families free for 60 days
 - Use the info below to apply:
 - <https://www.internetessentials.com/covid19> - online application
 - Call 1-855-846-8376 for English
 - Call 1-855-765-6995 for Spanish
 - Includes 25Mbps Upload/3Mbps Download speeds
 - Waiving data limits for existing customers (unlimited data at no additional cost)
- Charter/Spectrum – Making their [Spectrum Internet Assist](#) program available to anyone who doesn't have Internet access free for 60 days
 - Call 1-844-488-8395 to enroll
 - Includes 100Mbps upload speed
- Frontier – [Frontier Lifeline Program](#) for low-income families and have stated they will not disconnect families for non-payment during this time. "
- T-Mobile is offering 20GB more hotspot data at no extra cost, if you already have an account with them. It is referred to as "Covid-19 Response- High-speed Smartphone Mobile Hotspot Data". You would get an additional 10GB of high-speed smartphone mobile hotspot data per bill cycle for the next 60 days. For additional information on this hotspot go to www.t-mobile.com/support/account/covid-19-updates. Log in through My T-Mobile / T-Mobile app, myMetro app or MetrobyT-Mobile.com to add the COVID-19 Response – High-speed

If broadband access is an issue for households in your home area, here are links to resources and options that may be available in your area.

- Contact your local broadband provider(s):
 - List of broadband providers by county (with contact information):
<https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/maps/data.jsp>
 - For help identifying providers in your area:
 - Minnesota Cable Communications Association: 651-493-0716
 - Minnesota Telecom Alliance: 651-288-3723
 - Satellite Industry Association: 202-503-1560
 - Wireless Infrastructure Association: 703-739-0300
 - WISPA (fixed wireless providers): 407-319-0062
- Companies with service options related to COVID-19 response. Note this is not a comprehensive list. Visit the [Office of Broadband Development](#) for updates and additions to this list.
 - [AT&T](#)
 - [CenturyLink](#)
 - [Comcast](#)
 - [Charter](#)
 - [Mediacom](#)
 - [Sprint](#)
 - [T-Mobile](#)
 - [Verizon](#)
- Minnesota Office of Broadband Development

- For assistance identifying broadband service options or connecting with broadband providers, please call or email:
 - 21 651-259-7610
 - Deed.broadband@state.mn.us

Mail Delivery or Distribution

Minnesota State Academy students are eligible to participate in their resident district meal delivery/distribution programs. Families should contact their resident district for meal delivery information.

If families would like assistance connecting with their resident districts, please contact:

Micki O'Flynn
School Social Worker
micki.oflynn@msa.state.mn.us

Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness

Our School Social worker, Micki O'Flynn (Micki.OFlynn@msa.state.mn.us), is available to support students and families who may be experiencing homeless. Please contact Ms. O'Flynn if you are facing any challenges with housing, food, medicine, etc. and she will assist in connecting families to resources in your area.

Students with Early Learning Needs

Our early childhood teachers will continue to serve our young children. Unfortunately, at this time, we will not be able to continue with home visits. We will contact each parent/caregiver to provide activities, instruction, and other learning opportunities utilizing the same methods as mentioned above for distance learning. Please stay in contact with your child's teacher so that we can work together in determining the most appropriate times, methods, and communication to make this work for your young children. We will have interpreters available on a limited basis when we begin this process to answer any of your questions.

Assessment of Students

The Minnesota Department of Education has informed us that all state and district tests will not be administered this spring. The ACT test for Juniors has been rescheduled and will happen sometime during the fall semester.

Teachers will develop appropriate assessments for the content of each class and will be communicating this with students.

Meeting the Needs of Staff

Our instructional staff will be teleworking during this period of time. Staff will establish routine hours and communicate their office hours with students and parents. They will utilize school-approved platforms for communication and completion of their work tasks. Each employee is expected to continue provision of

educational services within their job assignment. Staff members may be assigned alternate projects and/or responsibilities to support the school's mission.

All MSA staff will follow guidance issued by MSA Human Resources and the Superintendent's Office regarding time entry, work logs, and attendance/leave use.

Questions should be directed to the MSA Human Resources Department and/or supervisors.

Attendance of students

Class Attendance:

Completing assigned work and/or logging in when scheduled is expected. Failure to log in and/or complete assigned work will result in a student being marked absent.

Case managers will contact each student or the student's parent/guardian on their caseload daily via email to check in on the student's status. If email is not a viable way of connecting, the case manager will determine with the student or the student's parent/guardian the most effective way of connecting. The expectation will be for the student or parent/guardian to respond to the email with an update. This information collected and entered by the case manager will be used to track daily attendance.

Student Absences:

If students are ill or have an appointment, parents should still contact the campus secretary to excuse them. Unless students are excused, they will be expected to be complete and turn in classroom activities/assignments.

Assessing and Adjusting the Distance Learning Plan during Implementation

Adjustments will be made as we proceed through each week of distance learning to attempt to optimize learning opportunities for each student.

Our teams will monitor the provision of educational programming through weekly meetings with teachers/support staff, and check-ins with students/families and other support staff. Team leaders will host weekly meetings to identify areas of improvement and communicate needs with MSA administrators.

We appreciate your understanding, patience, grace and forgiveness as we venture through this time of uncertainty. Together we will take care of the children of our community.

Our hope is for wellness for you and your family.