

Dear Parents,

I am writing to provide another update regarding the provision of Special Education services during our current school closure and to pass on important information and guidance we have received from the state and federal government and the New York State Education Department.

The below information describes how Rockville Centre School are responding to our current circumstance and to state and federal guidance as it is provided. We will be prepared to respond to changes to these directives and keep you informed.

First let me say that our special education and pupil personnel staff members, including teachers, psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses, and related service providers are continuing to work very hard to develop ways in which our students may receive instructional and emotional support and IEP driven services during this time. Their efforts have been inspirational. Given the nature of our business, we will depend on parents to keep us apprised of individual circumstances, which may require more individualized attention and we will address them as best we are able.

I have been meeting virtually with all staff members to review updated guidance and develop instructional and service plans. As we receive new information, I will share it with you. In the meanwhile, please e-mail me at [nleahy@rvcschools.org](mailto:nleahy@rvcschools.org), with any questions you may have.

Beneath each heading is italicized information representing the most current guidance we have received in each subject area. Specific information related to compliance with such guidance and the provision of service follows.

### **Responsibility to Provide Distance Learning**

*If a School District closes its schools and does not provide any educational services to the general student population, then the school district would not be required to provide services to students with disabilities during the same period of time. However, if a school district provides educational opportunities to the general student population, it must then ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to the same opportunities.*

- At the outset of our closure general education and special education students were provided with instructional materials and resources via hard copy packets or through google classroom. Special Education teachers reviewed these learning resources to help differentiate learning materials and make recommendations for support. **Special Education teachers have been asked to reach out to students and or parents to monitor the progress of each student's access to distance learning.**
- Our teachers have been working collaboratively to research online resources and provide meaningful learning activities to our students.

- The mandates of our students' IEPs and 504 plans must be met to the greatest extent possible. Pending further guidance from New York State, contingency plans to provide special education services should be structured to meet the mandates of the student's IEP in the same manner that general education students access distance learning. In some cases, where student needs or disabilities preclude access, alternative methods such as instructional telephone calls, on line or virtual instruction and other curriculum-based instructional activities may be required. **We are developing plans for teachers to provide specialized instruction and some services directly via online platforms. Parent permission for video access, should the teacher provide such learning support will be required.**

### **Are Districts required to Amend the IEP to provide for Distance Learning?**

*While neither the federal government nor New York State have waived the requirement to amend an IEP upon a change of placement, clarification from NYSED regarding this issue has been requested but has not yet been received.*

- Until clarification is provided by the New York Special Education Department, no changes will be made to the IEP placements of Rockville Centre special education students.

### **Annual Review Meetings**

*In the event closures extend longer than currently ordered, school districts must conduct annual review meetings to ensure that each student has an IEP in place before the start of the 2020-2021 school year and that parents have had a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development of the IEP. Meetings are not required to be held in person while schools are closed. Members of the CSE need not all be present at the meeting. Members of the CSE may participate by alternative means.*

- As previously announced, in Rockville Centre, all CSE meetings will take place as scheduled. Staff attending the CSE will be utilizing the Google Hangouts Meet App. Parents and anyone attending the CSE that is not a Rockville Centre staff member will have the opportunity to participate in the meeting via telephone, desktop or iPad.
- I am pleased to report that with rare exception, the virtual CSE meetings have been going very smoothly. We are grateful for the professionalism of all involved in facilitating and participating in these meetings. Please contact Dr. Noreen Leahy, [nleahy@rvcschools.org](mailto:nleahy@rvcschools.org), Dr. Orly Gadon, [ogadon@rvcschools.org](mailto:ogadon@rvcschools.org) or Ms. Elaine Jung, [ejung@rvcschools.org](mailto:ejung@rvcschools.org) if you have any concerns about the conduct of your annual review.
- For those who have not yet had their annual review meeting, an invitation to the meeting will be sent to you, via email, from your building level or Central CSE

Chairperson prior to the start of the meeting. This email invitation will offer both an on-line and telephone connection option.

- All documents must be made available, so please contact the psychologist conducting your meeting to ensure you have access to all necessary documentation.

### **What About Evaluations and Referrals in Progress?**

*If an evaluation or re-evaluation requires a face-to-face assessment or observation, the evaluation/re-evaluation needs to be delayed until school reopens. If an evaluation/re-evaluation does not require a face-to-face assessment or evaluation, it may take place so long as a student's parent/guardian consents. The same principles apply to students with a disability who have a plan developed under Section 504 or who are being evaluated under Section 504.*

- In Rockville Centre, we are assessing the status of referrals in process by reaching out to each building psychologist and asking them to update us on the status of each referral, including status of assessments, evaluations reports, and ability to conduct initial CSE meetings.
- The requirement to hold a CSE meeting within 60 days of receiving consent for testing has, to date, not been waived.
- We will comply with all mandates and work diligently to complete the referral process.
- Dr. Gadon or Ms. Jung will be in touch with each family with a pending referral to discuss the status of your individual circumstances.

### **Provision of Related Services including Home Services**

*Preliminary guidance indicated that special education and related services could be provided in the home setting or at an alternate location. NYSED guidance permitting services in the home setting indicated that the decision to provide services in the home is subject to a determination by school officials that the provision of services in the home is in compliance with appropriate health guidelines and considers the risk of transmission of the virus in connection with the provision of such services.*

- **Rockville Centre has determined that special education related services and home services will not be provided in students' homes.**
- Special education services will be provided to the extent practicable via alternative means such as teleconferencing or other modalities. We are holding meetings to discuss the expansion of services,(beyond that which was originally planned and explained in our first update), using other modalities, **including video conference**. As was the case with specialized instruction described above, parental permission will be required if teachers choose to provide service using this modality.

- Rockville Centre related service providers will keep records regarding the provision of services. A review of these records by CSE, will be undertaken for each student in order to assess what services will be required to meet the individual needs of our students who may experience difficulty accessing these services during school closures.

These unusual circumstances are not without challenge but we are here to support you in any way we can. Please know that we will be carefully monitoring the impact of this closure on all students, and in particular those with unique learning, behavioral and emotional needs. Please reach out to central office, building administration, teachers and providers if you need to talk, have questions or want to express any concerns. We will do our best to address each and every matter.

Warm Regards,

*Dr. Noreen Leahy*  
*Assistant Superintendent*  
*Pupil Personnel Services and Special Education*