

Virtual Related Services

A Brief Guide for Parents

In addition to specially-designed instruction, many students with disabilities need related services in order to make progress towards their IEP goals. Unfortunately, many school districts in Maryland (and throughout the country) are experiencing a shortage of professionals able to provide these services. In order to meet students' needs and address the shortages, some school districts have been providing related services virtually. The question of whether or not a school is permitted to provide related services virtually requires an individualized decision based on the unique needs of the child. This document will discuss some considerations and strategies for participating in IEP team discussions about virtual related services.

What are related services?

Related services are those services that must be provided to your child so they can benefit from special education instruction. Related services are recommended for your child by the IEP team, and must be included in your child's IEP. The IEP should specify exactly how many hours of each service your child is to receive and how often. Examples of related services include but are not limited to:

1. Speech pathology
2. Audiology
3. Psychological services (including psychotherapy)
4. Occupational therapy
5. Social work services
6. Medical services for the purpose of diagnosing and evaluating the child
7. Rehabilitation counseling
8. Parent counseling and training
9. School health services
10. School nursing services
11. Counseling
12. Interpreting services

Can related services be offered virtually?

Schools are not prohibited from providing related services virtually. However, the decision to provide related services in this way must be based on the individual needs of the child. To determine whether virtual related services are appropriate for your child, the IEP team should analyze your child's educational data, history, and specific needs and determine if your child can make sufficient progress on their IEP goals if the related service is delivered virtually.

What to do if my child is not progressing with virtual related services?

If you believe your child will not be able to access virtual related services, or if you believe your child is not making appropriate progress with their related services being delivered virtually, you should raise your concerns in an IEP meeting with your child's school. You can request an IEP meeting at any time throughout the school year. During the meeting, make sure to provide evidence to support your belief that your child does not progress or regresses (loses skills) when related services are provided virtually.

For example, if you have documentation that your child did not make progress or regressed during COVID-19 virtual learning, that could be evidence that virtual related services are not appropriate.

If the school fails to provide in-person related services after receiving evidence that your child is not progressing with virtual services, you may file a complaint with the Maryland State Department of Education, request mediation, or request a due process hearing. You may also ask that the school system provide compensatory (make up) education services to your child. More information about dispute resolution options can be found in DRM's [Special Education Handbook](#).

Please feel free to contact Disability Rights Maryland's intake line at 410-727-6352 with questions or concerns or if you need this document in an alternative format.