

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Related Services: Delivering Teleservices During COVID-19

A comprehensive Teleservices Toolkits is available [here](#). This FAQ is a companion and highlights the most common questions asked by providers.

#### **1. If I'm an SLP, do I have to hold a license from the Tennessee Board of Communication Disorders and Sciences to provide teleservices?**

Not necessarily. Since distance learning is considered an extension and adaptation of the educational supports that were provided at school, the educator license (school services personnel) issued by the Tennessee Department of Education (the department) is sufficient. However, if teleservices are being billed by a third-party provider, and/or submitted for Medicaid reimbursement, then the provider must hold a license by the Board of Communication Disorders and Sciences.

#### **2. Some families do not have internet access or necessary technology for teleservices. How do I provide services to them?**

Access to internet and technology varies greatly across the state, and not all families are able to participate in online learning opportunities or teletherapy. The department has compiled a guidance document outlining available IT resources for families [here](#). Alternatively, related services providers should continue to communicate with the families through phone calls. It's possible to provide coaching, share local resources, or plan to develop and offer learning materials that can be picked up by the family at school or other location. Related service providers should also continue collaboration with teachers to find ways to support their lessons and help with making learning materials accessible to students with disabilities.

#### **3. What platform do I use when delivering teleservices?**

There are multiple options available in the marketplace at support distance learning and online video conferencing. When using these options, teachers, staff, and students – or anyone who is in a host role – must ensure they follow best practices for providing a safe and secure platform for all parties to use. While the department does not advocate for any particular platform, our recommendation is for districts to use an enterprise application that ensures teacher's and student's privacy and protection and that can be secured using district's existing privacy and access control. Consult your district administrators and board attorney to determine the policies around virtual learning platforms and online communication. Additionally, districts must ensure that their chosen platform protects student privacy and complies with [FERPA/HIPAA](#).

More information can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

#### **4. Am I required to obtain parental consent prior to engaging in teleservices?**

Districts must assess whether parental consent is required prior to the provision of telehealth services to students. Please reference the [Teleservices Toolikit](#) to read further explanations of FERPA requirements and potential exceptions to schools. It is, however, always important that parents understand your district's policies and practices regarding teleservices, the type of services the student will receive virtually, and how you will protect confidential student information. Families and guardians should be informed of any service or distance learning opportunity being made available to their child, and they have the right to decline these services.

#### **5. I have never delivered teletherapy. Where do I begin learning to do this?**

These are unrepresented times and both providers and families are having to adapt quickly. While it is easy to become overwhelmed by the *how*, it is more important to keep the *what* at the forefront. As a provider, the delivery may look differently, but the purpose of the service hasn't changed. Identify if the student's needs or skills have changed or if the family has new priorities; from there determined if intervention can be delivered directly (online) with the student, or if coaching and consultation are more appropriate. Additionally, providers should also check with their professional associations and licensing board for specific requirements.

#### **6. If I'm not able to access my school materials for lessons/therapy, what am I supposed to use when delivering teleservices to students?**

Therapy will likely look very different under the current circumstances, and providers and families will be adjusting to a model that does not exactly mirror face-to-face therapy. The home and school dynamics have changed and therefore the needs of the students and family may also have changed. Providers may find that coaching and consultative supports are just as valuable to the family as direct instruction with their child. Prior to planning a session, it's important to communicate with caregivers to understand the current struggles and observations at home with regard to their child's needs; use that information to guide therapy services and resources.

#### **7. How do I complete assessments virtually?**

Consider the purpose of the assessment. If the team is conducting an initial evaluation for special education eligibility, reference the department's [School Closures and Special Education: Guidance on Services to Students with Disabilities](#) and [Guidance on Initial Evaluations per State Board of Education Emergency Rule](#). For re-evaluations due during a school closing, teams should complete the reevaluation as soon as possible upon return. For re-evaluations due while

students are attending a virtual instructional setting, cases should be treated on an individual basis; however, every attempt should be made to complete the re-evaluation to the extent possible, given reasonable access to the student. Consider the limitations of distance evaluation methods. Consult the test's technical manual or test-maker to determine if the measure was designed to be administered online.

#### **8. Do I count teleservices as IEP hours?**

It depends. If the school district has closed and is not requiring that students participate in online learning, then any related services delivered during school closure are not considered IEP services; they are supports and learning opportunities provided for continuity of education and to mitigate potential regression. However, if a district has elected to continue distance education with requirements for attendance and grading, then students with disabilities must also be provided an equal education to the greatest extent possible, including IEP services (which may be counted as IEP hours).

#### **9. Do I record online sessions?**

No. Providers are expected to document any services provided to, or on behalf of, students. The provision of teleservices is no different and should be documented in the same way as an in-person session.

#### **10. What do I do if I witness abuse, neglect, or a mental health crisis during a teleservice session?**

If you suspect that a child's health or safety is at risk, or you witness situations deemed harmful to a child, you must report it immediately in accordance with your LEA policies and procedures, and as required by Tennessee law. Additional information on what constitutes child abuse and neglect and mandates for reporting can be found [here](#).

Additionally, be prepared with a plan to manage emergencies if a student threatens to harm themselves or others. Ensure that parents know how to seek help out of school hours or when school professionals are otherwise unavailable.

Crisis services available to parents and children can be found [here](#) and [here](#).