

MDE provides guidance to parents of students with disabilities about services during school closures

Press Release

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Office of Special Education has created this Q & A as a resource to parents of children with disabilities to help support their learning during school closures.

Please visit the MDE's Special Education webpage for more information and for an email list of staff contacts:

*UMMC Holmes

(Continued from page 1.) killed 10,040 people with over 246,000 total confirmed cases.

As of Friday morning, March 20, there had been 80 confirmed cases in Mississippi and one death.

"We are currently taking every measure and succeeding in maintaining excellent patient care and limited spread during this pandemic," said Dr. Antone "Mac" Nichols, director of the Emergency Department at UMMC Grenada. "We are also making every effort to protect the emergency staff on the front line so they can continue to be available over the upcoming weeks to care for the sickest of patients who come to our emergency department and minimize the serious impact of COVID-19 on our community and the surrounding area."

If the patient meets the criteria of the Mississippi State Department of Health, testing is available at the drive-through clinic in Grenada. The criteria includes anyone with symptoms of fever, severe cough, respiratory issues or sore throat – especially those who are older or in poor health. It also includes those with symptoms who have been in close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient.

"Minimizing the serious complications and mortality of this pandemic while caring for our other emergency patients is our utmost priority," said Nichols.

If their symptoms are the result of flu or another infection, they are treated on site as well.

Nurse practitioner Linda Carter is a lead provider, and her clinical staff on the front lines have been screening and treating patients since Monday. She said she and her team are "happy to assist local primary care clinics and our own ER while maintaining protective measures for our patients and our team."

She said she appreciates the work of her team, and Dodie McElmurray, chief executive officer of UMMC Grenada, describes Carter and the others as "instru-

www.mdek12.org/OSE.

Should my child with disabilities be receiving special education services during the school closures? Based on guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education, if the district is not providing educational services to students during the closure, then there is not a requirement to provide special

education services to students with disabilities during the same time period.

If the LEA provides formalized educational services through online instruction to the general student population, would the LEA be required to provide services to students with disabilities during that same period? If a Local Educational Agency (LEA) continues to provide

the spread of COVID-19 in both Grenada and Holmes County."

Like UMMC's Jackson operations, UMMC Grenada is only performing urgent outpatient visits and emergency surgeries. The clinics both in Grenada and in Lexington are also moving some appointments to telehealth and taking measures to preserve personal protective equipment, similar to the Jackson campus.

If you are a patient at UMMC Grenada and experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, call the main line at 662-227-7000. If you are a patient at UMMC Holmes County, call 662-834-1321.

mental in the success of the drive-through clinic and taking care of our community."

McElmurray said UMMC is taking additional measures besides the drive-through clinic – including visiting community doctors outside of UMMC to provide educational information, such as how to proceed if they have a patient who could be infected and how to order test kits. "We are taking a proactive approach to prevent the spread of this disease," said McElmurray. "We are in regular contact with city and county leadership to make sure we are doing what is needed to protect the community and prevent

the spread of COVID-19 in both Grenada and Holmes County."

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Deadline to apply for HELP Grant March 31

Press Release

The deadline to complete the Mississippi Aid Application (MAAPP) in order to qualify for the HELP Grant is March 31, 2020. Applicants will then have through April 30 to submit supporting documents, including the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Students should apply online at www.msfinancialaid.org or link directly from the FAFSA.

"Although we have had to modify office operations, we want to assure students that applications are being processed and that assistance is available," said Jennifer Rogers, Director of Student Financial Aid. "It is important for students to stay on track with their plans for college and continue pursuing the resources needed to help pay for it."

The HELP Grant pays up to full tuition for students attending Mississippi public colleges and universities. Students attending a private institution will receive an award amount equal to the award of a student attending the nearest comparable public institution.

To qualify for the HELP Grant, students must:

- Complete the MAAPP by March 31
- Apply for the first time within two years of high school graduation

• Have a cumulative high school GPA of 2.5

• Score a minimum of 20 on the national ACT (or an equivalent score on the SAT)

• Take the required IHL College Prep Curriculum in high school

• Meet income requirements and be Pell eligible, as determined by completion of the FAFSA, and

• Provide supporting documentation by April 30

More information about HELP is available at www.msfinancialaid.org/help.

Due to recommendations from the Mississippi State Department of Health, the state aid office is working with a skeleton staff and has temporarily disabled the call center.

Students who need assistance with their online applications are encouraged to submit questions via email to sfa@mississippi.edu and check their MAAPP Dashboard for updates.

Students are also encouraged to take advantage of the services offered free of charge by the non-profit Get2College, including help with the FAFSA or MAAPP. Visit www.get2college.org or call 601.321.5533 to make a virtual appointment with a counselor.

The deadline to complete MAAPP to qualify for MTAG or MESG is September 15.

educational opportunities to the general student population during a school closure, the school must ensure that students with disabilities also have equal access to the same opportunities, including the delivery of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

How will special education services be provided to my child during school closures? If the district is not providing educational services to students during the closure, then there is not a requirement to provide special education services to students with disabilities during the same time period.

What will happen if my child is not able to receive certain special education services during school closures? Any need for compensatory services related to school closure or inability to fully implement a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) can be addressed after school resumes and should be addressed on a case-by-case basis. This might include discussions of compensatory education and extended school year (ESY) services, made on a case-by-case basis. When your district resumes standard operations, the district should collect student data to determine any student progression or regression on annual IEP goals. This data can be used to inform IEP Committee decisions and assist in compensatory service decisions.

What should I do if my child's IEP will expire during school closures? Districts are currently considering alternate ways to use virtual technology (e.g., Zoom, conference calls, Skype, etc.) to the extent possible to provide annual IEP meetings if staff and parents are available but not able to attend in person. IEP Committee members may contact you to schedule meetings while schools are closed.

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These meetings can be hosted virtually as long as a student's parent or legal guardian consents. Each student decision will be handled on a case-by-case issue.

What should I do if my child had an evaluation/eligibility meeting that was scheduled during the school closure? Districts are currently considering alternate ways to use virtual technology (e.g., Zoom, conference calls, Skype, etc.) to the extent possible to conduct meetings pertaining to evaluation if staff and parents are available but not able to attend in person. If an evaluation of a student with a disability requires a face-to-face assessment or observation, the evaluation would need to be delayed until school reopens.

Evaluations and re-evaluations that do not require face-

to-face assessments or observations may take place while schools are closed, so long as a student's parent or legal guardian consents. IEP Committee members may contact you to schedule virtual meetings while schools are closed. What will happen to my child's services if school remains open, but my child is sick at home? Students who are sick and who need to stay home for more than 10 days may need to receive homebound instruction. The IEP committee must meet to determine how to provide services for your child. This may include schoolwork packets, virtual online instruction, or some other type of learning adapted to the student's needs and location.

Find guidance and updates for all students and schools at www.mdek12.org/covid19.

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