Transition to In-Person Learning FAQs

What does the Ohio Department of Education say about children returning to school?
The Department of Education has instructed every school district to create a Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan. This means that schools should have information available on their website about how they plan to address the following:
- Universal and correct wearing of masks
- Physical distancing
- Handing washing and respiratory etiquette
- Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities
- How ventilation is going to be improved
- How the school will respond to positive COVID results and when children will be quarantined due to exposure to COVID
- Diagnostic testing and screening for COVID
- Providing vaccinations to educators, staff, and students, if eligible
- Accommodations for children with disabilities regarding health and safety policies

Are there special considerations for children with disabilities?
Requesting an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or accommodations under a 504 Plan

Initial Evaluations
A parent may need to ask for an evaluation for a child who has had or has developed a disability that has interfered with the child’s ability to learn. The parent should make this request in writing. The school must respond to your request within 30 days.
If the school agrees that your child should be evaluated, the school has 60 days to evaluate your child.
The evaluation will decide whether the child has a qualifying disability and determine what services are needed to ensure that the child receives an appropriate education.
Special education services can be provided as part of an IEP and classroom accommodations can be provided as part of a 504 Plan.

Reevaluations
Typically, reevaluations are done every three years, but IEPs and 504 Plans are updated each year. Changes to your child’s plan may be needed to account for the transition from remote learning to in-person learning. You should consider requesting a reevaluation for your child if there are concerns or if your child has developed additional mental or physical health issues since they were last evaluated.

Any documentation of the child’s progress on goals while the child was learning remotely
If the school was providing a free and appropriate education during the time period, the child was remotely learning
What service options were accessible to the school during the remote learning period?
Parent’s refusal of appropriate services during a closure period or remote learning period. To get an idea of whether your school offered appropriate services previously
What additional services are available for children who have fallen behind?

Recovery Services:
- Many schools are using the term “recovery services” to explain what assistance they will provide to help students who have fallen behind during remote instruction.
- These recovery services are available to children who are showing less than expected achievement for their goals and skills when they return to school.
- A child’s eligibility for recovery services is considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Some of the factors that schools should consider in determining whether recovery services are needed for a child on an IEP or 504 Plan are:
  - The child’s IEP goals and baseline objectives
  - The progress that a child made on their IEP goals and objectives before remote learning.
  - Any documentation of the child’s progress on goals while the child was learning remotely
  - If the school was providing a free and appropriate education during the time period the child was remotely learning
  - What service options were accessible to the school during the remote learning period?
  - Parent’s refusal of appropriate services during a closure period or remote learning period. To get an idea of whether your school offered appropriate services previously, please feel free to contact us.

Compensatory Education:
- Compensatory services are required when the school failed to provide IEP services that it should have given to the child. Schools have been very resistant to classify any services missed due to COVID as compensatory education and have instead been relying on recovery services to bridge this gap.
- Compensatory education services provide the child whatever services are needed to put the child in the same position as the child would have been in if the necessary services had been provided.
- The considerations for compensatory education are the same as recovery services:
  - The child’s IEP goals and baseline objectives
  - The progress that a child made on their IEP goals and objectives before remote learning.
  - Any documentation of the child’s progress on goals while the child was learning remotely
  - If the school was providing a free and appropriate education during the time period the child was remotely learning
  - What service options were accessible to the school during the remote learning period?
  - Parent’s refusal of appropriate services during a closure period or remote learning period. To get an idea of whether your school offered appropriate services previously, please feel free to contact us.

How can I get more information about returning to school?
- Your school district likely has this information in their Safe to Return In Person Plan, or has made decisions about their practices for contact tracing and quarantining. You should contact your school district regarding their contact tracing and quarantine protocols so you

What if my child is medically fragile?
- For children who are at-risk for contracting COVID 19, you should contact your school about creating an Individual Health Plan (IHP) to incorporate necessary precautions into your child’s day-to-day activities to reduce their exposure. An IHP may also be needed for children struggling with increased anxieties during this time.

What if my child is experiencing behavioral issues now that they are back in the classroom?
- Many children will be out of practice on what is expected in the classroom setting. Having conversations with children to remind them of the expectations in the classroom could make quite a difference in the child’s behavior in school. If your child is struggling with appropriate classroom behavior, you should contact your school about whether your child could benefit from a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP).
- Children experiencing behavioral struggles when returning to the classroom should also be referred to counselors or other designated school officials to discuss how to self-advocate for their needs during this time.
What if my child is anxious about returning to school?
- Children may have increased social anxieties because they have not been in a classroom with their peers and faculty for some time. They may also have anxieties about health or cleanliness as a result of the pandemic. Children may need additional supports in the schools for their social/emotional needs. You should ask the school counselor about services available to your child if they are experiencing social or health-related anxiety.

- Many children may experience anxiety due to separation from their home and family after a year of being predominantly at home. Discuss these concerns with your children and help them develop tools that they can use to help lessen their anxiety. You may need to refer your child to a private counselor for additional tips on how to address their needs if their anxiety interferes with the ability to perform day-to-day tasks.

Will schools return to remote instruction if COVID cases rise again?
- Continue to ensure you are prepared for any changes that could be announced for a return to remote learning. Unfortunately, due to unpredictability and the rise in cases, there could be a need to return to remote learning again either for your child's school, or your individual child if they are exposed to someone with COVID. Make sure that you have a plan in place for them to receive whatever services are available in case there is another period in the next year when they need to learn remotely.