Guidance for Administrative Units on
Hearing & Vision Screening During COVID-19

State universal screening mandate requirements (C.R.S. 22-1-116) were temporarily suspended by executive order in the 2019-20 school year due to the temporary suspension of normal in-person instruction. Schools should develop a plan for conducting in-person student screenings as soon as feasible and permitted by public health orders. In the 20-21 school year, mass screening requirements will resume - unless an executive or public health order suspending activities occurs. In addition to the universal screening mandate, screening requirements and recommendations under **Parts C and B of IDEA** are still in effect for students undergoing screenings and evaluations for special education eligibility.

The value of these screenings, to identify potential sensory issues that may hinder development and learning, has not diminished during the current COVID-19 pandemic. However, the feasibility of conducting both universal and targeted screenings will be highly affected by remote and in-person learning scenarios as well as school-implemented health and safety procedures. Conducting screenings in a greatly altered school environment with physical distancing and other strict infection control protocols will present challenges for districts. Districts should expect to alter practices in order to fulfill requirements under the law and to support students' needs. This guidance identifies potential considerations and solutions to address these challenges.

Remote Learning Considerations

Remote learning situations will be encountered whether schools have made this decision or whether parents have decided on this option for their child. In either case, the following should be considered.
- Hearing and vision screenings cannot be conducted virtually.
- Parents can opt out of school-based screenings based on religious or personal grounds.
- Schools may continue to offer screening opportunities by appointment at a designated district location while students are learning remotely, using the in-person screening considerations below.
- For students being evaluated for special education 100% remotely, and parents who decline having their student screened by school staff in a designated location, refer to this guidance for special education processes.
- Utilize survey screening tools to determine risk (see resources below).
- If concerns are identified, consult with experts in the district as needed (audiologist, nurse, teachers of students with visual impairments).
- Designate district staff who are trained (school nurses, audiologists, health technicians/assistants or screening teams) to review previous screening data and conduct follow up with families.
- If a student is determined at risk, encourage and document follow up with the appropriate health care provider.
- Share resources and information on the importance of hearing and vision screening and follow up with families (see resources below).
- If a school is experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak, suspend all in-person screenings until permitted to resume by local public health.

In-Person Screening Considerations

When schools resume in-person learning scenarios, districts will need to consider how screenings can also resume in a safe and effective manner given the disruptive changes to the school environment. To minimize disease transmission and to provide much needed services to the most at-risk students, the following should be considered.

- Remember that students should not be screened if a parent objects based on religious or personal grounds. Screening personnel should document the parent's decision.
- Even during the Stay at Home phase, in-person screenings may be considered as an important requirement for meeting a student's specific learning need.
- Instead of scheduling an in-person screening for all mandatory grades, consider using a process that helps identify students at risk as a first step.
- Triage students grades 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9 through a survey screening tool first.
  - Parent/guardians and/or teachers can complete a hearing and vision observation and survey screening tool (see resources below)
  - All kindergarten students are at greater risk for missed screening opportunities and would not need to be triaged using the survey screening tool
  - Ninth grade will be the final opportunity for most students to receive a universal hearing and vision screening so every effort should be made to include them in the screening process
- Conduct in-person screenings prioritized for the following sets of students.
  - Students whose survey screening results indicate concerns
  - Birth to age three (Part C)
    - Families must agree to in-person screening if available by the administrative unit
    - Remote evaluation guidance should be followed for those families who decline in-person screening opportunities
  - ECE-Kindergarten students
    - Teachers/staff may not have enough experience with these students to provide meaningful feedback on surveys
    - ECE-Kindergarten students are at greater risk for missed screening opportunities
    - This age group has a potential for greater developmental impact related to undiagnosed hearing and/or vision loss
  - Students being evaluated for an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan
  - Students who have no record of having a hearing and/or vision screening
  - Students who have repeatedly failed a hearing and/or vision screening and have no record of completing a referral
  - Students who are referred by a staff member, family member, or self-referred
- If a school is experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak, suspend all in-person screenings until permitted to resume by local public health.

Safely Conducting In-Person Screenings

Decisions Locally
Decisions regarding how to conduct safe screenings should be made at the district and school level and based on a variety of factors, including staff and equipment availability as well as local health conditions and phase of re-opening. The school nurse is responsible for coordinating and supervising mass screening programs. It is

recommended that coordinators of screening programs include Child Find teams and appropriate professionals, such as audiologists and teachers of students with visual impairments, in the discussion of how to identify safe and appropriate screening practices. Building leaders and school nurses should help determine a plan that works for the individual situation.

Location

Typically, screenings occur at the school of attendance. Screenings should be conducted in a location that protects confidentiality, minimizes distractions of other students, allows for safe distancing, and follows cohort rules of the school/district. Consider using spaces that allow for easy access to handwashing and efficient disinfection of equipment and surfaces in addition to areas with maximized ventilation. Screenings should not occur in spaces where students and staff are evaluated for illness, such as the health office.

Equipment

Availability of screening equipment may be an issue as not every building has a designated device and equipment is shared among multiple sites. In addition, screening equipment that has not been calibrated or maintained appropriately may not be usable.

Equity in Screening Opportunities

Students attending remotely, regardless of the reason, should be given the option to receive an in-person screening at a site designated by school staff.

Individuals Conducting the Screenings

Individuals conducting in-person student screenings may be allowed in the school buildings as an essential service provider and should comply with the school's health screening protocols and requirements prior to entry into the screening area.

Safe Screening Practices: Respiratory protection and infection control
- Limit exposure to students and/or adults to under 15 minutes
- Maintain 6-foot distancing unless screening procedure requires closer contact
- Use face coverings such as a cloth face mask
- A face shield and/or divider may be used in addition to a face mask
- Wash hands before and after each screening (student and screener)
- Disinfect all touched surfaces in between students (gloves are recommended when available), making sure to follow manufacturer's instructions for disinfecting screening equipment

Resources
- CDE Guidelines for Childhood & Youth Hearing Screening Programs
- CDE Guidelines for Vision Screening Programs: Kindergarten Through Grades 12
- CDE Guidelines for Vision Screening Birth - 5
- Screening surveys/questionnaires:
  - Hearing
    - H.E.A.R. Checklist: English / Spanish
    - Birth-5 Hearing Developmental Checklist: English / Spanish (NIDCD)
    - 10 Signs of Risk for Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (CDC)
  - Vision
    - ABC Checklist ages 5+: English / Spanish
    - Birth-5 Vision Screening Checklist: English / Spanish

- Metro-area community non-profit for low-cost hearing screening: Marion Downs Center
- General information websites for caregivers and educators
    - Childhood hearing loss information on CDC Website: English / Spanish
    - Preventing noise-induced hearing loss in children and teens: NIH Noisy Planet Website
    - Facts about vision loss on CDC Website: English

Contacts

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