

Guidance on Hearing & Vision Screening During COVID-19 for Children Served Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Parts C and B

Best practices for conducting hearing and vision screening necessitate in-person contact between the screener and the child. In-person screenings should not occur during school closures due to COVID-19. There are currently no evidence-based options for conducting remote hearing and vision screenings. As early education agencies and schools proceed with referrals and evaluations under IDEA Parts C and B, this information needs to be taken into consideration. It is important to inform parents about this limitation and that hearing and/or vision problems needing further attention or assessment cannot be ruled out at this time. With that understanding, the following guidance is offered to support CCB and AU processes, as staff move to remote working and virtual service delivery. When a hearing and/or vision screening is necessary to move forward in the early intervention or special education process, the following 3 step protocol is suggested.

□ Step 1 – Data Collection to Inform Evaluation or Next Steps

Once the family demonstrates understanding of the inability to perform an in-person hearing and/or vision screening, team members should make all reasonable efforts to obtain three data points.

1. Prior screening or medical records (newborn screenings; screening or assessment reports from clinical or medical providers) (all ages)
2. Full health history including “high risk” questions ([HEAR Checklist](#), [0- 5 Vision Screening Parent Questionnaire](#))
3. A functional record of hearing and/or vision abilities ([ABC Checklist](#), [NIDCD, 0-5 Vision Screening Parent Questionnaire](#))

□ Step 2 – Team Review and Documentation of Existing information to Inform Next Steps (Evaluation Activities)

The screening or evaluation team, including the parent,:

- a. Documents whether the data collected in Step 1 indicates a concern related to hearing and/or vision or does not indicate a concern.
- b. Documents clearly in the child’s Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP) that a formal hearing and/or vision screening was not conducted.
- c. If the team, including parent, decides not to proceed with the evaluation process, Prior Written Notice (PWN) should include information about assessments not completed, such as hearing and/or vision screening, among all of other content

required. A statement such as the following is recommended to be included in any documentation of evaluation activities:

*“Due to stay-at-home order and suspension of in-person activities, a formal hearing and/or vision screening was unable to be obtained. All effort was made to obtain prior screening history, high-risk health history, and functional data to proceed with this evaluation. **As soon as restrictions on in-person contact are lifted, a valid, in-person hearing and vision screening is recommended for this child/student.**”*

□ Step 3 – Follow-Up Plan

All early intervention programs and school systems will establish a plan to complete in-person hearing and vision screenings whenever it is safe to do so. A comprehensive plan will include tracking all future hearing and vision screening needs, as well as consultation from professionals with appropriate expertise including educational audiologists, school nurses, teachers of students with visual impairments. For children in early intervention, consultation may be provided by the Colorado Hearing Resource Coordinator (CO-Hears). The plan will include any recommendations for follow up with clinical providers..

Documentation should include:

- a. Projected date for in-person screening/s: ___/___/___
- b. Projected date for IFSP team or IEP team to re-convene and consider new data: ___/___/___

FAQ

What if a hearing and/or vision problem is suspected?

For children eligible for early intervention, consultative visits with sensory disability specialists (e.g. audiologists, CO-Hears, teachers of students with visual impairments) to address concerns may be added to IFSPs prior to the child receiving a medical evaluation. These specialists can support families in connecting with medical providers.

If either the IFSP or IEP team suspects a significant or medically urgent hearing and/or vision problem, support the family in contacting their medical provider to determine next steps.

Should the IFSP or IEP process be suspended?

Teams are encouraged to proceed with the special education process of gathering data and determining eligibility for services. The absence of a hearing and/or vision screening, in most circumstances, should not prohibit moving forward with the process. Families will be provided a follow-up plan for the administration of hearing and vision screenings when in-person services resume as outlined in the Guidance Document (insert name). If a significant hearing

or vision problem is identified at that time, the team can then determine next steps and, if needed, how to amend the child's IFSP or IEP.

What "other" tools are appropriate to obtain health or functional hearing and vision data?

There are a myriad of checklists and assessment tools that are available to collect data regarding hearing and vision health and function. These tools may already be used by certain teams and be comprehensive enough to gather the intended data. If there are questions about whether a specific tool is appropriate, please reach out to the experts on the team including the educational audiologist, school nurse, and teacher of students with visual impairment, and for EI the CO-Hear, as appropriate. **However, these alternate tools do not replace an in-person hearing or vision screening.**

Who may additional questions be directed to related to hearing and vision screening?

Hearing Screening 0-21:

Lisa Cannon, CDE Audiology Coordinator, 720-423-9794, Lisa_Cannon@dpsk12.org

Vision Screening:

Birth to age 5 years: Tanni Anthony, CDE Blindness/Visual Impairment Consultant, 303 866-6681, anthony_t@cde.state.co.us

K-12: Sarah Blumenthal, CDE School Nurse Consultant, 303-947-6946 blumenthal_s@cde.state.co.us

Attached: 0- 5 Vision Screening Parent Questionnaire