

**Office of Early Childhood - COVID 19 FAQ**  
*Last Updated on March 17, 2020*

**In This FAQ**

- Basic Resources
- Closures
- Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI)
- Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)
- Expansion of VPI/Mixed Delivery Application for 2020-2021
- Food and Nutrition Programs
- Learning Resources for Educators and Families
- CLASS Observations and Professional Development Planning/Consultations
- Monitoring
- Teacher Licensure
- Preschool Development Grant Birth-Five
- Upcoming Events

**Basic Resources**

**Q: Where can we learn more about COVID-19 in Virginia?**

A: The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) works closely with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and other state and federal authorities to provide the latest information and guidance on COVID-19 to the commonwealth's public schools. The most up-to-date information from VDH can be found on this website: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/surveillance-and-investigation/novel-coronavirus/>

Division and building-level administrators, school health coordinators, and educators looking for access to up-to-date resources and information about COVID-19 and the steps schools should take to safeguard the health of students and staff should access the VDOE website:

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/health\\_medical/office/covid-19.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/health_medical/office/covid-19.shtml)

Additional information can be found from the Center for Disease Control (CDC):

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>

**Q: What preventative actions can everyone take?**

A: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Virginia Department of Health recommend protecting yourself and children in your home or in your care by taking basic precautions:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- If you think you are sick, consult your healthcare provider.

## **Program Closures**

**Q: The Governor issued an order on March 13, 2020 that closed all public and private K-12 schools in Virginia for at least two weeks. Does it include Virginia Preschool Initiative? Early Childhood Special Education?**

A: Yes. Generally speaking, it is expected that all VPI, early childhood special education classrooms or other early childhood classrooms located in schools should follow this order and are to be closed for at least two weeks, from March 16 to March 27. This may not apply to classrooms in private child care settings (see below).

Information on the Governor's order related to school closure can be found here:

<https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/all-releases/2020/march/headline-854442-en.html>

Further information on Virginia school closure can be found on the VDOE website:

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/health\\_medical/office/covid-19.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/health_medical/office/covid-19.shtml)

**Q. What about Virginia Preschool Initiative in private child care settings?**

A. For classrooms funded all or in part by VPI that are located in non-school, private child care settings or that are run by private child care providers are not required to be closed. This decision should be made locally and in consultation with VPI Coordinators and private child care setting director.

It is strongly encouraged that all VPI Coordinators or equivalent stay in close communication with providers and families as these situations will likely continue to evolve.

As stated above, classrooms located in public and private K-12 schools are required to close for two weeks, from March 16 to March 27.

**Q: Does the Governor's order include child care centers?**

A: No. Child care centers are not impacted by the Governor's order to close schools. Sites should make closure decisions in coordination with local health departments: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/health-department-locator/>

**Q: What should determine if a center or private provider should close?**

A: The CDC has issued the following guidance on school and child care closures:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html>

Additional information may be shared by the Department of Social Services:

<https://www.dss.virginia.gov/geninfo/corona.cgi>

## **Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI)**

**Q. Will VPI Programs be required to make up hours to meet the 990 instructional hours for full-day VPI (or 540 hours for half-day)?**

Per the Governor's order related to the state of emergency, the State Superintendent will work with school divisions to provide flexibility via waivers for the school hours missed during the Governor's order and for other school closures related to COVID-19. Information about potential for waivers can be found in

the Superintendent Memo posted on March 13:

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents\\_memos/2020/071-20.docx](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2020/071-20.docx)

Should there be extended closures beyond the current order the VDOE encourages school divisions to consider options and ideas to engage students in meaningful adult-to-child interactions, early literacy activities, enriched language experiences, and meaningful activities that boost children's natural curiosity related to mathematics, science, and the arts. Creating such opportunities should be done with careful consideration of providing equitable access and support for a variety of students. Due to the waivers that will be granted for school closures related to COVID-19, schools should not consider strategies for continuity of learning as make-up days.

Additionally, we recommend that school divisions be mindful of the impacts of increased screen time for students and incorporates suggestions for physical activity and wellness.

**Q: Does the attendance requirement still apply for VPI?**

A: During school closures, VPI automated payments continue. The VDOE will continue to provide updates to the guidance concerning automated VPI payments. Contingency plans are in place to allow recurring payments for VPI to continue to divisions.

With the approval of waivers mentioned above, state funding will continue to be provided to school divisions. Attendance tracking should mark the school closures in the same manner used for normal school closures for weather, holiday, etc. When schools reopen, any additional COVID19 related absences are considered excused absences.

**Q. When will we find out whether we can open after March?**

A: Additional information about any statewide orders from the Governor will be released to the public as soon as possible. For up-to-date information, check the following websites:

- Virginia Department of Health: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/surveillance-and-investigation/novel-coronavirus/>
- Virginia Department of Education: [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/health\\_medical/office/covid-19.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/health_medical/office/covid-19.shtml)

Decisions about opening schools may also be impacted by decisions made at the local level.

**Q: How will school closures affect expectation and timelines for Spring PALS?**

A: Information regarding spring testing windows is forthcoming. Please send any specific questions regarding PreK PALS or VKRP to [Tamilah.Richardson@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Tamilah.Richardson@doe.virginia.gov).

**Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)**

**Q. What about early childhood special education services?**

A. If a school division is closed and does not provide any educational services to the general student population, then the school division would not be required to provide services to students with disabilities during that same period of time. Once school resumes, the school division must make every effort to provide special education and related services to the child in accordance with the child's individualized education program (IEP) or consistent with a plan developed to meet the requirements of Section 504.

In addition, the IEP Team or the personnel responsible for implementing Section 504, would be required to make an individualized determination as to whether compensatory services are needed under applicable standards and requirements.

**Q. What about early childhood special education services offered in private settings?**

A. If the division has children with an IEP that are served in community-based preschool or child care centers that remain open, the provision of services should still be provided to ensure the requirements of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) are met. If services are not able to be provided per the IEP, the IEP Team would need to reconvene to make an individualized determination as to whether compensatory services are needed under applicable standards and requirements for the time/services not provided. Without sufficient notice or a team meeting the lack of services could leave the school division open to risk of due process. The local director of special education as well as school division counsel should be consulted.

As such, there will be a lot of variability in what programs will remain open/close and we expect that many of these locations will continue to operate in what are highly extraordinary circumstances. We would encourage you and your team to keep this in mind as you make these individual determinations on how to proceed.

**Q. Will timelines for special education and will the state or federal calendar be adjusted?**

A. At this time, there is no guidance from the U. S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) regarding the waiver of federal timelines related to special education compliance. OSEP has been clear in the past there is no waiver for natural disasters. Local school divisions should develop a plan to support maintaining timelines and to document clearly if a delay occurs, the nature and extent of the delay and the plan to move as quickly as possible to prevent any further delay. Local Directors of Special Education should be consulted for local and school based guidance. Please recall that existing regulations already provide for certain types of flexibility with regard to holding meetings and for extending timelines. For instance, if a parent does not make a student available for testing, or if the parent and school division agree in writing to extend the 65 business day timeline to obtain additional data that cannot be obtained within the 65 business days, the evaluation/eligibility timeline may be extended. In addition, amendments to IEPs may be made without a meeting, and meetings may always be conducted virtually.

**Q. What about children referred from Part C to Part B?**

A. At this time, Part C services continue to be delivered based on individual decisions made by the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) Team. OSEP has given states the ability to use judgement and make decisions on a case-by-case basis regarding provision of IFSP services and consistent with protecting the health and safety of the child and those providing services to the child. In some instances, services are not being provided as the family is unable to make the child available. It should be expected that referrals may continue to be sent to Part B. As noted above, OSEP has not provided a waiver of federal timelines. For more guidance, please see the question on “Timelines for Special Education” above. Additionally, as some children will not receive IFSP services, referrals may indeed be sent late to Part B. Part C has been asked to clearly communicate the reason for all late referrals to Part B. OSEP does provide allowances for missing federal timelines. For instance, if a parent does not make a student available, changes their mind to refer the child to Part B, or if the parent and school division agree in writing to extend the 65 business day timeline to obtain additional data that cannot be obtained within the 65 business days, the evaluation/eligibility timeline may be extended. In addition meetings may always be conducted virtually.

**Q. Must an LEA provide special education and related services to a child with a disability who is absent for an extended period of time because the child is infected with COVID-19, while the schools remain open?**

A. Yes. It has long been OSEP's position that when a child with a disability is classified as needing homebound instruction because of a medical problem, as ordered by a physician, and is home for an extended period of time (generally more than 10 consecutive school days), an IEP meeting is necessary to change the child's placement and the contents of the child's IEP, if warranted. Further, if the IEP goals will remain the same and only the time in special education will change, then the IEP Team may add an amendment to the IEP stating specifically the amount of time to be spent in special education. If a child with a disability is absent for an extended period of time because of a COVID-19 infection and the school remains open, then the IEP Team must determine whether the child is available for instruction and could benefit from homebound services such as online or virtual instruction, instructional telephone calls, and other curriculum-based instructional activities, to the extent available. In so doing, school personnel should follow appropriate health guidelines to assess and address the risk of transmission in the provision of such services. OSEP understands there may be exceptional circumstances that could affect how a particular service is provided. If a child does not receive services after an extended period of time, a school must make an individualized determination whether and to what extent compensatory services may be needed, consistent with applicable requirements, including to make up for any skills that may have been lost.

**Q. How will VDOE's scheduled professional development events and TTAC services to school divisions be impacted?**

A. As part of containing the community spread of COVID-19, VDOE staff is keeping people's travel and group gatherings to a minimum; universities with TTACs have policies and procedures for containment as well. At this time, the VDOE staff is taking precautions, which involve changing face-to-face gatherings with educators to virtual sessions. For the TTAC services to schools, TTAC staff members are employees of the universities and must follow their university policies and procedures, even if that means canceling all travel. Schools who were expecting TTAC services should be communicating with the TTAC office for specific information.

**Expansion of VPI/Mixed Delivery Application for 2020-2021**

**Q: How will all of this impact current deadlines for VPI for 2020-2021, including the waiver for local eligibility and Spring VPI Application May 15<sup>th</sup> deadline?**

A: The VDOE has not changed deadlines for VPI. Division applications for VPI for the 2020-20201 school year, including applications for the pilot VPI-3 program, are still due May 15, 2020. However, the VDOE will continue to provide updates regarding any potential changes to these deadlines.

School divisions interested in applying for a waiver to increase the percentage of at-risk children served through local eligibility criteria are still encouraged to submit this as soon as possible. All waivers must be submitted before the May 15 VPI application deadline.

School divisions should contact Erin.Carroll@doe.virginia.gov if they anticipate they will need additional flexibility due to extended closure. Information on any changes to VPI application deadlines will be shared directly to VPI Coordinators via email and in future Superintendent Communications.

**Food and Nutrition Programs**

**Q: How will all of this impact current deadlines for VPI for 2020-2021, including the waiver for local eligibility and Spring VPI Application May 15<sup>th</sup> deadline?**

A: The VDOE is currently approving waivers to school divisions to authorize non-congregate feeding under the Summer Food Service Program. We have received updates from local school divisions that are setting up drive-thru pickups, using school buses, and using faith-based organizations as pickup sites, etc., in order to ensure children have access to meals. Please see [Superintendent's Memo #070-20](#) posted on March 13, 2020 for more details on meal options for the School Nutrition Program.

### **Learning Resources for Educators and Families**

**Q: What resources are available for educators that may be helpful towards facilitating learning at home?**

A: VPI Coordinators and other early childhood leaders have prepared resources for supporting virtual learning and/or learning at home. Please note that the VDOE will continue to collect these resources and encourage educators to upload them to the new portal, GoOpenVA <https://goopenva.org/>.

If you have a resource that you are not able to upload, please email [Tamilah.Richardson@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Tamilah.Richardson@doe.virginia.gov)

**Q: What resources are available for families that may be helpful towards facilitating learning at home?**

A: The VDOE has pulled together the following free learning resources that are available to families.

#### Online Learning

- [ABCYA®](#) provides free access to preschool learning games covering letters, numbers, problem-solving (strategy) and other preschool skills.
- [Age of Learning®](#) is offering families at schools and centers affected by school closure free at-home access to research-proven learning resources. Families can use the redeem code: SCHOOL3673 to sign up for each of the following programs:
  - [ABCmouse.com® Early Learning Academy](#) is a comprehensive, research-validated curriculum for children 2-8.
  - [ReadingIQ®](#) is a digital library and literacy platform for children 2-12 designed by reading experts to improve literacy skills.
  - Questions can be sent to [support@aofl.com](mailto:support@aofl.com).
- [GoNoodle®](#) offers free movement and mindfulness videos for children (appropriate for older preschoolers). Watch the [GoNoodle 101: An Intro for Families](#) video for more information.
- [Khan Academy Kids®](#) is a free, educational app providing families of children ages 2-7 access to thousands of activities and books. Focused content includes math, reading, social emotional learning, creative projects, and more.
- Read [How to use Khan Academy Kids](#) for remote learning for details on how to set up a free account.
- [PBS Kids®](#) is adding daily activities and tips to their parent newsletter. This free resource is a guide families can use to help their children ages 2-8 play and learn at home. Content covers emotions and self-awareness, social skills, character, literacy, math, science, and arts. [Sign-up](#) for this free newsletter and also check out other no-cost resources made available to support families:
  - [PBS KIDS 24/7](#) channel offers anytime access to trusted educational series for kids ages 2-8 (check local listings)
  - [PBS KIDS Video](#) app is available on mobile, tablet, and connected TV devices and offers on-demand educational videos (live stream of PBS KIDS 24/7 channel also available. No subscription required.

- [PBS KIDS Games](#) app- nearly 200 educational games for children ages 2-8; can be downloaded for offline play. Learn more [here](#).
- [PBS KIDS for Parents](#) offers information, activities, and tips for parents, including the resource [“How to Talk to Your Kids About Coronavirus.”](#)
- [Scholastic Learn at Home](#) is a free resource for families impacted by school closure. The website links to a hub of active, cross-curricular learning journeys for up to three hours of learning experiences per day for prekindergarten children. No-cost access to articles and stories, videos, and related learning challenges available for up to 20 days. Spanish content available.
  - Families must first set up a free account for [BookFlix®](#) and the [Watch and Learn Library®](#), entering **username:** Learning20 | **password:** Clifford.
- [Starfall®](#) offers free access to interactive prekindergarten language arts, math, and music activities.

### Text Services

Several programs are available to offer tips and resources for families that support early learning through text messages. Message and data rates apply.

- [Bright by Text](#) provides quality information and trusted resources to families of children prenatal to age eight partnering with LPB. Text: LPB to 274448
- [Vroom](#) offers free, easy-to-use learning tips for children 5 and under delivered daily directly to your phone. Sign up for free at <https://www.vroom.org/>.
- [Ready4K](#) is an evidence-based family engagement curriculum delivered via text messages. Text: Ready4th to 70138

### **Q: How can families support preschoolers during this difficult time?**

A: Closures will result in changes in routine and some anxiety for children. Share these resources with families to support their conversations with young children.

- [Parent and Caretaker guide for helping families cope with COVID 19](#)
- [Just For Kids: A Comic Exploring The New Coronavirus](#)
- [Talking to Children About COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) - A Parent Resource \(English Resource\)](#)
- [Talking to Children About COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) - A Parent Resource \(Spanish Resource\)](#)

### **CLASS Observations and Professional Development Planning/Consultations**

#### **Q: How will school closures impact the external CLASS observations through CASTL/UVA?**

A: Most external CLASS observations across VPI have been completed for this school year (91%). All remaining external VPI CLASS observations conducted by UVA/Teachstone are currently suspended. Once schools resume, we will work with VPI coordinators in the remaining locations where external observations are needed to determine if and when external CLASS observations could occur during this school year. AEII will continue to process data from external CLASS observations completed prior to schools closing and send the reports to VPI coordinators within a timely manner.

#### **Q: How will school closures impact the ongoing work on VPI professional development plan (e.g., consultation)?**

A: UVA is currently open and the AEII team will continue to provide PD consultation with VPI leaders in a way that works for their division. We will be reaching out to our VPI partners to work flexibly with them during this time.

### **VPI Monitoring**

#### **Q: How will school closures affect VPI monitoring?**

A: Both desk-review and onsite VPI monitoring have been completed for this school year. It is expected that results of this year's monitoring will be summarized in a letter sent to division superintendents, copied to VPI Coordinators, by the end of May.

### **Preschool Development Grant Birth-Five**

#### **Q: How will this affect communities currently participating in the Preschool Development Grant Birth-Five community pilots?**

A: No current deadlines have been altered for PDG B-5 Communities. Communities that have identified a concern with completing any of the current grant requirements due to closures should contact [Erin.Carroll@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Erin.Carroll@doe.virginia.gov)

#### **Q: How will this affect communities interested in applying to be in the next group of community pilots?**

A: The deadline for LOIs for communities interested in applying to be in the next cohort of PDG community pilots has been moved from March 20, 2020 to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020. Communities are encouraged to submit their LOI by March 20 if possible.

### **Upcoming Events**

#### **Q: What events or meetings have been postponed or canceled?**

A: As required by Governor Northam in his state of emergency declaration, the following events or convenings will be held virtually, postponed or cancelled:

Cancelled: Face-to-Face Early Childhood Coordinator Collaborative Meetings (March 30 Williamsburg, April 28 Charlottesville, Wytheville April 30) We will hold a virtual EC Coordinators Collaborative Meeting in place of these face-to-face meetings on a date to be determined soon.

Please continue to check back to these FAQs as this list will likely continue to grow.