

Dear parents of Massachusetts deaf/hard of hearing (DHH) students,

We are going through an unprecedented time and could not have predicted ending the school year with remote learning. This parent handout will help you identify Massachusetts-specific support, if you have questions or need resources, and is endorsed by the organizations listed on page 4. This National Association of the Deaf video link also provides guidance and applies to all DHH students

<https://www.nad.org/2020/04/27/covid-19-families-seeking-accessible-prek-12-remote-education/>

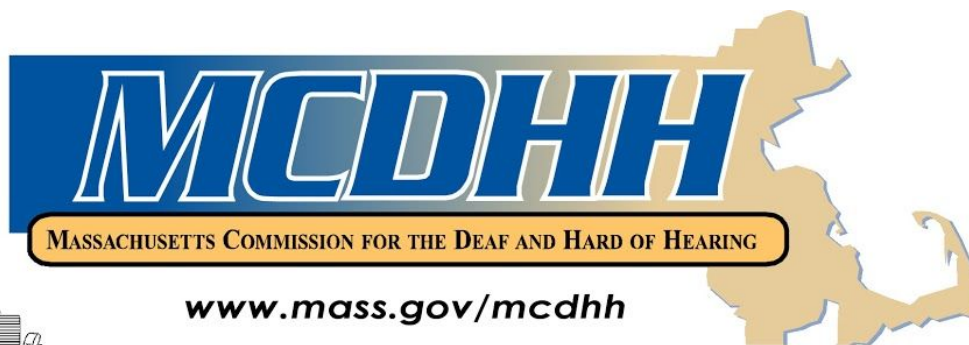
Link to ASL interpretation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djCOzZI20g4>

**Consider these guiding questions as your child participates in remote learning. If you have concerns about any of these issues, please follow the steps at the bottom of this page, and refer to the MCDHH contact information on page 2.**

- Are your child's IEP services continuing during this time?
- Is your child continuing to receive support from the teacher of the deaf, educational audiologist and/or interpreter (the same services they received prior to school closure)?
- Does your child understand everything, when working 1-on-1 with a teacher? When participating in group lessons with other students?
- If your child receives sign language interpreting services at school, is your child receiving interpreting services for remote lessons?
- If your child was provided school-owned Hearing Assistance Technology (HAT, or personal FM system), do you now have that equipment at home?
- Do you (parent) know how to attach this school-owned HAT to your child's hearing aids/cochlear implant or stream the hearing aids to understand sound from the computer? Does your child's understanding improve when HAT is attached to the computer?
- If your child wears hearing aids/cochlear implants at school, is this continuing at home?
- Is there accurate captioning of the teacher's words and peer comments? Is there accurate captioning on videos and prerecorded curriculum/lessons?
- Is your child continuing to receive speech-language, teacher of the deaf, educational audiology and/or interpreting services remotely? If your child had services before the closure, they should continue.

**Who should you contact if you have concerns about the services your child is receiving, or about getting their school owned HAT equipment sent home?**

- If your child is on an IEP or 504 plan, the name of the school district liaison is on the front page of that document. Email that person and let them know your concerns. **If you don't share your concerns, the school assumes there are no issues.** You can also copy the special education director and the superintendent on the email. An example of email wording is found on page 3 of this letter.
- The MA Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) provides **free** Child Specialist support for families. Contact the Child Specialist for your region (page 2 of this letter).
- The Family Resource Toolbox (published by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education): <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/sped/family-resource-toolbox/>
- If you have concerns about sign language interpreting services, please contact Diane Stains, Project Administrator - MCDHH/DESE Educational Interpreter K-12 Professional Development Program [d.stains@att.net](mailto:d.stains@att.net)



Charles D. Baker  
Governor

Karyn E. Polito  
Lieutenant Governor

Marylou Sudders  
Secretary HHS

Steven A. Florio  
Commissioner

## CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

The **Children and Family Services** at Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing provides unique support services to families with children who are Deaf or hard of hearing throughout the Commonwealth.

**Children Specialists** are carefully selected staff experienced in working with children and adolescents with varying degrees of hearing loss. Each staff possesses a wealth of knowledge in communicative and educational choices available for deaf and hard of hearing children. All Children Specialists are fluent in ASL and English.

### CHILDREN SPECIALISTS

#### Boston/North Region

Melissa Dowler  
600 Washington Street  
Boston, MA 02111  
617-694-9781 Cell  
617-740-1659 Voice  
617-861-8847 VP  
617-740-1830 Fax  
[melissa.dowler@mass.gov](mailto:melissa.dowler@mass.gov)

#### South Region

Melissa Adams, LCSW  
600 Washington Street  
Boston, MA 02111  
617-872-4087 Cell  
617-740-1652 Voice  
617-409-7496 VP  
617-740-1830 Fax  
[melissa.adams@mass.gov](mailto:melissa.adams@mass.gov)

#### Central Region

Terri Pancare, MA  
167 Lyman Street  
Westborough, MA 01581  
508-395-3634 Cell  
508-395-3634 Voice  
508-948-0606 VP  
508-616-3594 Fax  
[terri.pancare@mass.gov](mailto:terri.pancare@mass.gov)

#### Berkshire/Western Region

Karran Larson, LMHC  
160 North Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Fl  
Pittsfield, MA 01201  
857-488-5440 Text  
413-788-6427 Voice  
413-347-4094 VP  
413-731-5177 Fax  
[karran.larson@mass.gov](mailto:karran.larson@mass.gov)

### SERVICES

- **Parent Education** relative to the effects of hearing loss at birth, during childhood and in the teenage years
- **Identification of Intervention Strategies** for parents and others, including the appropriate usage of hearing aids, assistive listening devices and system, alerting and signaling devices, medical procedures, early intervention, communication and language development and more.
- **Objective Information** regarding choices for early language development
- **Information and Referral** to specialized services such as mental health, psycho-educational evaluation and testing, speech and language pathologist and audiologists
- **Technical Assistance** to Early Intervention and educational programs regarding the communication needs and cultural perspectives of Deaf and hard of hearing children
- **Advocacy and Support** to families and agencies in the development and utilization of service plans
- **Connecting Children and Families** to recreational and social activities as well as other families and Deaf adult role models
- **General Case Management** services as needed

All services are free and confidential

Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
600 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111  
Toll free numbers: 800.882.1155 (V) | 617.326.7546 (VP)

**Sample email to send to your child's school district**  
**(copy the wording into your email browser and *personalize the areas in yellow*)**

Subject: Special education services for my child during school closure

I hope that you and your family are healthy and safe during this difficult time. I understand that you all are very busy planning and preparing new ways to teach all students.

As you know, my deaf/hard of hearing child [redacted], has an IEP. Since schools are closed, I am concerned that my child will lose skills without special education and specialty deaf/hard of hearing services.

I am writing to request that you develop and send me a "Remote Learning Plan" for my deaf/hard of hearing child to receive IEP services and specialized access during this period of school closure, as recommended by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. It is important for me to understand the instruction and services the district plans to provide remotely to address my deaf/hard of hearing child's IEP needs. I also need to understand how materials and lessons will be adapted and what support will be provided so that my deaf/hard of hearing child can learn remotely. A schedule for working directly with teachers and with deaf/hard of hearing service providers is also very important.

These are my concerns: <add your concerns here>

Thank you for all you and the staff are doing to meet my child's needs, while caring for your own family members.

Thank you.

<signature/insert parent names>

This parent resource is endorsed by the following organizations



**Massachusetts State Association for the Deaf**

<https://massdeaf.org/>



**Disability Law Center**  
<https://www.dlc-ma.org/>



**Massachusetts Chapter  
A.G. Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard  
of Hearing**

**Facebook: @massagbell**



**Disability Policy Consortium**  
<http://www.dpcma.org/>



**The Learning Center for the Deaf**  
<https://www.tlcdeaf.org/>