



THE MAINE EDUCATIONAL CENTER FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

STATEWIDE EDUCATION AND FAMILY SERVICES

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Dear Colleagues,

As we reflect on this unprecedented situation we find ourselves in, we understand the enormous challenge you are facing as you begin to implement distance-learning options that are relevant and effective for your students. For those of us in Special Education, this challenge has been even greater.

The Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Statewide Educational Services Teachers of the Deaf, Therapists and Educational Audiologists have spent the past two days working together as a team to develop plans for supporting your schools with your online learning to Deaf and hard of hearing children.

We are prepared to continue to offer Specially Designed Instruction to your students and consultation to your staff virtually. We will also be offering American Sign Language instruction and Kids Like Me Virtual Groups for students to get together virtually in a facilitated accessible discussion. Stay tuned for more information on these offerings. During this unprecedented time, we are asking school districts to consider your students' visual and auditory access during online learning opportunities. If students have access to ASL interpreters or Cued Language transliterators in the classroom we would like to support you in ensuring this service continue for their online learning. If students use hearing assistive technology, we are asking school districts to consider allowing students currently using technology (specifically, personal FM or remote microphone systems) in the classroom setting to continue to have access to this equipment in the home. For those students who may be accessing instruction with an auditory component through e-learning platforms, direct connection using a 3.5mm to 3.5mm auxiliary cable (often called a "patch cord") to their computer or tablet device will provide the most appropriate auditory access to these activities. For students who are not engaging in e-learning during this time, their personal FM or RM system can be used by parents who will likely be working to provide formal or informal learning opportunities during this hiatus from school. For all students, auditory access is likely to be compromised in their home environment due to less than ideal acoustics, the presence of background noise due to siblings and other family members in the home, and other distractions that may challenge their learning. An FM/RM system is designed to overcome challenges created by poor acoustics, distance from the speaker, and background noise.

If districts choose to send home their students' FM/RM systems, please remember to include all components, which for most students, will include receiver(s), audioshoe(s), a transmitter, charger for the transmitter, and 3.5mm to 3.5mm auxiliary cable or patch cord. Please know that MECDDH staff will be available to support districts and families in the proper use of this technology should any questions arise.

Please know we are here for you and are ready to support you, your staff and students. Please feel free to reach out if we can help in any way. Take care and stay healthy,

Best,

Karen Hopkins

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Statewide Education and Family Services Director

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