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Providing Educational Services to Students in the Home or Hospital

Overview

The purpose of this guide is to describe the procedures for arranging temporary **home or hospital educational services** for eligible students under Massachusetts regulation **603 CMR 28.03(3)(c)**.

The intent of this regulation is to ensure that a student receiving a publicly funded education continues to make educational progress when a physician determines that a medical condition physically prevents school attendance. While home/hospital instruction cannot fully replicate the classroom experience, the district is mandated to provide, at a minimum, the instruction necessary to enable the student to maintain their courses of study and minimize educational loss.

Important Distinctions:

- **Not Automatically Special Education:** Home/hospital instruction is a general education service unless the student is already eligible for an IEP. It is a support intended to maintain progress in the general curriculum.
- **Short-Term Nature:** These services are intended to be temporary and are not a substitute for a long-term remedial program or a "Home Schooling" authorization.
- **Educational Progress:** The goal is to provide a "Free Appropriate Public Education" (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment possible given the student's medical confinement.

Eligible Students

1. Public School Students Any student enrolled in the Norfolk School District, a local charter school, or a district-funded placement (such as a collaborative) who has a documented medical problem. This includes students identified as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act who may be temporarily sheltered outside of the district or state, provided Norfolk remains the "District of Origin."

2. Private School Students Any student enrolled in a private school at private expense within Norfolk who has been determined eligible for Special Education. For students without an IEP, parents may refer the student for an evaluation to determine if a health impairment exists. The district's responsibility is limited to maintaining progress in the general curriculum as outlined in the IEP.

3. Pregnant and Postpartum Students Students are eligible for six (6) weeks of home-based educational services following the delivery date. This period may be extended if a physician documents medical necessity or complications (e.g., recovery from a Cesarean section). Additionally, services may commence prior to delivery if a physician verifies that pregnancy-related complications prevent school attendance. While the district provides these supports, students are encouraged to remain in the school environment as long as medically advisable, utilizing the support of the school nurse and attending physician.

4. Mental Health and School Avoidance Students unable to attend school due to acute or chronic mental health needs (e.g., Emotional Impairment or severe anxiety) may be eligible for home/hospital services. In these cases, the physician's statement must explicitly certify that the student is medically unable to attend school even with the implementation of clinical or environmental accommodations. For students admitted to out-of-district facilities (e.g., Boston Children's Hospital or McLean Hospital), educational services are often provided directly by the facility's instructional staff. In such instances, the district remains responsible for coordinating with the facility to ensure the instruction is consistent with the student's curriculum and meets the district's standards for educational progress..

5. Suspended or Excluded Students In accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H, 37H ½, and 37H ¾, any student suspended for more than ten (10) days or excluded from school is entitled to an Education Service Plan to ensure they have the opportunity to make academic progress toward graduation requirements.

Accessing Services

To initiate services, the student's physician must complete the *Physician's Statement for Temporary Home/Hospital Education*. In accordance with state regulations, the physician must certify that the student **is required to remain at home or in a hospital setting for a minimum of fourteen (14) school days** during the school year. At a minimum, the signed medical notice must include:

- The date the student was admitted to a hospital or confined to the home.
- The specific medical reason(s) for the confinement.
- The expected duration of the confinement.
- A description of the student's medical stamina to assist in planning instructional hours.

Chronic or Recurring Health Issues Students with recurring stays of less than 14 consecutive days are eligible if the cumulative absences are expected to exceed 14 school days in a school year. The school nurse will verify these recurrences with the physician.

Response to Receipt of Request

1. **Verification:** The Principal or Special Education Director will review and verify the Home Hospital request. The school nurse will contact the physician for additional information if necessary to inform planning.
2. **Timeline:** Services must begin **without undue delay** once the physician's statement is received. There is no "14-day waiting period" if it is clear the absence will exceed that timeframe.
3. **Submission:** Once verified, the request is submitted to the **Director of Student Support Services** with the following:
 - Physician's Statement
 - Consent for Release of Confidential Information
 - Copy of the 504 Plan or IEP (if applicable)

Service Delivery Models

Frequency and Duration There is no regulatory "cap" or "minimum" for instructional hours. While 4–6 hours per week is a common baseline, the Team must individualize hours based on the student's medical stamina, the complexity of their course load, and their ability to access the curriculum.

Modes of Instruction Instruction may be delivered via:

- **In-Person:** 1:1 instruction at the home or a neutral site (e.g., library). A parent or designated adult must be present at all times.
- **Virtual/Synchronous:** Participation in the classroom via secure video conferencing.
- **Hybrid:** A combination of 1:1 check-ins and virtual assignments.

Teacher Credentials Teachers must be Massachusetts-certified. While they do not need to be certified in every subject they are tutoring, they must coordinate directly with the student's classroom teacher of record to ensure content alignment. For students on IEPs, services must be delivered or supervised by appropriately licensed special education staff.

Responsibilities of the Instructor (Tutor)

- **Communication:** Coordinate with classroom teachers to obtain materials, syllabi, and assessments.
- **Attendance & Grading:** Maintain a record of hours and student work. If a student is seen for more than one month, the instructor assists in assigning grades in collaboration with the classroom teacher.
- **Statewide Testing:** Ensure the student has the opportunity to participate in MCAS or Alternative Assessment, unless medically excused.
- **Documentation:** Submit monthly service logs and progress reports to the Office of Student Support Services.

Team Reconvening (60-Day Rule)

If a student on an IEP is likely to remain at home for medical reasons for **more than 60 school days**, the Team must reconvene to review the student's unique circumstances, consider the need for further evaluations, and determine if a change in placement or a new IEP is required. This meeting should occur within ten (10) days of the district being notified of the extended absence

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Physician's Affirmation of Medical Reasons That Student is Likely to Remain at Home, in a Hospital, or in a Pediatric Nursing Home for More than 60 School Days

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regulation, 603 CMR 28.04(4)
provides:

If, in the opinion of the student's physician, an eligible student is likely to remain at home, in a hospital, or in a pediatric nursing home for medical reasons for more than 60 school days in any school year, the Administrator of Special Education shall, without undue delay, convene a Team to consider evaluation needs and, if appropriate, to amend the existing IEP or develop a new IEP suited to the student's unique circumstances.

RETURN THIS COMPLETED FORM TO YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT

Student Information:

Student Name: _____ DOB: _____
Address: _____ School District Name: _____

Physician Information:

Physician's Name: _____ Telephone #: _____
Type of Authorizer (M.D. or Nurse Practitioner): _____
License # _____
Address: _____

I affirm that it is likely that it will be medically necessary that the above-named student remain:

- At home or
- in a hospital or
- in a pediatric nursing home or
- any combination of the three

For a period of more than 60 school days in the school year.

Medical diagnosis and reason(s) student must remain in the home, hospital, pediatric nursing home, or is otherwise unable to attend school for medical reasons:

Date student was admitted to hospital or pediatric nursing home, or began medical treatment at home:

- The student is expected to be in the home, hospital, or pediatric nursing home for the remainder of the school year due to the medical condition, **or**
- The student is expected to return to school on (Date must be provided)

(If there is a continued medical need beyond this date, the student's parent or guardian can submit to the school district a new signed form from the physician to verify the need to continue the provision of educational services in the home, hospital, and/or pediatric nursing home.)

**Physician's Affidavit of Student's Medical Need for Educational Services in the Home,
Hospital or Pediatric Nursing Home**

I am the above-named student's treating physician and am responsible for the student's medical care. I hereby certify that the student must remain at home, in a hospital, or in a pediatric nursing home for a period of more than 60 school days in the school year, or on a recurring basis that will accumulate to more than 60 school days over the course of the school year, for the medical reasons articulated above.

Physician's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please note that, if further information is needed, the school district may seek parental consent and be in contact with you as the treating physician.

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