

Meeting called to order at 6:05pm.

1. **Roll Call of Committee Members:** Jackie Ecker, Patrick Fitzgerald, Bruce Friedman, (Jessica Hall absent) (Revised guidance prohibits in-person meetings-meeting conducted via Zoom. Verbal explanation was provided)
2. **Approval of Minutes for March 25, 2021 Meeting**
Motion to Approve by Amy Friedman. Amy's motion was seconded by Jackie Ecker. The meeting minutes were unanimously approved as submitted.

3. **Mass Advocates for Children (MAC) – Compensatory Services and COVID-19 – Johanne Pino**

Johanne is a Project Coordinator for MAC. MAC is a non-profit organization that has a helpline for parents and also provides advocates for special needs families. They can provide some legal services for low impact families, and referrals to other advocates and attorneys for those who are not deemed low impact. MAC also has an Autism Legal Support Center and works with legislators to advocate for legislative changes. MAC also has a Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative, particularly related to domestic violence situations.

Johanne provided an overview of the training to include what are COVID compensatory services (CCS), and who qualifies and who determines the need. Services will come in different forms, such as General Education Recovery, CCS, and additional IEP services.

CCS are those IN ADDITION to those already included in the IEP. CCS can be determined by the full IEP team, the IEP team without certain members, or through some other informal process.

Parent input is important to provide important data, such as children's access, attention and engagement, behavior, progress and skills, and other overall impact of COVID. Families are still entitled to interpreter services for this process. Johanne emphasized families can call MAC's helpline for families who may not know if they are eligible. **617-357-8431 x 3224**

CCS are to be prioritized for "complex and significant needs." These include students who are turning 22 years old and making sure they are connected with adult service agencies for when they are no longer eligible for public school special education services. Updated priorities include students who have been chronically absent for the 2020-2021 school year and those who were remote for more than 3 months during this year.

Complex needs include those deemed as high needs in their PL-3, augmented alternative communication, homeless and foster/congregate care, and English language learners.

The IEP team process for CCS includes

Step 1 – determine services not offered or accessed

Step 2 – determine lost skills or knowledge, or have not made effective progress

Step 3 – determine if require special ed services, and if so, frequency and location of services

Communications to be provided in the home language.

Step 4 – Amend IEP to include new services, any new disabilities, evaluations

General Education Recovery Support is intended to address gaps, loss in skills, social and emotional needs. IEP team may determine General Education Recovery Support may be sufficient to address the child's needs

Other issues to consider: delayed evaluations and IEP development, moving to a new district, and out of district placements.

What can families do now? Contact their IEP Teach Chair if not already to discuss CSS determination.

If families are having issues getting CSS addressed, they can call MAC Hotline (number above) or DESE's Problem Resolution System (PRS) Complaint Hotline 781-338-3700; compliance@doe.mass.edu

Assistant Superintendent Pam MacDonald was present for the meet and contributed to the conversation and answered questions. Pam indicated her office was actively working on finalizing summer programming as CCS and hope to be able to let us know soon. Questions were asked about whether families could defer CSS until the fall if they wanted a break for the summer. Pam confirmed her commitment to accommodating such requests and encouraged families to inform their Team Chairperson so they can determine the demand and prepare accordingly.

4. Public Comment

Patrick opened the floor for public comment and the discussion involved the transportation contract with North Reading Transportation (NRT). People shared their negative experiences with the company. Ward 3 School Committee Representative/SEPAC Liaison was present and recommended we reach out the Assistant Superintendent MacDonald regarding the status of the contract. Discussion was had about the fact the existing contract is due to expire on June 20, 2021 and what the plans were for either requests for proposals or extending the existing contract for either one or two years as disclosed at a recent school committee meeting. Patrick agreed to send a communication to the district asking for information and

5. **Next Meeting is May 27, 2021 at 6pm** for the Federation for Children with Special Needs training "Know Your Rights: Understanding the IEP"

6. **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Patrick Fitzgerald, Clerk on April 29, 2021