



West Virginia School Psychologists' Association & West Virginia Board of Examiners of Psychologists

Guidance on Assessment Practices for School Psychologists During COVID-19 School Closures

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the uncertainty surrounding assessments during school closure, the West Virginia School Psychologists' Association (WVSPA) and the West Virginia Board of Examiners of Psychologists (WVBEP) joined together to offer guidance to practicing School Psychologists. This guidance is offered in response to many concerns that may arise during the uncertainty of how school psychologists in West Virginia should proceed with mandated special education assessments. Also, as you are likely aware publishing companies are advertising adjustments to current instruments to modify them to be administered virtually.

WVSPA and WVBEP offer the following guidance based on federal and state laws and policies, NASP and APA's ethical codes, and best practices in school psychology.

1. Should school psychologists be conducting assessments that have been designed, standardized, and normed for in-person administration?

Based on guidance from the Office of Civil Rights, if an evaluation of a student with a disability requires a face-to-face assessment or observation, the evaluation would need to be delayed until school reopens. Most in-person assessments used by school psychologists (cognitive ability/intelligence tests, processing tests, neuropsychological tests, achievement tests, etc.) were not designed, normed, or validated to be administered under virtual assessment conditions. In addition, test validity and reliability and professional ethics will most likely be compromised due to the current stressors of disrupted routines, elevated stress and anxiety for students and families, and the completion of evaluations in the presence of family.

However, there are virtual assessments that have been validated, but these assessments require the following considerations:

- School psychologists have been trained in best practices in virtual assessment
- Assessments have been validated for virtual administration
- Virtual platform must be HIPAA and FERPA compliant with end-to-end encryption
- Technology standards need to be met for virtual assessments, including parameters such as screen size, digital resolution, internet speed, number of cameras, etc.
- School psychologists must report variance from standard administration and how it may impact the test reliability, validity, and applicability

- School psychologists must consider a range of cultural factors, including age, technological familiarity, and culture-specific norms
- An on-site trained proctor is accessible for the duration of the evaluation
- Verifying the positioning and functioning of the technology
- Controlling the conditions of the environment
- Maintaining confidentiality and privacy of the test situation
- Properly proctoring the assessment
- Verifying maintenance of test security

2. *Can reevaluations be completed without in-person assessment?*

If a reevaluation does not require in-person assessment, it is possible that it can be completed during the school closure. However, if the IEP team has determined that additional data that includes in-person assessments, such as achievement or intellectual assessments, then the district should postpone the evaluation. The team should also not determine that “no additional evaluations” are needed solely as a result of the current school closure.

3. *Should we hold Eligibility Committee meetings and subsequent initial IEP meetings if all evaluations are complete?*

The [U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights guidance](#) indicates that teams are not required to meet in person while schools are closed, and EC/IEP teams are able to meet via alternative methods, such as conference calling or video meeting formats, with parent consent. It is important to note that families may be experiencing extraordinary circumstances that may impact parents/guardians’ abilities to provide informed consent for services. Maintaining our ethical requirements to act in the best interest of each student will require teams to consider the best course of action for each individual student.

Adapted from information contained in the following sources:

[CASP Position Paper for Online Psychoeducational Assessments](#)

Luxton, D. D., Pruitt, L. D., & Osenbach, J. E. (2014). Best practices for remote psychological assessment via telehealth technologies. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 45(1), 27-35.
<https://doi/10.1037/a0034547>

[NASP Virtual Service Delivery in Response to COVID-19 Disruptions](#)

[New York State Department of Education April 27, 2020 Memo Supplement #1 – Provision of Services to Students with Disabilities During Statewide School Closures Due to Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[USDE Office of Civil Rights Fact Sheet: Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Schools While Protecting the Civil rights of Students](#)

[West Virginia Board of Examiners of Psychologists Revised Telepsychology Guidelines for COVID-19](#)