

Stepping Stones



Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership Center

Promoting inclusion and access
in education and healthcare

Empowering families and
young adults across PA

When Health Issues Prevent Attending School

Some students experience physical or mental health related issues that make school attendance difficult or impossible. If a student has an IEP, the IEP should be revised to reflect how special education will be delivered. A reevaluation may need to be conducted if there are changes to the student's needs for specially designed instruction. **There are two distinct ways that a school can provide instruction** to a student with an IEP who cannot attend school for a period of time due to health-related issues.

1. Homebound Instruction— Available to all Students

Any student who, due to a mental, physical or other urgent reason, cannot attend school may be eligible for **Homebound Instruction**. Homebound instruction temporarily excuses a student from compulsory attendance rules for **up to three months**. Ideally, homebound instruction will keep the student from falling behind. Districts that offer cyber and online programs may offer these as an option for students on homebound instruction.

A health condition may prohibit a student from participating in instruction or limit how much instruction they can tolerate during this temporary excusal.

For students who have an IEP, the team should meet to consider how a student's needs can be met during homebound instruction. Homebound instruction should be designed to enable the student to receive meaningful educational benefit.

For those who do not have an IEP, the family can request a 504 plan.



2. Instruction Conducted in the Home—a Special Education Placement

If a student needs to be educated at home, the IEP team must determine how the student will receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

One option is to change the student's educational placement to **Instruction Conducted in the Home**. This educational placement is considered to be the "most restrictive" because the student does not have interaction with non-disabled peers. Special education services and supports are individualized. For example, a student may receive instruction following an individualized schedule. Instruction can include content area instruction, special education services and related services. They may be served by subject area teachers, special educators, and receive related services at home or via telehealth. Virtual instruction can be provided to provide access to teachers, peers and learning opportunities.

Considerations for Families

Families need to be aware of the options for a student with a disability who cannot attend school in person. Whether a student receives Homebound Instruction or Instruction Conducted in the Home while they are unable to attend school, it is important to have a plan for when and how they will transition back to school. This is particularly important when the student is unable to attend school due to mental health issues or trauma.

Doctors may prescribe “homebound instruction” without an understanding of the limited services that may be provided. Doctors may not be aware that a student who has an IEP may be entitled to receive FAPE via Instruction Conducted in the Home.

If a physician recommends that a student who has an IEP receive homebound instruction due to physical or behavioral health issues, the IEP team should consider whether changing the student’s placement to Instruction Conducted in the Home is appropriate.



Resources

Pennsylvania Department of Education:

→ **Homebound Instruction:**

<https://bit.ly/2VGuMBE>

→ **Instruction Conducted in the Home:**

<https://bit.ly/2D1ceWd>

	Homebound Instruction	Instruction Conducted in the Home
Who is eligible to receive this service?	All students—both general education students and students who receive special education services	Students who have an IEP or who are determined to be eligible to receive special education services.
How and when are the need for services determined?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Parent initiates request and provides a doctor’s note indicating a medical or psychological issue → School makes the decision for the student to receive Homebound Instruction → Student is excused from compulsory attendance due to temporary mental or physical illness or other urgent reasons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → IEP team meets and makes a decision that this placement is necessary to provide FAPE, keeping in mind that this is the most restrictive educational placement. → Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP)/Prior Written Notice (PWN) is issued and signed by parent/guardian.
Who provides instruction?	A Certified Teacher—Special education services, must be delivered by a certified Special Education teacher.	Instruction must be provided by a certified Special Education teacher consistent with the student’s IEP.
Where is instruction provided?	Instruction is delivered in the student’s location (e.g., home, hospital, treatment facility).	Instruction is delivered in the student’s home or a mutually agreed upon location that is decided by the IEP team (such as a local library).
How long can a student receive this service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → May not exceed 3 months unless the school receives approval from the Pennsylvania Department of Education to extend the provision of Homebound Instruction → Depends on school policy and the student’s condition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → For the length of the IEP (the IEP can be reviewed and changed at any time but must be updated at least annually). → Determined by the IEP team, based upon the student’s condition

The PA Family to Family Health Information Center is a program of the Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership (PEAL) Center funded by the Health Resources Services Administration Maternal and Child Health Bureau under Grant H84MC26214.



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