Alternative Education

FOCUS AREA 1
Student Enrollment Procedures for Alternative Education

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the stay at home order, students who are enrolled in alternative education may be significantly impacted. It is imperative to have a consistent connection with students during this time to ensure they remain on track working towards graduation. Students need to have access and enrollment with limited delay in their education.

1. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How can we ensure that foster youth, students experiencing homelessness, migrant youth, children of military families, and former court school students who are eligible for the California state minimum graduation requirements are being identified at enrollment?

Implementation, Recommendations, and Considerations

Several steps need to be put into place to ensure that foster youth, students experiencing homelessness, and former court school students are immediately enrolled in school. Once they are enrolled a transcript evaluation should be conducted of foster youth (AB 216), former juvenile hall court school students (AB 2306), homeless youth (AB 1806), as well as children of military families (AB 365), migrant and newly arrived immigrant pupils (AB 2121) who transfer schools after their second year of high school in order to determine eligibility for the California minimum graduation requirements. While evaluating transcripts, special attention needs to be taken to ensure partial credit is accepted and issued. Districts will need to determine and possibly ask the state for waivers for homeless/out of state or country students who arrive with no documents to allow them to start school.

School-purchased devices should be made available to maintain continuous access at school and outside of school settings to continue the students' free appropriate public education. If a student moves away from the distributing school, the student may continue to use the device, or a comparable device, for up to two months or until the device is replaced in the new setting, whichever occurs first (EC § 56040.3). Districts need to ensure the acceptable use policies are updated.

To ensure these steps are put in place, professional development training for counselors, registrars, and administration needs to be provided.

Resources

- Riverside University Health Systems-Behavioral Health
- Horizons
- Desert Learning Academy in PSUSD

2. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How can we support families who don't have access or the ability to upload documents for enrollment?

Implementation, Recommendations, and Considerations

In order to provide parents with enrollment access and capabilities, LEAs should provide scanning centers equipped with staff who can help assist parents with enrollment or provide these resources at the LEA's Parent Community Center.

FOCUS AREA 2

Student Scheduling for Alternative Education

As school re-opens, alternative education has an opportunity to provide instruction in alternative formats in order to offer flexibility for the most vulnerable students. It is imperative to keep these students in school and focused on their goal to graduate by offering options to complete their course of study.

1. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: Can we expand alternative education online programs?

Implementation, Recommendations, and Considerations

In order to ensure continuity of educational access, hybrid learning or distance learning are both viable options. LEA's are encouraged to provide remote online intervention/support times for students in ELA and math by teachers, instructional assistants, and program specialists. LEAs should ensure that all courses (CTE/AVID opportunities) are available online for alternative education (i.e. cooking lessons online/video provided by students in a private space) - including tutorials for both parent/student. If the district offers a teen parenting program, students should consider independent study or online options for health and safety with the understanding that parenting teens may not be excluded from any class or extracurricular activities solely on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or postpartum recovery.

Resources

- Care Solace
- CDC Guidance for School Settings

2. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: If we expand online programs, does it change student placement if they are SWDs?

Implementation, Recommendations, and Considerations

IEP teams need to decide if accessibility options are a priority. Teams need to address goals, services, and placement in addition to the least restrictive environment. A prior written notice may need to be developed if there is a discrepancy in current needs and services. The IEP team will need to offer services during an IEP meeting. If it is a virtual meeting, an electronic signature can be used to sign an IEP.

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3. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How can we ensure that the foster youth, students experiencing homelessness, migrant youth, children of military families, and former court school students have flexibility in their schedules and support to meet their graduation requirements?

Implementation, Recommendations, and Considerations

To provide flexibility for alternative education students the following options can be made available:

- Hybrid classes
- Classes offered at different times during the day.
- Provide synchronous and asynchronous models.
- Combination of both small group settings/large group setting online.
- Online intervention/support times for students in ELA and math by teacher, instructional assistants, and/or program specialists.
- All courses (CTE/AVID opportunities) are available online for alternative education (i.e. cooking lessons online/video provided by students in a private space) including tutorials for both parent/student.
- Create more flexible scheduling for students who might need to help with younger siblings, work, etc.

Returning to School for Alternative Education

Returning to school after the closure on March 16, 2020, will require a change in mindset for both staff and students. Previous actions, behaviors, and routines will need to change following Public Health recommendations and district health and safety plans. As a result of the social isolation from the previous three months, students may be exhibiting strong emotions and bringing their trauma to school. Plans to address mental health issues need to be put in place. Communication with all stakeholders will help to keep everyone informed.

1. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How will we promote social distancing when students return to the alternative education campus?

Implementation, Recommendations, and Considerations
In order to promote social distancing on the alternative education campus, face masks, gloves, thermometers, and plexiglass barriers for students and staff will be supplied. Training for staff and students will need to be provided to include virtual training for all staff on how to communicate with students upon the return from social isolation. Training for students on the "new normal" should occur before their return via video or online webinar and include expectations, class size, recess, etc. Additional staff development through Zoom or other platforms to minimize gathering should be provided.

To support social distancing, continue to offer online counseling (guidance and behavioral/mental health) and mentoring support. Additionally, a county wide informed consent form for telehealth and counseling should be considered.

Resources
- Contacts/resources for masks, hand washing/sanitizing
- Riverside University Health Systems-Behavioral Health.
- CDC Guidance for School Settings

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2. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How will we prepare staff for students' emotions and trauma related to social isolation when they return to school?

Implementation, Recommendations, and Considerations
To address the emotions and trauma students will be coming back to school with after social isolation, consideration of a county wide informed consent form for telehealth and counseling may be appropriate. The utilization of a behavioral health screening tool or a risk assessment checklist should be implemented.

Resource
- Care Solace

3. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How can we ensure that students who need mental health services are engaging if we're still in a distance learning environment?

Implementation, Recommendations, and Considerations
To ensure students are receiving mental health support while participating in distance learning, having counselors, social workers, and other school staff conducting daily check in telephone calls and emails for students who are not engaging in distance/online learning will connect the students with a caring adult. In order for this connection to be successful, student and parent email accounts need to be current and updated regularly.

Resources
- Care Solace
- Have a Warmline (emotional support hotline) available such as the California Peer-Run Warm Line Toll-free 1-855-845-7415
- Call the NAMI HelpLine at 800-950-NAMI (6264) Monday through Friday, between 10:00 am and 6:00 pm EST for mental health resources.
- Resources for immediate response
- Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach a 24-hour crisis center or text MHA to 741741 at the Crisis Text Line (from Mental Health America).
- Helpline-24 Hour Crisis/Suicide Intervention line- The Helpline is a free, confidential
- Crisis/Suicide Intervention service. Operated by highly trained volunteers, the line is open 24-hours a day, seven days a week. Call (951) 686-HELP (4357)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255- Spanish line: 1-888-628-9454
- 24/7 Mental Health Urgent Care- Riverside (951) 509-2499 (18 & over), Perris (951) 349-4195 Palm Springs (442) 268-7000
- Emergency Treatment Services (ETS) Riverside (all ages) (951) 358-4881 Indio- (760) 863-8600 -Danger to self or others- 5150 evaluation

4. ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How will we provide updated communication to school stakeholders?

Implementation, Recommendations, and Considerations

It is important to keep communication open and updated for parents and students by training students on the "new normal" before the return to school. This can be accomplished through videos or online webinars to review expectations regarding class size, recess, and social distancing. Just as important, is keeping staff informed on the current status of students and staff by conducting daily staff huddles. Once school is open, sending daily communiques to parents about school status.

Resources

- SIS Communication
- Auto-dialers