



## OREGON COMMISSION ON AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

### QUICK REFERENCE TOOLKIT: PREPARING STUDENTS ONE YEAR AFTER COVID 19

April 2021

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#### Introduction

While all students were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, students on the autism spectrum had a wide and varying individual experience. Some students thrived in the online format, while others were unable to connect via screen. These individual experiences should result in careful consideration, discussion and thoughtful planning in order for students with autism to return to in person instruction successfully. For some students, the loss of in person instruction, familiar routines, and socialization with peers and trusted adults has resulted in learning loss, regression of academic, social/emotional skills and behavior challenges. For others, the physical act of simply returning to in person instruction and school routines will take careful planning. Returning to in person instruction will present challenges and opportunities for students as they learn to navigate their education one year after Covid-19.

This Resource Guide was prepared to identify potential student needs and provide resources under each need. The goal of this toolkit was to create a document to respond to the most urgent student needs identified by the OCASD Statewide Parent Survey from March 2021 and list resources to help families and educators easily find information and resources.

It was prepared by an interdisciplinary group of experts and parents from the commission's Return to In Person Instruction Work Group, including professionals from the education field and parents of children with autism.

***This document will be updated periodically in order to share evolving best practices and information with all of our Oregon stakeholders.***

## 1. One Page Profile Template - My Year During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Encouraging families to use a one page profile, specific to the past year, will help educators, IEP teams, community organizations, family members and support workers understand how COVID-19 affected an individual person. Each person's experience has been unique with gains and losses and this one page profile template is designed to help you capture that experience in a one page, easy to read snapshot. The goal is to create a one page profile that gives a clear idea of how the past year affected an individual, significant life events and how best to support them for success now.



**SAM**  
**AGE 11**

*Non speaking does not mean  
non thinking.*

### HOW COVID AFFECTED ME

I never went back to a safe, familiar routine after spring break 2020. All my routines of school, therapy, playing with friends, going to the pool suddenly vanished. These routines helped me navigate my world, self regulate and function. My world grew smaller and smaller and I became sadder and inconsolable. My family has been very lucky that we have our home, good food to eat and a yard to play in. None of my family got sick and neither did I.

#### WHAT DID NOT WORK FOR ME THIS YEAR

- Online school - I cannot attend to a screen for more than a few minutes at a time
- I'm very literal: school is not home and mom is not my teacher! This made the limited time I was on Zoom very frustrating.
- No routine; just being at home; too much screen time; no structure to my days
- Closure of familiar, regulating parts of my life like the pool, restaurants, movie theaters, etc
- No social interaction with peers or friends
- Not having a communication method made online school very sad and frustrating. I felt very lonely.

#### WHAT DID WORK

- My IEP team created more age appropriate and challenging academic goals using my AAC device.
- Daily outside time: hiking, camping
- I learned to ride a bike and do chores at home.
- I got help from my doctor for my sadness. I am feeling better, though still very sad with the continued changes and limited routines.

#### SUPPORTS I NEED

- Full time, in person instruction
- Visual schedules, social stories, video modeling. I will need a lot of practice to get used to new safety routines and rules.
- Positive behavior supports to help me readjust back to school (which is different from the school I knew last year).
- Daily repetition to meet academic goals
- Social time with my peers
- Familiar adults and environments to regain the skills & routines I lost.

[Click here](#) for a link to an editable one page profile for your child or feel free to create your own! An English and Spanish example are provided, as well as blank templates.

There are many websites and blogs that offer free templates for you to download and create. A simple internet search will turn up many options. The important thing to remember is that it should be written to tell a student's story specific to how the last year has affected their life.

For the view only sample above of Sam, a template in Canva was used. This is a link to a free template to get started.

<https://adayinourshoes.com/all-about-me-printable-worksheets/>

A one page profile can also be created in Word, Google or written out by hand if that is what works best.

## **2. Meeting Basic Needs and Assistance**

### **Student Need**

Upon return to in-person instruction, students should be informally assessed to gauge if basic needs are being met (housing, nutrition, wrap around services, IFSP/IEP team check in regarding goals and supports).

The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a tumultuous year of upheaval for many families that could include changes that drastically affect a student's ability to attend, learn and thrive with the return to in person instruction.

### **Additional Considerations**

A one page profile for a student, completed by student/family or as an IEP team, can provide valuable & essential information about how the past year has affected a student's life and learning.

### **Resources**

- My Year During the Covid-19 Pandemic (a one page profile template)  
[Oregon Commission on ASD: Resources / Oregon Resources](#)
- [211info](#)  
(housing, health, child care, food assistance and more)
- Oregon Food Bank <https://foodfinder.oregonfoodbank.org>
- [Autism Society of Oregon – Providing resources, education, advocacy and support for individuals and families.](#)  
(support groups for students and families)
- [FACT Oregon – Empowering families experiencing disability](#)  
IEP/IFSP support in multiple languages
- [Oregon Department of Education : Mental Health and Well-being : Mental Health & Well-Being Resources](#)

### **3. Families Choosing Comprehensive Distance Learning**

#### **Student Need**

Some families prefer to continue with distance learning for personal and health reasons. Teams will need to work collaboratively to ensure that students receiving CDL will be provided with a quality program and a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that is commensurate to hybrid and in-person instruction being delivered to other students.

Some students still struggle with inadequate WiFi connectivity and other technical and access difficulties. Staffing shortages as schools try to balance adequate coverage for in person instruction and CDL contributes additional difficulties.

#### **Additional Considerations**

It is encouraged that school districts and families proactively meet as a team to review current IFSP/IEP goals, accommodations, and supports - and make changes if necessary. Since schools will be having both in-person and remote classes, school staff may change. Discuss who will be the teacher/s for your child whether in person or CDL.

Supports provided by school districts and early childhood programs may include loaner equipment and WiFi hotspots to ensure access to instruction.

Reviewing the IEP, goals, accommodations and supports as a team and making changes when necessary will help ensure student success.

If a family chooses CDL or hybrid, the child may still participate in extra-curricular school-based activities.

#### **Resources**

- FACT Oregon's special education toolkit: [FACT's Special Education Toolkit](#)
- FACT Oregon's special education templates: [Parent Input and Concerns for: \(Child's Name\) Date: IEP Team, I/We look forward to working with the team on our child's I](#)
- FACT Oregon training video: [Understanding Goals, Modifications, and Accommodations](#)
- [Resources for Children with Significant Cognitive Disabilities Series](#)

## 4. Behavior Supports and Emotional Wellness

### Student Need

Researchers are beginning to describe the adverse impact that school closures have had upon the emotional wellness of students with ASD. Families across the state describe the ways in which their children with ASD have experienced mental health difficulties associated with the prolonged closures and isolation from peers and supportive school routines. Students returning to in-person instruction, as well as those remaining in CDL, will need proactive mental health and behavioral supports, as changes to routine and other demands of the environment can trigger anxiety resulting in challenging behaviors.

### Additional Considerations:

Parents and school staff should take a proactive approach to support a student's emotional well-being and behavioral needs. As a family, consider discussing any mental health or behavior changes with the child's pediatrician and/or mental health provider.

Using the one page profile, specific to the student's experience the past year with the Covid-19 pandemic, is a good way to present a current picture of a student. The profile template, and samples, are available below under Resources.

Parents and school staff can review the IFSP/IEP and discuss how to support students upon their return to in person instruction, including, where applicable, creating, revising and/or reviewing behavior support plans. Inquire into the current school-based resources that are available to support social, behavioral, and mental health needs.

### Resources:

- Oregon Commission on ASD: My Year During the Covid-19 Pandemic (one page profile template) [Resources / Oregon Resources](#)
- FACT Oregon: [Special Education Behaviors at School](#)
- [What Is a Behavior Intervention Plan \(BIP\)](#)
- Using a template to request a behavior plan:  
<https://factoregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/FACT-Toolkit-Templates-Final.pdf>
- <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/pbs-resources/>
- [Universal Design for Learning After COVID-19 | Learning Innovation](#)

## 5. Sensory Responses and New Safety Requirements

### Student Need

Students with ASD may struggle with mask requirements at school as well as other safety requirements including social distancing, hand washing, and other new requirements implemented by schools to promote student and staff safety. As a result, teams should be prepared to consider explicit teaching, scaffolding, and reinforcement of mask wearing as well as the other safety requirements. To assist with instruction, several social narratives, videos, and visual supports are available to assist educators and parents.

Sensory processing challenges are a well documented phenomenon among most individuals with ASD, so efforts may also be required around staff education to ensure understanding that mask refusal is likely the result of extremely aversive sensory experiences for the child (e.g., the tactile sensation of the mask, the smell, the pressure) versus oppositional behavior.

### Additional Considerations

Many students with ASD will face challenges with the return to in person instruction. These challenges should not prevent the student from receiving FAPE or participating in the least restrictive environment (LRE). For detailed information from ODE, please read:

[Supplemental Guidance to Student Face Covering Requirements](#)

Proactive and strength based approaches should be taken by parents and IFSP/IEP teams to create a successful return to school. Carefully thinking about changes to the routine, environment and expectations and preparing students to learn new routines and safety protocols in their LRE.

### Resources:

- [ODE Face Coverings](#) ( updated 3/15/21)
- [Ensuring Safety and Equity for Students who Experience Complex Medical Needs: Guiding decisions about Covid-19 mitigation when standard strategies cannot be used.](#)
- [Social Stories for Young and Old on Covid 19 – HMEA's Autism Resource Central](#)
- [Comprehensive Distance Learning Guidance](#)
- [Universal Design for Learning After COVID-19 | Learning Innovation](#)
- [Physical Therapy and Telehealth in Oregon Schools](#)
- [School Occupational Therapy and Telehealth FAQ](#)
- [School Speech Language Pathology and Telehealth FAQ](#)

## 6. Re-Establishing Routines and Predictability

### Needs

Changes in routine are often distressing for students with ASD who prefer sameness and predictability. When re-establishing previous or establishing new routines, keep in mind that students with ASD generally require additional time to adjust; they may show signs of stress and anxiety while doing so. Plan on providing additional support in terms of instruction and reinforcement to help students with ASD settle into routines.

Work proactively to prepare for the establishment/re-establishment of routines. IFSP/IEP teams, including parents and perhaps the student with ASD themselves, can work collaboratively to identify supports such as priming for upcoming changes using social narratives, video models, use of visuals (e.g., calendars, schedules, etc.), and allowing advance time in the school environment. With proper support, students with ASD can become accustomed to and successfully participate in new or re-established routines.

### Resources

- [Transitioning Back to School During COVID: Using Visuals and Other Evidence-based Strategies for Children with Autism](#)
- Autism Society Back to School Toolkit 8/2020: [Back to School: "The New Normal." IEP Resources, Public Policy, and Advocacy - August Toolkit](#)
- [Universal Design for Learning After COVID-19 | Learning Innovation](#)

## 7. Regaining Skills

### Needs

Skill regression during extended breaks (e.g., summer, winter holiday) is common among students with ASD. For some students, disruptions in in-person learning associated with the pandemic response may result in especially significant skill regression.

Regression may have occurred in a wide variety of skills including (a) following a daily routine and schedule; (b) emotional control and coping with stressors; (c) academic skills; and (d) social capabilities with regard to peer interactions. As a result, teams should consider re-assessment to establish baselines and determine where to prioritize instruction. Explicit teaching in multiple areas will very likely be necessary to return a student to pre-pandemic performance.

### Resources

- [Summer Learning Best Practice Guide 2021](#) from ODE 4/14/21
- What is Extended School Year (ESY)?: [Extended School Year Services: What You Need to Know](#)

## **8. Recovery and Compensatory Services**

### **Need**

Recovery and compensatory services may be a topic that families and educators need to address upon return to in person instruction.

Understanding what these terms mean and if they are appropriate is very important for both families, students and school staff.

### **Resources**

- [Compensatory Education Case Law](#)
- Disability Rights Oregon: [Know Your Rights: Requesting Compensatory Education due to Covid-19](#)
- [ODE: Compensatory & Recovery Services defined \(page 36\)](#)
- [ODE: Student Learning: Unfinished, Not Lost](#)
- [ODE Graduation Pathways Guidance 2021](#)
- [ODE Graduation Ceremony Guidance 2021](#)

## **9. Phase 2: Including family and student voices**

The committee recognizes the need to hear first hand from families and students about how the Covid-19 pandemic affected their lives and education.

We plan to meet again in the summer of 2021 and plan at least one Zoom town hall in order to capture these stories.