

How can schools accommodate children with Long COVID?



LONG COVID ESSENTIALS: A series by [The Sick Times](#) & [Long COVID Justice](#)

Symptoms associated with Long COVID can significantly disrupt a child's education. [Schools remain a risky space](#) for students who are immunocompromised and/or seeking to avoid reinfection. Fortunately, federal policies now recognize Long COVID as a disability. This opens up access to free programs that provide accommodations for in-person learning or alternative plans for students who require an in-home or hybrid education.

* **Symptoms of Long COVID that may impact performance in school:**

- [Extreme tiredness and fatigue](#), such that previously easy activities are now difficult or impossible
- [Neurological issues, also called "brain fog"](#)
- [Dizziness and headaches](#)
- [Sleep disruption](#)
- Anxiety and other mood disorders

* **Rights and accommodations:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act protect students in the United States with a medical condition or disability from discrimination in education. This includes the right to a "free appropriate public education" and the right to be educated alongside non-disabled peers as appropriate.

Depending on a child's needs, parent/guardians can request accommodations through an [Individualized Education Program \(IEP\) or 504 Plan](#). An IEP is a [personalized roadmap](#) that outlines education goals for students based on their unique circumstances. It often includes additional services such as speech therapy or occupational therapy.



Children must first be evaluated by their school and/or an Area Education Agency to qualify. IEPs are updated annually.

A [504 plan](#) is geared toward accommodations in the classroom. It is reviewed every three years. Some children need only one plan, while others have both.

Collectively, these plans should focus on *conserving energy and prioritizing needs*. Accommodations may include:

- Blended learning, such as attending school on a modified or hybrid schedule that may include rest days between days of instruction
- Having teachers visit the home
- Targeted mask requirements or increased air filtration
- More frequent breaks and/or amended physical requirements
- Extended time or modifications for tests and assignments
- Alternative or modified assignments (i.e. oral instead of written)
- Use of assistive technology, such as screen readers, note takers, or calculators

* **Assembling your team**

If your child requires accommodations due to Long COVID, you'll need to put together a team to assess their needs and how best to address them. This group will likely include the child's parents or guardians, teachers, school administrators, the school nurse and counselor, and the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDco) or educational psychologist, if available.

Parents will be asked to [provide evidence](#) to support their requested accommodations. This can include a letter from your child's medical provider, documentation of a clear pattern of learning difficulty, and documentation that the teacher(s) has tried different approaches.



* Resources

- [Support guide for children living with Long COVID](#) and [educational leaflets](#) – Long COVID Kids
- [Pacing guide for helping students manage their symptoms](#) – Long COVID Families
- [Document for educators working with children with Long COVID](#) – Kennedy Krieger Institute
- [Sample letter to provide school outlining challenges and accommodations](#) – *Frontiers in Pediatrics*
- [Breakdown of IEP and 504 plan language](#) and a [how-to guide for filing complaints](#) – Special Education Action
- [Letter outlining how Long COVID is treated under current law](#) – U.S. Department of Education

FULL SERIES OF FACTSHEETS WITH LINKED RESOURCES + MORE:

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QUESTIONS? connect@s4hi.org

This series was designed by people living with Long COVID and associated diseases. Each resource sheet has been reviewed by patient and medical experts. This is an informational resource, not medical advice. Publication date: 12/13/2024.