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**Sent:** Thursday, August 6, 2020 6:48 PM  
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**Subject:** 8/6/2020 Update from OASES

Dear Executive Directors of Collaboratives and Leaders of Approved Special Education Schools,

I know everyone continues to work diligently towards providing the best education possible to all of the students you serve and the decisions you are making are difficult ones. None of this is easy but we are all doing what is in the best interest of the students and will continue to do so through open communication and transparency. If you haven't already done so, I recommend reaching out to colleagues who serve a similar student population to see what you can learn from one another.

**Here are some important updates from OASES:**

- 1) **Restraint Security Portal**
  - 2020-2021 school year is open for reporting (formal announcement will be "On the Desktop soon from the Commissioner").
  - Please remember this system is meant to be "live," so please update as often as possible (not daily but weekly or bi-weekly).
  - A few changes to the system will be addressed:
    - Example: If a prone restraint is selected
      - Six questions from the regulations are generated and will need to be answered.
  
- 2) **Age Span Waivers:**
  - a. The process to request Age Span Waivers has been revised to simplify during COVID-19.
  - The new form can be found at:
    - <http://www.doe.mass.edu/oases/sa-nr/default.html>
  - b. You will be asked to affirm specific statements and submit electronically.
  - c. Collaboratives will email requests to: [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu)
  - d. Approved Special Education Schools will email requests to: [OASES1@mass.gov](mailto:OASES1@mass.gov)
  - e. Schools will receive a confirmation email once the age span waiver has been approved.
  - f. Please use this form starting today.
  
- 3) **Updated Monitoring System:**

OASES is finishing the process of reviewing bids for an updated monitoring system. Vendor demonstrations begin next week and we are hoping to have an identified vendor by the end of September. We will be asking for stakeholder input with the new vendor so that external and internal processes are more efficient. Stay tuned for this opportunity.
  
- 4) **2020-2021 Monitoring Reviews:**

We have received several requests for extensions on the submission of self-assessments beyond August 24th. As it has been, your time right now should be on returning students to school. We

are still working on how monitoring will take place this coming school year, but will have an update to you within the next few weeks.

5) **Final School Re-Opening Plans**

a. Final School Re-Opening Plans are due for submission by **August 14, 2020** (changed from August 10).

b. For Approved Special Education Day Schools, Final School Re-Opening Plans are required to be submitted by August 14, 2020. So for those of you who have an approved day program and an approved residential program, you will submit the plan for the **day program only** by August 14, 2020.

c. DESE has determined that Approved Special Education Residential Programs are no longer required to submit Final School Re-Opening Plans. While this is not required, the Department still strongly encourage you to complete Re-Opening Plans for three modes of education: 1) In-person Instruction; 2) Hybrid Instruction; and 3) Remote Instruction. No one can predict what the Fall will exactly look like, so it will be important for your program to be prepared to serve students in each of those modes.

6) **OASES has an email address!**

We now have a dedicated email address where questions can be sent. This should not take the place of contacting your liaison, but is meant as an additional level of support. The Managers and Supervisors will monitor this inbox and assign to OASES staff as appropriate for follow up. [OASES1@mass.gov](mailto:OASES1@mass.gov)

7) **Specific to Approved Private Special Education Day and Residential Programs Only:**

a. **Contracts with School Districts**

- DESE encourages school districts and approved private special education schools to work collaboratively on reaching agreements.
- Reminder that contracts must include the terms specified in the regulations at 603 CMR 28.06(3)(f).
- DESE encourages all parties to review existing and proposed contractual language to ensure conformity with 603 CMR 28.09. If contractual terms proposed by any party would result in policies or practices that differ from what is required by DESE regulations, such proposals should be excluded or corrected.
- For more information please go to [http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/02\\_5.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/02_5.html).

b. **Parental Waivers and Releases**

- DESE has significant concerns about attempts to require parents of publicly funded students to sign waivers and releases of COVID-19 liability.
- Potential alternative solutions are currently being explored.

c. **170 school days announcement**

- The Department apologizes for any confusion. As explained today, this change is not applicable to approved special education schools.
- Approved special education schools are required to provide the number of school days they were approved to provide through initial, reconstruction, and/or monitoring review.

- Most approved special education schools provide school days above and beyond the required school days required by regulations.
- 603 CMR 28.09(9)(a)
  - Minimum number of days
    - 10 month program: 180 school days
    - 11 month program: 198 school days
    - 12 month program: 216 school day

**NOTE:** Still include 5 additional days for unforeseen circumstances (examples: snow days, power outage, flood in the building, etc.)

We continue to appreciate the thoughtful questions that you have and I can assure you there are a group of us working on getting accurate responses as quickly as possible. If you could send an easy one once in a while that would go a long way for us. 😊

Please be sure to share this information with anyone in your organization who would benefit from receiving these changes/updates. And, if the proper people in your organization are not receiving these updates, please know that the email addresses are pulled from Directory Administration your organization updates at the Agency, School, and Program levels for the Approved Special Education Schools and the Executive Directors for the Collaboratives. We are unable to make changes; that is something each school must take care of on its own. Instructions can be found in the Document Library WBMS if you need assistance on making any changes. If you are still stuck, contact your liaison who will be able to problem solve with you.

I hope that you all remain well and are able to take a few days here and there to recharge.

Be well,

--Nina

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