



# Technical Guidance : Ensuring an Inclusive Return to School for Children with Disabilities

UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office

# Challenge and Opportunity

**Challenge: The crisis may exacerbate exclusion and isolation felt before the crisis.**

- A major risk exists that children with disabilities will not return to school.
- Parents may also be concerned about the health risks for their children's return to school.

**Opportunity: to make schools 'Open Up Better' by putting in place mechanisms to make school more inclusive than before the crisis.**

This note presents a checklist of considerations to ensure that:

1. Specific considerations are put in place to facilitate the return to learning for children with disabilities
2. Schools Open Up Better by making the learning environment friendly and welcoming for children with disabilities



1. Whole Systems Approach



2. Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment



3. Supported Teachers



4. Learning-friendly Environment



5. Effective Transitions



6. Partnerships



7. Data and Monitoring

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context of General  
Comment No. 4 to  
Article 24 (Education)  
of the CRPD

# Whole systems approach

## Prior to school reopening

- Establish **clear plans for the return to school** with explicit measures for children with disabilities.
- Ensure **information in accessible formats** about returning to school.
- Conduct **outreach and follow up** with families of children with disabilities.
- Ensure **accessible and inclusive WASH facilities**.
- Put plans in place and ensure for safe return of **support services**.

## After school reopening

- Advance **inclusive policy reforms** to improve the quality of education for children with disabilities.
- Strengthen **parent-school committees** or forums for outreach to households.
- Ensure **referral systems are inclusive** of children with disabilities.

# Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment

## Before school reopening

- Recognise the **extraordinary circumstances and stresses caused by COVID-19** and allow classroom time focused on mental health and well-being.
- Make provisions for additional support services for remedial work with children with and without disabilities who may need to regain knowledge and skills.

## After school reopening

- Encourage schools to establish **regular opportunities to meet with families** after the return to school.

# Supported teachers

## Before school reopening

- Provide **additional training and support to teachers** and aides who teach and support children with disabilities on ensuring an inclusive return to school.
- Ensure the education system and school staffs are prepared to **address child protection issues** and facilitate referrals and cooperation between education, child protection, social services, mental health and disability services.

## After school reopening

- Provide guidelines for social distancing and personal protection measures for staff supporting children with disabilities who may need assistance requiring physical contact, such as getting around the school or using bathroom facilities.

# Learning friendly environment

## Before school reopening

- Ensure **inclusive and accessible WASH facilities** in schools. Proper hygiene is particularly important in the context of COVID-19.
- Put **child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures** in place including clear reporting and referral mechanisms as school reopening may be the first time a child will be able to interact with and/or report abuse to a trusted adult.

## After school reopening

- In some circumstances, friendships may have changed while on lockdown, so there will be uncertainty on social stances and in educational stances. Ensure that teaching staff are prepared to address these concerns.

# Effective transitions

## Before school reopening

- Provide clear guidelines on the transition process for children with disabilities.

## After school reopening

- Consider waiving less important examinations and focus resources on ensuring that important examinations are carried out in a valid, reliable, and equitable way.
- Ensure regular check-ins for all students in transition phase and ensure assessments at both current and future education facilities are accessible.

# Partnerships

## Before school reopening

- Build on any existing **collaboration or partnerships with disability movement**, organizations of people with disabilities (OPDs) and self-help groups.
- Ensure that the **parent teacher committee or school committee** keep disability and inclusive education on their agenda.
- Facilitate and contribute to **appropriate and effective referral** between educational services, child protection services, disability services and social services.
- Ensure that **intersectoral collaboration** with the school nurse/health services, child protective services and social workers.

## After school reopening

- Continue to build on partnerships established prior to school re-opening.

# Data and monitoring

## Before school reopening

- Ensure that **comprehensive, reliable and disaggregated data collection** on the number of children with disabilities returning to school.
- Ensure **inclusion of children with disabilities in monitoring and identification systems** that focus on absenteeism and related follow up.
- Ensure to collect **information about the issues faced by children with disabilities** during the lockdown, which may lead to dropping out, or regression in learning.

## After school reopening

- If data collection activities prior school closure did not collect disability data, this is a good time to ensure that disability questions are included.

## Related resources

- Framework for reopening schools
- Frontline Response to Children with Disabilities and COVID-19
- Integration of Child Protection in the COVID-19 Return to School Tips for Teachers and School Management
- COVID-19 Minimum Care Package for Children with Disabilities
- Technical Note: Protection of Children during the Coronavirus Pandemic
- Inclusive Education sector guiding note on COVID-19
- Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBVAoR), Disability Considerations in GBV Programming during the COVID-19 Pandemic:
- IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action