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## FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

March 31, 2020



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### EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES — COVID-19 RESPONSE: MARCH 31, 2020

**School Closures and Legislation.** On March 15, 2020, Governor Kim Reynolds gave the [recommendation](#) that Iowa schools close for four weeks. On March 17, 2020, Governor Reynolds signed [Senate File 2408](#), which includes a waiver of instructional time requirements for school districts and accredited nonpublic schools that close to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

**Department of Education.** The Department of Education (DE) is continuing to provide updated [guidance](#) to families, school districts, area education agencies (AEAs), community colleges, and teacher preparation programs. Federal legislation, guidance, and information is continually being reviewed and incorporated into current guidance. The DE is also hosting twice-weekly webinars with school district superintendents and education stakeholders. Prior webinars can be viewed [here](#). The Department has established a Continuous Learning Task Force that is working to provide additional information for online learning and addressing education needs when students return to school. The Department is partnering with AEA Learning Online, the Governor's STEM Advisory Council, Iowa PBS, and the Iowa Reading Research Center to provide [resources](#) for families and educators to use to support student learning. These resources are by grade level and cover multiple subject areas.

**Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services.** Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) has 80.0% of staff in a telework environment. Service delivery for job candidates with disabilities and business partners continues virtually. Support of clients involved with the entrepreneurship program continues, and work opportunity partnerships are being formed.

**Iowa PBS.** Governor Reynolds has asked Iowa PBS to provide the press conference [video](#) of ongoing news conferences from the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). Iowa PBS is also providing programming and support statewide. Multiple special informational programs have been aired and are available on [iowapbs.org](#), and a live call in show will be airing April 3, 2020, at 7:30 p.m. to address statewide impact issues related to COVID-19. Iowa PBS has provided multiple online educational resources including the following:

- [Virtual Learning Camp](#) on Facebook beginning March 23, 2020, for educational skills and activities.
- Daily special [programming](#) for grades 6-12 in the subject areas of science, history, and English language arts.
- Parent [resources](#) to use to talk with children about COVID-19. Information on healthy habits, educational games, and activities are also available.
- At-home learning [resources](#) for families and children.

**Iowa Department for the Blind.** The Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) completed its transition to a virtual and distance service model and is continuing to take referrals by phone or through its [website](#). Independent living teachers are maintaining contact with clients and continue to support their needs. The orientation center staff are working with students over the phone and continue to teach home management skills, job readiness, and communication skills. Additional webinars are being developed to address nonvisual techniques for home deep cleaning and adjusting recipes due to certain food items being unavailable. The communications instructor is meeting with students and staff trainees via phone to teach braille and to teach use of computers with screen-reading software. Additional education offerings by the IDB include the following:

- IDB Read is a live reading of a book followed by discussion. Readings are offered Monday through Thursday via conference call.

- Technical support is offered every Wednesday from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m.
- Braille Bits Online will be a twice-weekly podcast conducted over Zoom beginning March 30, 2020.

The Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped has increased from 10 to 20 the number of audiobooks being placed on cartridges and sent to patrons. The library is also providing a two-week teleconference training for paraeducators and associates focusing on accessibility and providing accessible educational materials to students. Training topics will include accessible documents, Universal Design for Learning, and braille and accessibility tools. Updates on available trainings can be found [here](#).

**Early Childhood Iowa.** Early Childhood Iowa (ECI) is collaborating with multiple State agencies to provide community guidance for family support and child care programming. ECI is partnering with the Iowa Women's Foundation to identify financial resources to assist child care programs. ECI is also supporting the efforts of individual ECI local boards to coordinate providing meals to child care centers experiencing lost partnerships with schools or changes in resources. Additional [information](#) is included on the ECI website and includes the following:

- Updates and guidance on family support programs.
- Child care updates and a child care availability map.
- Child care guidance.
- Temporary job opportunities and updates.

The ECI State Board will hold a teleconference [meeting](#) on April 3, 2020.

**State Library of Iowa.** The Law Library and administrative offices in the Miller Building are currently closed to the public. The majority of staff are using telework options, and services continue to be provided virtually. The State Library is providing [guidance](#) to local libraries on the handling of materials and library closures. A listing of [updates](#) including public libraries closed is being maintained on the State Library's website.

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