How has COVID-19 impacted special education?

The pandemic has forced many schools to alter individualized education programs (IEPs) to accommodate distance learning and online classes. Teachers are saying that they are burdened with more paperwork requirements and must dedicate less time to their students. The switch to online classes has also caused many challenges in providing services and education to students with disabilities who cannot access remote learning due to lack of technology or other various reasons. Special education advocates are recommending that parents add a note at the end of their students' IEPs stating that parents do not agree to waive any rights under IDEA or Section 504, including their rights to a "free appropriate public education" for their children. Although the Department of Education has issued a statement emphasizing that special education services must continue either in-person or remotely, parents and districts say that the problems lie in cases where equitable services cannot be provided remotely or where in-person learning is not an option. Currently, students with disabilities may have to wait six to eight weeks for learning resources that work for them, putting them in danger of falling behind in their learning compared to their classmates.