

**MCA IS EXPANDING OUR SERVICES  
AND WAYS TO ACCESS OUR SERVICES  
TO ADDRESS THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS AND SCHOOL SHUT DOWN**

The Coronavirus crisis has rocked the country and caused disruption and difficulty for everyone. Similarly, the stay-at-home orders, though absolutely necessary, have gutted education for our kids. Kids with disabilities are especially vulnerable to all this disruption. Many kids with disabilities are more vulnerable to getting the virus, requiring even more care in relation to exposure to others. At the same time, they also require more assistance, sometimes full 1-1 assistance, to access the distance learning options being implemented by schools. And then there are many questions:

- 1) What is my child entitled to while they are staying at home?
- 2) Can they get related services as well as educational support?
- 3) What if the virtual school program that my district is offering doesn't work for my kid?
- 4) What if we don't have the equipment to access the online programs?
- 5) What if my child needs direct support to do the work, but I have to go to work or have other responsibilities?
- 6) What will happen when school starts up? How can I prepare for my child's return?
- 7) Does my child have a right to get extra services to make up for what they have lost?

Although the Coronavirus is causing shutdowns in many ways, these and other issues actually are going to create new advocacy challenges for parents, clinicians and advocates. At the same time, many people are worried about the financial impact of all of this on their families and their future. To address these issues, we are putting in place many new options for families to support them in this crisis:

1. **FREE BRIEF IEP TUNE UP/REVIEW.** – If you send us your child's most recent IEP (or Section 504 plan), school evaluation and the most recent private evaluation, if any, that has been done in areas of concern for your child, we will review it and provide 30 minutes of free feedback about the adequacy of the IEP and whether there are things that could/should be added. If we feel it is necessary, we may also offer suggestions for additional evaluations and can often provide options for evaluators. We will also tell you if you need either a deeper case assessment or direct help from an advocate or a lawyer, but with no obligation to use our firm for that purpose. Email Tami Kuipers at [tami.kuipers@gmail.com](mailto:tami.kuipers@gmail.com) to arrange for a free review.
2. **FREE 90 MINUTE ONLINE or PHONE CASE CONSULTATION** – If you feel you have a dispute with your school that requires the help of our lawyers or advocates, we will provide you a free legal consultation for up to 90 minutes to review documents, discuss your concerns, provide a preliminary evaluation of your case, and options for going forward. If additional time is needed to evaluate the situation, we will discuss the additional costs involved at that time. Subject to availability, this will either be with Matt Cohen or Brad Dembs. Call Tami Kuipers at 866-787-9270 to arrange for a legal consultation.
- 3) **FREE PARENT ONLINE "ASK THE LAWYER/ADVOCATE" WEEKLY CALL IN FORUM** - We will provide a weekly zoom video program for parents to ask questions about special education law and practice. Please note that this is not intended to be a place to discuss details of a particular child's case. It is to answer general questions about your rights, options that you have regarding services and placements, general strategy questions and the like. We are not allowed to give legal advice when we have not been retained and this is intended as a forum for general questions. These will be offered via Zoom on Wednesday afternoons. Register in advance for this meeting at

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlrcOuqqT8sq3cMmudqWRhs4X8GYqd5jA> After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

**4. WEEKLY WEBINARS ON IMPORTANT SPECIAL EDUCATION ISSUES.** Starting next week, Matt and other members of our staff will provide at least weekly webinars on subjects of interest. Watch for more information to be posted on our website. Some topics will be offered for free, while others will be for a nominal fee. The initial presentations will be free:

**4/14/2020 Matt Cohen will speak on Parents Rights During School Closings.**

**4/21/2020 Matt will speak on Special Education Advocacy 101.**

**4/28/2020 Elizabeth Hooper will do a Talk to the Teacher Presentation-Practical suggestions for meeting your child's special education needs at home during Distance Learning (Elizabeth is a master's Level Special Education teacher in addition to being an advocate for the law firm)**

**5/5/2020 Brad Dembs will speak on Child Find and Evaluations- including what to include in a request for school evaluations and tips for making private evaluations and reports as useful as possible.**

**5. ASK THE TEACHER:** Elizabeth Hooper, one of our staff advocates, is also a master's Level Special Education teacher with Illinois LBS certification. She is also an Executive Functioning coach. She will be offering an "ask the teacher" service for parents (or others) to post questions on our Face Book Page at <https://www.facebook.com/mattcohenandassociates/> that she will answer (within 2-3 days or less). This service is free of charge. She is also available for 1-1 consultation with parents on how to effectively support your child's academic and personal needs while they are stuck at home. This service will be based on her regular hourly fee. We will also be rolling out additional formats to get assistance on these issues (possibly webinars or joining an ongoing small group discussion with Elizabeth). Contact Tami Kuipers to arrange an initial call with Elizabeth (866-787-9270)

**6. BROCHURES:** We have a number of excellent brochures that we have prepared on topics of interest to parents. These include:

**Obtaining an IEE;**

**Gifted vs. Twice Exceptional;**

**Classroom Observations;**

**Tips for Obtaining Appropriate Autism Services;**

**Tips for Writing IEPs & 504 Plans;**

**Tips for Obtaining Accommodations for the ACT, SAT and Other Placement Tests.**

These are available for free by emailing Tami at [tami.kuipers@gmail.com](mailto:tami.kuipers@gmail.com)

**7. CLINICIANS:** We will also be offering a variety of services to clinicians that address special education law and advocacy topics, report writing, confidentiality and other issues. These will be explained in more detail in other announcements.

**8.** Stay tuned. We expect to be adding additional services within the next several weeks.

**9.** If there is a service that you would be interested in that isn't mentioned here, please contact Matt at [mdcspedlaw@gmail.com](mailto:mdcspedlaw@gmail.com).

\* If no one is online within 15 minutes of the start of the session, it will be cancelled. The moderator will limit or defer questions to ensure participants get a chance to ask a question and may deflect a question if it is felt to be too personal or otherwise not appropriate for this format.

All of this information and further details will be available at the following:

Our website is [www.mattcohenandassociates.com](http://www.mattcohenandassociates.com)

Our Facebook page is [mattcohenandassociates](https://www.facebook.com/mattcohenandassociates)