



# Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

To: Superintendents, Principals, and School Nurses

From: Steve Balko, Director of School Building Security

Date: March 5, 2021

Subject: Vision and Hearing Screening Guidance During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Vision and hearing screening requirements remain in effect for all students in the required grade levels this year (this includes both in-person and virtual learners), consistent with state law (IC 20-34-3).

Although it is best practice to complete these screenings in the fall, the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) recognizes that not all schools have been able to complete these screenings due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have provided guidance below for schools that have not yet completed their screenings this school year.

- IDOE recommends schools use these tools to modify existing school-based practices to safely conduct screenings.
- Schools should assess the status of COVID-19 in their communities on a regular basis (including factors such as community spread and number of positive school cases). County and school COVID-19 metrics can be found [here](#).

Schools are encouraged to safely screen students as soon as they can. IDOE acknowledges that some schools may need to wait until April or May, based on their community's COVID-19 status. The law does not stipulate a specific date by which these annual screenings must be completed, so schools will have until the end of the school year to complete the screening process.

For in-person students, parents should be notified when students will be screened, the procedures for screening, and how parents can communicate if they object to the screening.

For virtual students, schools will need to work with parents to develop a time when students can come to school to obtain their vision and hearing screening. Schools must offer the opportunity for students to be screened, but parents may accept or decline, as no student should be required to submit to a screening test if objection by the parent is submitted to the school. If the student does not show up for an offered screening opportunity, the school should document this in the student's record.

Parent objections may be submitted in writing, electronically, or verbally (as long as the verbal communication is properly documented in the student's health file).



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## VISION SCREENING

Visual acuity screening is required for students in kindergarten or grade 1, and grades three, five and eight, as well as any student suspected of having a visual defect. Guidance for modifying vision screening procedures during COVID-19 can be found on the National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health webpage by clicking [here](#).

The national guidance contains a FAQ section offering suggestions for vision procedures during the pandemic. Please note that near vision screening is not recommended at this time.

In addition to a visual acuity screening, students in kindergarten or grade one must receive a Modified Clinical Technique (MCT) vision screening by a licensed eye professional. Indiana law provides a waiver for the MCT portion of the vision screening for these students. If schools are unable to obtain the services of a licensed eye professional by the end of this school year, a waiver can be requested by completing this [form](#). The form asks for the reason a school could not complete the MCT screening. If the reason for a school's waiver request is due to COVID-19, please select "Other" as your choice and write COVID-19 in the box provided. The waiver form is open at this time and will be open until Friday, June 18. The waiver does not apply to the visual acuity screening requirement for students in kindergarten or grade one.

Additional information regarding the vision screening law can be found [here](#).

## HEARING SCREENING

Hearing screening is required for students in grades one, four, seven, and 10, as well as any student suspected of having a hearing defect and any student who has transferred into the school district.

Guidance considerations for modifying existing school-based hearing screening practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as information regarding the hearing screening law, is available [here](#).

If you have additional questions, please contact Jolene Bracale at [jbracale@doe.in.gov](mailto:jbracale@doe.in.gov).