



February 4, 2022

Federally Mandated Assessment Medical Waiver Guidance for Assessment and Accountability

Introduction

All Iowa students attending public, charter, or state accredited nonpublic schools (including students with disabilities, English learners, and English learners with disabilities) are required by state¹ and federal law² to participate in Iowa's federally required assessments: Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP), Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM), and English Language Proficiency Assessments for the 21st Century (ELPA21). Students who do not participate in state assessments are included as "not tested" when calculating participation rates for school accountability purposes. Students with acute, short term minor illnesses or injuries, that allow the student to take an assessment with or without support within the assessment window, must participate in the statewide assessments. Schools may provide support through the assessment's universal and designated features. Allowable accommodations may be provided for students who have a documented need in an IEP or 504 plan. Consult the specific assessment's accessibility and accommodations manual for more information. If a student can receive instruction during the assessment window (including off-site instruction), then a student is also expected to participate in statewide assessments. Contact state assessment staff if there are any questions regarding support or accommodations for students in unique situations.

Medical Waiver

In rare and unique instances, a student may be unable to participate in all or part of a statewide assessment during a particular testing window due to a significant, documented medical emergency. Examples may include but are not limited to: hospitalization or placement in hospice care, severe trauma, or a mental health crisis. If due to the student's medical condition they are unable to participate in a statewide assessment, a student may be waived from participation in a statewide assessment and excluded from the school's accountability calculations.

The Iowa Department of Education (IDOE) requires districts to maintain documentation of instances where testing is not completed due to a significant or emergency medical situation. IDOE may request documentation, as deemed necessary, when calculating a district's accountability determinations.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. Is a prescribing health care provider's note required?

A prescribing health care provider's note is not required but is highly recommended.

2. Should parents be involved?

In the vast majority of situations, parents and schools collaborate to make decisions about participation in assessments due to a circumstance that falls under the medical waiver guidance.

3. What kind of documentation is recommended?

¹ [IC 256.7\(21\)\(b\)\(2\)](#); [IAC 281-60.3\(1\)](#)

² [ESEA Section 1111\(b\)\(2\)\(A-G\)](#)

There are two types of documentation that is recommended: information from the prescribing health care provider and information from the school. Both types of documentation will create an educational record and therefore will be protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Documentation could include but is not limited to:

- a. *Prescribing health care provider*: a prescribing health care provider's note, dates of illness or accident, and description of the educational limitations
- b. *The School*: reasons why administering the assessment is not possible, dates of meetings, list of staff involved in making the decision, and evidence of parent communication.

4. If a student participates in the alternate assessments, and is medically fragile, does this exempt them from participating in the assessments?

No, every student on the alternate assessment is to be tested, even those with significant health needs. District Assessment Coordinators should contact Jennifer Denne, Alternate Assessment Consultant, at jennifer.denne@iowa.gov for guidance on assessment requirements for students who are receiving medical services that present challenges to performing the assessment.

5. Where do districts report the medical waiver code for each assessment?

Districts report the medical waiver code for each ISASP and DLM assessment through the Assessment Accountability Application. For ELPA21, districts report the medical waiver nonparticipation code in TIDE for each assessment.