



WEST VIRGINIA PARENT  
TRAINING & INFORMATION

## 'Bits & Pieces'

Covid-19 Edition December 2020



### Our Mission

Our mission is to empower families as advocates and partners in improving education, health and transition outcomes for their children and youth with disabilities and special health care needs with a commitment to diversity and equity.



Welcome to our newsletter from WVPTI!

WVPTI is here to help you with questions and finding answers to your problems. We are sharing some news and ideas in our newsletter. Please check out of Facebook page for other resources:

<https://www.facebook.com/Wvpti/>

Brenda Lamkin,

Executive Director

## Holiday and Covid -19

With the Covid's effect upon your families, the schools, and our communities, this year has been very difficult. It is even more overwhelming when you are navigating distance learning, school opening and then shutting down, or having a virtual IEP meeting. Now, we are starting the holiday season, and like most things this year, it will be changed due to the coronavirus pandemic. You may feel it is one more disappointment in a very long, challenging year.

So, we are going to offer some general tips for the holiday season when your children with special needs and family members are celebrating the holidays. The first advice that Dr. Erica Lee, a psychologist at Boston Children's Hospital suggests is "talk it out." "The holidays are traditionally a time to come together with loved ones. If your kids are having a tough time adjusting to changes in your plan, let them know you understand and you are disappointed, too. Encourage them to share their thoughts and feelings and help them appreciate why things have to be different."

Start a few weeks ahead talking about the holidays and give your children time to sit down together, discuss, and make a plan for how you will celebrate. Most importantly, focus on what you can do this season. Think about your holiday rituals, and come up with ideas on how to continue the traditions in a new way.

You can create new traditions such as:

Host mini-holiday celebrations. Spread your events out over online, short celebrations. An example, one group in your family could host the sing-a-long holiday songs, another could host the dancing, and another could host a time for storytelling.

Work together on a shared project. It would be like a crafting, online chain for a holiday project to share with your family or friends. You could make a holiday ornament or treat and send it to each other. Send each other care packages. You could make a favorite holiday treat or small gifts and open them over Facetime/

Zoom online. Hold a friendly competition. You might put up holiday decorations; then, Zoom the decorations and have the family vote on their favorite. We hope you will celebrate the holidays in a safe and happy way.



# Happy Holidays!



## Covid—19 Video to Share with Your Child



It looks pretty scary to take a Covid-19 test when the people are covered with masks and protective gear. Here is a video to help explain the process to your special needs' child:

[https://youtu.be/AhC6\\_JXagxE](https://youtu.be/AhC6_JXagxE)

## Opportunity to give your opinion!



University is offering you an opportunity to give your opinion. COVID-19 has led to many changes for parents, their children, and schools. You are invited to participate in a survey research project entitled "Impact of Covid-19 on Students and Families in Appalachia." This survey is being conducted by Marshall University and is comprised of multiple-choice and short answer questions about how the Covid-19 pandemic is affecting children and families' physical, mental, emotional, and fiscal well-being, as well as daily school functioning. This survey will take participants approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please click on the link below to proceed to the informed consent and survey if you are interested in participation.

[https://marshall.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_cOTE4WuCF8c8vA1](https://marshall.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cOTE4WuCF8c8vA1)

We hope that you will offer your views and information. Thank you on behalf of Marshall University and WVPTI.

### *Message from the Director...*



Brenda Lamkin, Ex. Director of WVPTI

### *Greetings Friends of West Virginia Parent Training and Information, Inc.,*

WVPTI wishes everyone good health, calmness, and peace as we celebrate this holiday season. We understand the holidays will be different this year due to Covid-19. Your family will be together during the holiday, either virtually or in-person. The newsletter this month includes tips and suggestions to have safe gatherings. We wish all of you safe and happy celebrations.

In an effort to keep you updated in the new year with the latest news, WVPTI social media accounts, emails, and our website will have postings and updates about the status of WVPTI programs and services.

Also, contact us at our main number, 304-472-5697, if you need services or information.

Be well, stay safe, and Happy Holidays!

## Questions and Answers about Virtual IEP Meetings



It is a time when parents and school officials are having virtual IEP meetings during the Covid pandemic. West Virginia Parent Training and Information have had several questions from parents. We understand this different way to have a meeting makes changes for everyone involved in the process. The questions below are a sampling of what many parents of special needs children in WV are asking us.

**Question:** Does having a virtual meeting change any of the requirements of my child's IEP?

The IDEA requirements have not changed and every attempt should be made to comply with the required timeline for meetings. All IEP Team requirements still apply to the virtual IEP meetings. Every required team member should participate unless appropriately excused from the meeting. You, the parent, should be notified ahead of time of who will be absent and appropriate documentation required. Changes in federal rules and regulations now allow the utilization of alternatives to meeting in person. There are options such as conference calls, video conferences, and online collaboration. The online platform could vary like Zoom or Teams. It was in 2005 that the federal (USA) law changes for virtual collaboration to be a viable option for the typical face-to-face meeting. You, the parent, will still have notice of the IEP meeting and who will be attending the virtual meeting. If you need to reschedule the meeting, you might request another time for the virtual meeting.

**Question:** What about the meeting signatures or my signature on documents when IEP Teams are meeting virtually?

It depends upon the individual counties on how they are handling the signing. In some counties with the IEP documents, you may use electronic or digital signatures. When you are meeting, some counties are sending a copy of the evaluation and reports through your email or ahead of time with the regular mail. Also, there is a new feature set up by the US Dept. of Ed. called the Parent Connect Portal that allows parents to sign virtually using the online system of IEP. However, all the members on the IEP team need to have access to email including you, the parent. It will document that the IEP team met virtually due to the public health pandemic.

**Question:** What if I do not have access to the Internet or a video camera for a virtual meeting?

These items are not a requirement of a virtual meeting. Yes, video and screen sharing does make the meeting better due to the fact that you can see the attendees' faces and share documents. Yet, these items are not required. You may have a virtual meeting through a conference line which is accessible through a traditional phone or a voice option on most virtual meeting platforms. You do need to make sure that since you are going to receive copies of any materials discussed during the virtual meeting by email or US mail.

Please check out our website for more information!  
We are here to help you and your special needs child. Call us at 304-472-5697.  
We are here for you!

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West Virginia Parent Training and Information, Inc. (WVPTI) is a non-profit agency that operates the statewide federally funded Parent Training and is the [Family Voices](#) State Affiliate Organization for West Virginia.

The programs and services of WVPTI, Inc. are based on the concept of parents helping parents. Our mission is to empower parents of children and youth with disabilities in their roles as parents, decision makers, and advocates for their children and to promote partnerships among parents and professionals.



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## Self— Advocacy is our strength!

- Speaking up for yourself,
- Asking for what you need,
- Negotiating for yourself (working with others to reach an agreement that will meet your needs),
- Knowing your rights and responsibilities,
- Using the resources that are available to you,
- Being able to explain your disability either by the use of written words, pictures.
- Being able to explain your disability either by the use of written words, pic-

tures or gestures.

For the full article; <http://>

[www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/  
transition-tool-kit/self-advocacy](http://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/transition-tool-kit/self-advocacy)



The funding for this publication has been provided by a grant from the US Dept. of Education, OSERS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.