

# Checklist for Homebound Instruction

**Purpose:** When considering whether a student should receive homebound instruction, the IEP team must carefully evaluate the student's individual needs, medical requirements, and the impact on their educational progress. Homebound instruction is considered when a student's medical condition severely limits their ability to attend school. Homebound is one of the most restrictive placements for a learner with disabilities and should be used with caution and only after thoughtful consideration by the IEP team. Below is an outline of the considerations for recommending homebound instruction, including when it may be appropriate, why a team might recommend it, and the potential advantages and disadvantages of this placement. LEAs can follow this process to discuss the rationale for recommending homebound instruction. This checklist should be used to guide the decision-making process and for monitoring any student already receiving homebound instruction.

**NOTE for IEP Teams:** Do not proceed with this checklist if there is insufficient documentation to answer or discuss each consideration as an IEP team. For example, without documentation from licensed professionals, an IEP team could not appropriately consider homebound instruction. For example, consider medical documentation provided by the family. If the district determines medical documentation is needed to determine a FAPE for the student, then the district must pay for the evaluation needed to obtain the district-requested medical documentation. The district could make this decision because they have no medical documentation and need it to determine a FAPE or have some medical information and need more medical information in addition to what has previously been provided or what has been provided by the parent.

## When is Homebound Instruction Considered?

1. **Medical Necessity:** Homebound instruction is generally considered when a student has a significant medical condition that prevents them from attending school safely or effectively. This could include chronic illness, severe physical disabilities, recovery from surgery, or mental health conditions that make attending school in person impossible.
2. **IEP Team Decision:** The decision to place a student on homebound instruction must be made by the IEP team, including input from the student's prescribing healthcare provider. The professional's documentation should clearly state the need for homebound instruction and provide details on the expected duration and any specific educational limitations.

**Iowa Code Reference: Iowa Code 281—41.320(1)"f"** An explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular class and in the activities described in paragraph 41.320(1)"e"

## Why Would a Team Recommend Homebound Instruction?

1. **Severe Health Concerns:** The team might recommend homebound instruction when a student's health condition is so severe that attending school in any capacity could pose a risk to the student's well-being or significantly hinder educational progress.
2. **Temporary Circumstances:** Homebound instruction may be recommended for a temporary period while the student recovers from an acute medical issue, such as surgery or treatment for a serious illness, with the goal of reintegrating the student into school as soon as possible.
3. **Ensuring Educational Continuity:** The IEP team may determine that homebound instruction is the best way to ensure the student continues to receive educational services during a period when they cannot attend school.

## Potential Advantages of Homebound Instruction

1. **Health and Safety:** Homebound instruction allows students with significant medical conditions to continue their education in a safe environment that accommodates their health needs.
2. **Personalized Instruction:** The instruction is often highly individualized, allowing the student to receive one-on-one attention from a teacher, which can be beneficial for addressing specific academic needs.
3. **Flexibility:** Homebound instruction can be scheduled around the student's medical needs, allowing for flexibility in timing and pacing of lessons.

## Potential Disadvantages of Homebound Instruction

1. **Limited Social Interaction:** One of the primary disadvantages of homebound instruction is the lack of social interaction with peers. This can impact the student's social development and lead to feelings of isolation.
2. **Reduced Access to Curriculum:** Students on homebound instruction may not have the same access to the full curriculum as they would in a traditional school setting, potentially limiting their educational experiences.
3. **Resource Intensive:** Providing homebound instruction can be resource-intensive, requiring significant time and effort from educators to deliver personalized instruction outside the school setting.
4. **Potential for Academic Gaps:** Because homebound instruction typically involves fewer instructional hours, there is a risk that the student may fall behind academically compared to their peers.

# A Checklist of Considerations for Implementation

## Prior to the IEP Team Meeting

### 1. Secure Medical Documentation

- Obtain documentation from a licensed professional specifying the medical condition that necessitates a shortened school day, including specific limitations, expected duration, and recommendations for the student's educational program.

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.320(1) (Evaluations and eligibility determinations must include medical information when necessary to understand the impact of the disability on the student's educational needs).

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.320(1) (The medical opinion provides critical insight into the student's health needs and must be considered).

### 2. Involve Parents

- Ensure that parents or guardians are fully informed and participate in the decision-making process, understanding how the professional opinion guides the discussion. Parents must know outside information will be reviewed and considered at the IEP meeting, and that the outside information does not override an IEP team decision.

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.321(3) (Parental involvement is mandated in the IEP process).

### 3. Convene the IEP Team

- Schedule an IEP team meeting, including parents, relevant school personnel, and the professional or a representative when appropriate. Use the professional documentation as a foundation for discussing the student's educational needs.

## During the IEP Team Meeting

### 1. Weigh Professional Opinion

- Consider the professional's opinion. The IEP team must carefully consider the professional's opinion, which is essential in determining the appropriateness of a homebound instruction.

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.320(1) (The medical opinion provides critical insight into the student's health needs and must be considered).

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.321(3) (Parents must be involved in the development of the IEP and any decision-making processes related to their child's education).

### 2. Involve Parents

- Ensure that parents or guardians are fully informed and participate in the decision-making process, understanding how the medical opinion guides the discussion.

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.321(3) (Parental involvement is mandated in the IEP process).

### 3. Assess Educational Impact

- Evaluate how the shortened school day, as recommended by the licensed professional, will affect the student's ability to access the general education curriculum and meet their academic and functional goals. Consider alternative strategies or accommodations that might allow for a full school day.

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.116 (The school day should be the same for all students unless otherwise specified in the IEP, reflecting individualized needs based on expert recommendations).

- Identify what the student needs to receive at home. Can that be provided in the educational setting with accommodations or supplementary aids and services or can it only be provided at home? Could it be provided in any less restrictive setting with accommodations, modifications or supplementary aids and services? See *generally A.W. v. Northwest R-1 School District, 813 F.2d 158 (8th Cir. 1987)*.

#### 4. Review Advantages of Homebound Instruction

- Health and Safety:** Homebound instruction allows students with significant medical conditions to continue their education in a safe environment that accommodates their health needs.
- Personalized Instruction:** The instruction is often highly individualized, allowing the student to receive one-on-one attention from a teacher, which can be beneficial for addressing specific academic needs.
- Flexibility:** Homebound instruction can be scheduled around the student's medical needs, allowing for flexibility in timing and pacing of lessons.

#### 5. Review Disadvantages of Homebound Instruction

- Limited Social Interaction:** One of the primary disadvantages of homebound instruction is the lack of social interaction with peers. This can impact the student's social development and lead to feelings of isolation.
- Reduced Access to Curriculum:** Students on homebound instruction may not have the same access to the full curriculum as they would in a traditional school setting, potentially limiting their educational experiences.
- Resource Intensive:** Providing homebound instruction can be resource-intensive, requiring significant time and effort from educators to deliver personalized instruction outside the school setting.
- Potential for Academic Gaps:** Because homebound instruction typically involves fewer instructional hours, there is a risk that the student may fall behind academically compared to their peers.

#### 6. Document Team Decision in the IEP

- Clearly document the rationale for or against the homebound instruction in the IEP, including the licensed professional recommendations. Specify the duration and any conditions under which the student would return to a full or modified school day.

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.320(2) (All decisions, including deviations from the standard school day, must be documented in the IEP).

#### 7. Monitor and Review Progress

- Develop a plan for monitoring the student's progress during the shortened school day, collecting data on academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being. Schedule regular IEP meetings to review progress, with attention to any updates from the licensed professional.

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.324(1) (The IEP must be reviewed periodically, at least annually, to ensure it continues to meet the student's educational needs, especially in the context of ongoing medical advice).

#### 8. Develop a Reintegration Plan

- Develop a plan for reintegrating the student into a full school day when appropriate, with clear criteria and timelines, developed in consultation with any professional recommendations.

**Iowa Code Reference:** Although no specific code addresses reintegration plans, the requirement to provide FAPE under 281—41.101 implies that plans should support the student's educational progress without unnecessary restrictions.

**Federal Code Reference:** 34 C.F.R. § 300.101(a): This regulation requires that each public agency must ensure that a FAPE is available to any child with a disability who needs special education and related services, including the consideration of how a student's educational needs can be met in the least restrictive environment, which includes plans for reintegration. This federal requirement supports the state's obligation to create plans that help students return to a full school day when appropriate, aligning with Iowa Code 281—41.101.

## 9. Ensure Parental Rights and Involvement

- Ensure parents fully understand their rights under IDEA, including the right to consent to or challenge decisions made by the IEP team regarding their child's school day. Provide information on how to resolve disputes if the parents disagree with the decisions, especially if they feel the professional recommendations have not been adequately considered.

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.507 (Outlines the procedural safeguards available to parents, including the right to mediation and due process hearings).

## After the IEP Team Meeting

### 1. Monitor and Review Progress

- Implement a plan for monitoring the student's progress during the homebound instruction, collecting data on academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being. Schedule regular IEP meetings to review progress, with attention to any updates from the professional recommendation for homebound instruction. Regular IEP meetings are recommended to occur monthly using all available valid and reliable data.

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.324(1) (The IEP must be reviewed periodically, at least annually, to ensure it continues to meet the student's educational needs, especially in the context of ongoing medical advice).

### 2. Monitor Progress on the Reintegration Plan

- Review progress on a plan for reintegrating the student into a full or modified school day when appropriate, with clear criteria and timelines, developed in consultation with the professional.

**Iowa Code Reference:** Although no specific code addresses reintegration plans, the requirement to provide FAPE under 281—41.101 implies that plans should support the student's educational progress without unnecessary restrictions.

### 3. Maintain Ongoing Communication with Medical Providers

- Keep regular communication with the student's providers to ensure the educational plan aligns with professional recommendations. Update the IEP as necessary based on these communications.

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.321(2) (Allows for the inclusion of outside agencies, such as medical providers, in the IEP team if they have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child).

### 4. Ensure Parental Rights and Involvement

- Ensure parents fully understand their rights under IDEA, including the right to consent to or challenge decisions made by the IEP team regarding their child's school day. Provide information on how to resolve disputes if the parents disagree with the decisions, especially if they feel the professional recommendations have not been adequately considered.

**Iowa Code Reference:** 281—41.507 (Outlines the procedural safeguards available to parents, including the right to mediation and due process hearings).