



Kennedy Krieger Institute

Specialized Health Needs Interagency Collaboration

## Supporting a Student with Long-COVID

Considerations for Educators

Long-COVID, also known as post-acute sequela of SARS-CoV-2 (PASC); post-acute COVID-19; chronic COVID, or the umbrella term post-COVID conditions; has been defined as a wide range of new, returning or ongoing symptoms and clinical findings four or more weeks after initial COVID-19 infection. Such signs and symptoms cannot be explained by an alternative diagnosis. There has been no correlation between the severity of COVID-19 and this post-acute long-COVID disease; meaning that even if the student experienced a mild or asymptomatic COVID-19 infection, the symptoms of long-COVID could be significant.

Symptoms can be new, returning, or ongoing making it important to have a dynamic school plan. These symptoms could include:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Respiratory symptoms like chest tightness and shortness of breath
- Heart palpitations
- Joint or muscle pain
- Orthostatic intolerance
- Gastrointestinal issues like diarrhea or stomach pain
- Mood/psychological symptoms
- Insomnia
- Cognitive difficulties like “brain fog” or lack of concentration, difficulty processing information, and short term memory issues

At this time, management strategies and treatment of overlapping symptoms of long-COVID can be similar to that of students diagnosed with or experiencing symptoms of post-exertional malaise and Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS), lightheadedness and racing heart of Orthostatic Intolerance (OI) or Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS), and lingering cognitive symptoms of concussions or other brain injuries.

### Educational planning

A student experiencing long-COVID or other conditions as a result of the acute infection may be eligible for special education or related services under IDEA or Section 504. The disability may be new for the student or symptoms from a pre-existing disability could have worsened. The student may require new or different related services, specialized instruction, or reasonable accommodations based on their current symptoms.



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The Specialized Health Needs Interagency Collaboration (SHNIC) program is a collaborative partnership between the Kennedy Krieger Institute and the Maryland State Department of Education.

The determinations for eligibility for IDEA or Section 504 will be made by the school team on an individual basis. The school nurse is an integral part of this evaluation process. The plan should be focused on **conserving energy and prioritizing demands in school**. School suggestions or accommodations to consider for a 504/IEP could include:

- School RN assessment
- PT/OT/SLP evaluation
- Staggered return to school
- Blended learning (i.e. in-person, virtual, hybrid, etc.)
- Flexibility in scheduling, adjusted school days
- Adjusted time in arrival, dismissal, or transition between class times to avoid busy or crowded entry/exit or hallway
- Preferential classroom location to reduce demands transitioning to different settings
- Prioritizing academic demands
- Accommodations and/or adapted curriculum for cognitive difficulties
- Increased test taking time
- Use of written instruction
- Use of checklist, agenda book
- Reduced or limited amount of homework
- Extra set of books
- Use of assistive technology
- Copies of teacher notes
- Use of quiet space, activities, or noise-cancelling headphones
- Positive reinforcement, active listening
- Identification of an academic point person to coordinate and manage missed schoolwork
- Preferred staff member (i.e. resource teacher, guidance) for daily check-ins or distraction
- Adapted PE or reduced demands during physical activity
- Elevator privileges
- Development of an Emergency Care Plan (ECP) and/or Emergency Evacuation Plan (EEP)

It is important to develop a rapport with the student and understand that their needs and abilities may change from day to day or week to week. Communicate with the student, use active listening, and encourage management strategies to support their success returning to the classroom.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2021). Post-COVID conditions.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/long-term-effects.html>

Long COVID Kids. (2021). School awareness pack.

<https://www.longcovidkids.org/schools>

U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. (2021).

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/ocr-factsheet-504-20210726.pdf>