

What Can You Do During COVID-19 to Advocate for Aspiring Educators?

The threat of the coronavirus is impacting our students, schools, educators, AND the processes that Aspiring Educators must follow to complete their preparation programs and gain a license/certificate. Finding solutions to the challenges we face demands our collaborative efforts as never before. Here are some recommended actions:

For the Individual	For the Campus Chapter	For the State Program
<p>Watch for instructions from BOTH your assessment program and your state licensing agency. Assessment programs/vendors (e.g. edTPA, PPAT) may convey additional flexibility for timelines to complete tasks. But it is ultimately the state licensing/certification agency that determines what an individual must do to obtain their initial teaching license and when it must be completed.</p> <p>If possible, check with your preparation program coordinators for guidance. Tasks such as video recording demonstration lessons or providing feedback on student work may be impossible to complete at this time. Trying to fulfill these kinds of tasks by substituting virtual learning environments for face-to-face teaching may also be a challenge.</p> <p>Watch for flexibility and the possibility that some requirements may be waived. Preparation programs should help you monitor the requirements, and they may also have additional requirements to earn a degree.</p> <p>Monitor the communication of your state’s licensing agency. Your state’s licensing/certification agency determines the requirements to receive a license/certificate to begin your career. Sign up for emails from them and if possible, send them a note with your concern.</p> <p>Stay connected with your state’s Aspiring Educators program and to become part of their advocacy network. Possibly the most important actions by individuals will be to help with campus chapter and statewide advocacy actions.</p>	<p>Advocate for the flexibility and waivers of requirements to complete a degree at your preparation provider. Make sure to coordinate efforts with your state Aspiring Educator program!</p> <p>Advocate for the well-being of the Aspiring Educators in your program. These actions may address topics such as ensuring housing and nutritional needs are being met for all candidates, counseling services are available as needed, bills are able to be paid or delayed, etc.</p>	<p>Work with your state Aspiring Educators chapter AND your NEA state affiliate to advocate for needed changes. Advocating for flexibility in licensure requirements, testing timelines and fees, etc. may be difficult for an individual, but there is power in one united voice for candidates.</p> <p>Collect your stories of the impact of the coronavirus on your ability to complete tasks. Since state agencies have the authority and determine what you must do to receive a license/certificate to teach, collect testimonials and advocate with the appropriate state policymakers for flexibility and waivers. Share with your state Aspiring Educators program, too!</p> <p>Advocate for individual should be granted a provisional license (if needed). If the state agency does not waive testing (PPAT, edTPA, etc.) then the individual should be granted a provisional license (based on preparation program recommendation) so they are eligible to be hired, and then complete the testing during their first year of employment.</p> <p>Use your larger advocacy network. Pressure testing corporations to extend deadlines both for initial submissions AND resubmissions without additional costs.</p>

In conclusion, please know that you are not facing these challenges alone. You are part of a professional union family that will be working with you throughout your entire career to ensure your well-being and to help you to be successful in your important work with students. Stay connected, keep your union family apprised of your challenges, needs, and successes, and take care of yourself.

Stay healthy, stay positive, and best wishes for an amazing career.