



## **National Alternative Education Association's position on Alternative Education during COVID-19 Pandemic**

### **Challenge:**

The COVID-19 pandemic is having unprecedented impact on society including public school closures across the United States. The National Alternative Education Association applauds the commitment of doctors, nurses, other health care workers, and first responders on the front line, as well as grocery store and pharmacy employees. Alternative (nontraditional) education in all its forms, alternative schools and alternative education programs, are being impacted, yet many alternative education providers offer leading edge approaches to digital education at this time when it is much needed. School leaders, faculty, and staff are among the heroes as they work to continue the essential service of making educational opportunities available to the students and their families served by alternative education. Students served by alternative education are at high-risk of not graduating and often have characteristics that make them particularly vulnerable in a time of social distancing that could result in feelings of isolation. Social distancing is vitally important during this pandemic, yet the challenge remains to continue to reach potentially fragile students and their families.

### **Opportunity:**

Schools continue to provide educational opportunities and may be one of the lifelines for alternative education students and families. In addition to continuing academic offerings, this is an important time to emphasize social-emotional learning. The positive social-emotional aspect of schooling may be as important, if not more so, than academics during this uncertain time. Further, students served by alternative education should not be penalized by definitions of remote learning that are exclusive to use of technology that is often not available to those students. Further, students who were on-track to graduate should not be held back from graduation due to the public health emergency necessitated school closures.

### **Benefit:**

Just as alternative education is a state decision, so is each state's expectations for schooling during this emergency. As state's make decisions, it is important to give Local Education Agency's, (LEA), flexibility in defining how they can best provide education opportunities to their students. Alternative educators are working in the best interest of their students and families, who represent a diversity of geographic locations, ethnic groups, and socio-economic levels. As some states have already done, states should thoughtfully consider LEA autonomy when deciding how students fulfill graduation requirements during this crisis. Such flexibility will allow the continued positive impact of alternative education as healthy, educated individuals contribute to future society.