

Virtual Private Network (VPN) FAQ and Access Instructions

All Users must read the **VPN FAQ** and **End user Instructions**. If you are a new user as a result of the COVID-19 closure you have Temporary VPN access and you can skip to that section. Some new VPN users have Permanent VPN access (Leadership) and can skip the Permanent VPN Access section.

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VPN FAQs

What is VPN? VPN stands for Virtual Private Network and is a way for staff to remote in to their desktop computers, network files, and applications that are internal to MSDE while working remotely.

Does everyone need VPN? No, not everyone needs VPN. The only people who need VPN are people who need to remote in to their desktop computers or the MSDE network to access files or links to applications that can only be accessed from the outside via VPN. VPN is a cost to the state so if you think you need it you will have to justify it to your Division head.

How do I get VPN? Talk to your Division head. MSDE has a new process for creating new VPN accounts during the COVID-19 emergency. Once your Division head has sent your email to the MSDE Chief Information Officer (CIO) you will be sent a VPN Google Form. DoIT will then create your VPN account.

How long will it take to get VPN? MSDE has to prioritize staff who provide essential services to the state or Local School Systems. After essential staff, the remaining people who need VPN will be set up. Once a VPN request has been submitted to DoIT the process usually takes 2-3 days but could take longer during this time.

What if my VPN is not set up correctly? In about 20% of the cases additional resource links or applications or even a different device needs to be set up in the VPN. Testing your VPN connection as soon as you get it is a good idea. If your VPN is not set up properly after it goes live please contact the help desk, tell them you are a Temporary VPN user, and let them know what you need. **Email:** Service.Desk@maryland.gov

Why do some people already have VPN and others do not? Not everyone at MSDE needs VPN. Many people use their laptop (which they take home) and do not need to access files or applications on the network. Some people work remotely because they live far away and, therefore, already have VPN. Others can work remotely using email and Google Docs which are web-based and do not require VPN.

Can I use my personal computer to VPN into MSDE? Yes. If you do not have an MSDE computer you at home can use your personal computer to VPN into your desktop or the network if you are connecting to an MSDE desktop or terminal server via remote desktop. **No data should ever be copied to or stored on your personal computer and VPN does not allow you to move files from a work machine or network file to a personal machine or MSDE laptop.** All personal computers should have antivirus/malware protection and be set for automatic updates. Ensure you log out of the VPN when done working for the day and continue to follow the best practice of locking your system when away (key combinations/instructions for locking a computer are noted in a later paragraph).

Is VPN safe? What about Personally Identifiable Information (PII)? When you VPN into your computer at MSDE or the network your ability to work is somewhat limited. **For example, you should not be able to download work documents from a VPN onto your home computer if using remote desktop or terminal server connections.** Whatever work you do will remain on your work computer or at MSDE when using remote desktop connections. No sensitive data (including PII data) should ever be downloaded to a personal computer via any methods including VPN, Google drive, USB drives, etc. If your work requires working with sensitive data please ensure you are doing so in a spot where your laptop screen can not be seen by others.

Does my work computer need to be on in order to VPN and is it okay if the work computer is locked? Yes and yes. Work computers should be left on to accommodate VPN and users should always lock their

computers when leaving them even for a few minutes. To lock a computer click the Control-Alt-Delete keys and select Lock. You can additionally use the "Windows Flag" key along with L to instantly lock your computer.

When I log in to VPN does it require me to use the same username and password that I use when logging in to the network at MSDE? Yes

When the VPN prompts me to change my password, is it synced with the MSDE network so it updates the password in both places? Yes.

Can I listen to music or stream video via VPN? No. Streaming audio or video will not work via VPN. Audio is disabled by default so users don't take up bandwidth. That is a global setting. This also means you will have to call in to Google Hangouts for web meetings via phone as the audio will not work.

If my personal computer is set to sleep mode, does it affect VPN access? Yes. When the computer goes to sleep, any active VPN connection will be disconnected.

Does my personal computer need a browser update in order to use VPN to telework? Maybe. Old browser versions may not be compatible. It is suggested to use the latest, updated browser.

End-user Instructions of VPN (Everyone Read)

Before reading this please note that vendors should already have different links to do their work and have already been set up. External support vendors should not follow this instruction or the general DOIT instructions for state employee VPN access.

When you are approved for VPN access there are several different types of remote connections, web sites, file shares, etc., that can be provided depending on what is requested. This is a more detailed explanation of the resources available within the VPN if you have already been given access in the past.

The first section applies to users given TEMPORARY VPN Access during the COVID-19 emergency.

If you already had VPN before COVID-19 or were given PERMANENT VPN access during COVID-19 (Leadership) you will want to read the Permanent VPN Access section.

Most users added the week of 3/16/2020 to 3/20/2020 fall under the TEMPORARY VPN category.

Temporary COVID 19 VPN ACCESS

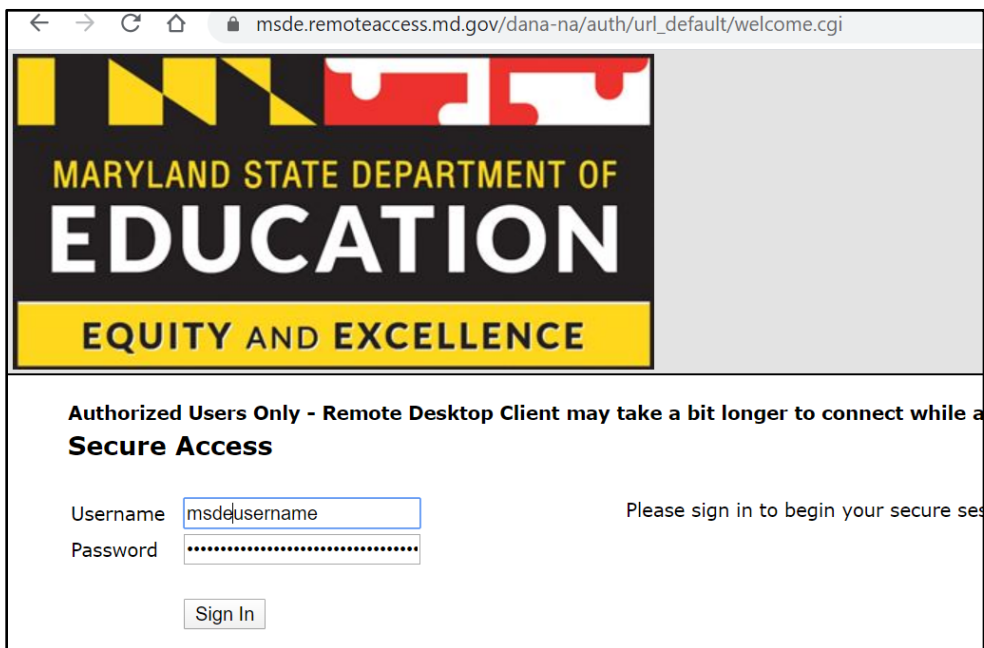
If you have been given temporary VPN Access please follow this section. If you have an existing VPN or have been given a permanent VPN you can skip this section.

Temporary User Login Instructions

To get started, use a supported browser (Latest versions of Chrome or Firefox are strongly preferred, most browsers such as IE, Safari, Edge should work).

Click [Remote Access](#)

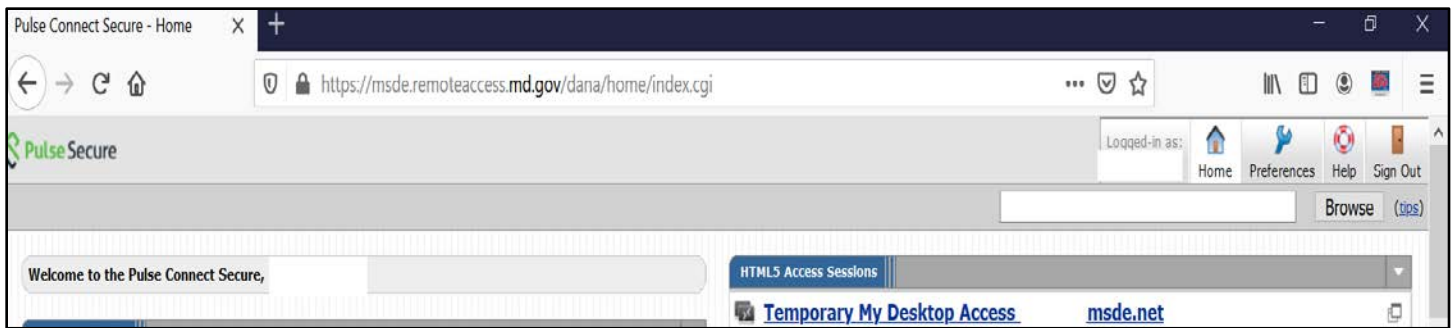
You will get the login screen:



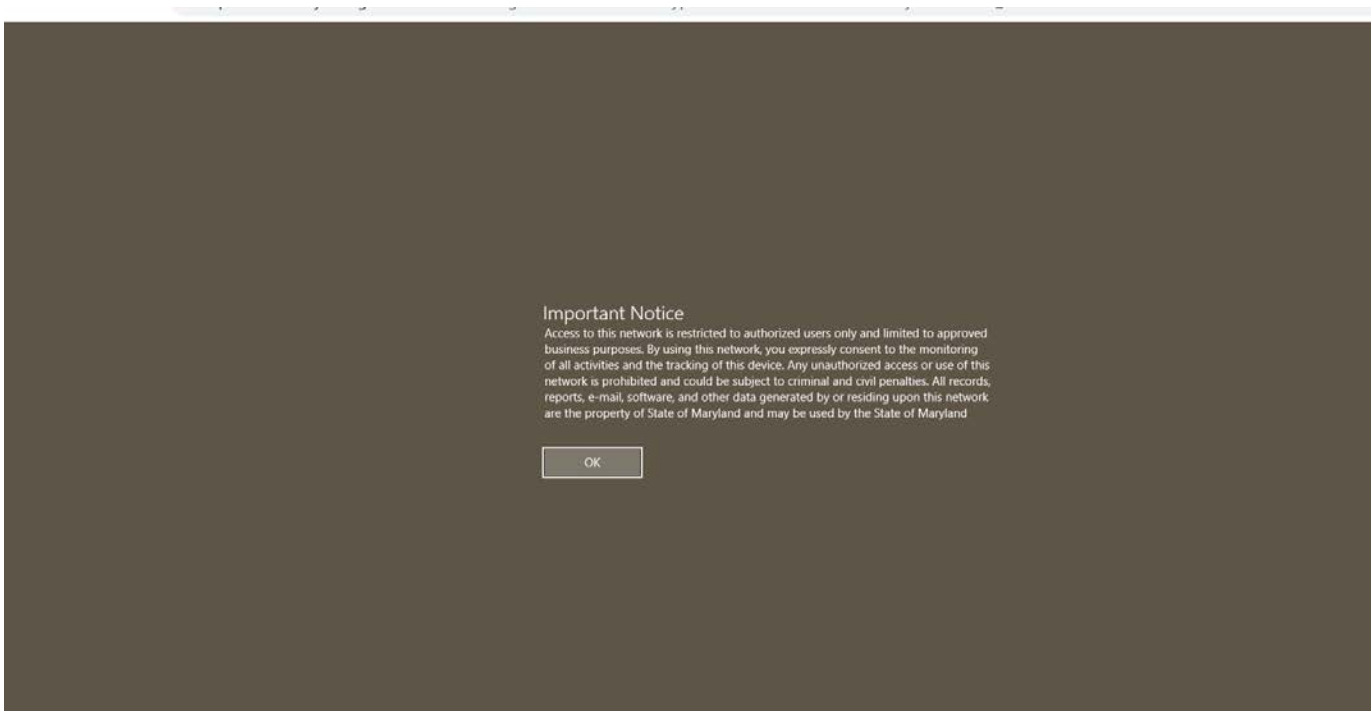
Enter your MSDE.net user ID and password and click sign in. Note the VPN may prompt you to change your password and you will need to follow the standard network password rules in place at MSDE (over 12 characters and having special characters/numbers).

Temporary User System Use and Caveats

You will then get a list of what you can access similar to this:



Click on **Temporary My Desktop Access** and you should get a screen like this in your browser (below). Continue working as you would if in the office. This should be a remote window to your PC at work if all is working properly.



If your connection works, great, you can skip the rest of this document. If problems, see below:

Temporary User Troubleshooting Assistance

In an attempt to roll out remote access to hundreds of users quickly we generated a report of the last machine logged into and this information was used to automatically create the **Temporary My Desktop Access** link.

Note: This process may induce errors and can not always determine the correct machine to link to but will provide most users the links if they do not know their workstation information.

Important: If you determine your VPN is connected to the wrong machine you will need to have someone in the office get the Dell service Tag and MSDE Tag number from the correct computer which the DOIT help desk

can use to determine the correct mappings. Contact the DOIT help desk with any questions or problems: note that you are a TEMPORARY MSDE VPN user. **Email:** Service.Desk@maryland.gov

Permanent VPN Access

If you need to connect to a computer at MSDE when offsite (most common use):

- All your applications, files, drive mappings, printers, etc., are already set up and you will normally **not need to use the other links** noted in this document because they are already accessible from your usual work computer.
- The computer name for that system will need to be provided (or likely has been for existing VPN users). The computer name usually contains the MSDE-[dell service number] or if an older PC it will be the MSDE tag number with an A on the end (example: 25628a).
- If using this method, the computer needs to remain at MSDE. Additionally, the desktop team will need to add a few settings to the machine so it is remotely accessible and does not go into sleep mode. **This machine NEEDS to be left on and connected to the network if you want to use it via VPN.** You will need to use a different machine to connect to the work machine (either a home machine or MSDE/DOIT laptop).
- The first time you access VPN a small piece of software will download. **Wait for it to complete then open the connection.** It can be a few seconds if you have a fast connection or up to a minute if you have a slow connection. After the initial setup you should not need to wait for more than a few seconds each time to connect.



- There will also be another set of links at the bottom called **"HTML5 Access Sessions"** that use a browser (no app) version of **My Desktop and Terminal Server** connections. These can be used without installing anything and can even be used on a phone or tablet if needed. There is an advanced menu for some operations including a virtual keyboard and copy/paste operations by pressing CTRL-ALT-SHIFT at same time after connecting to them.



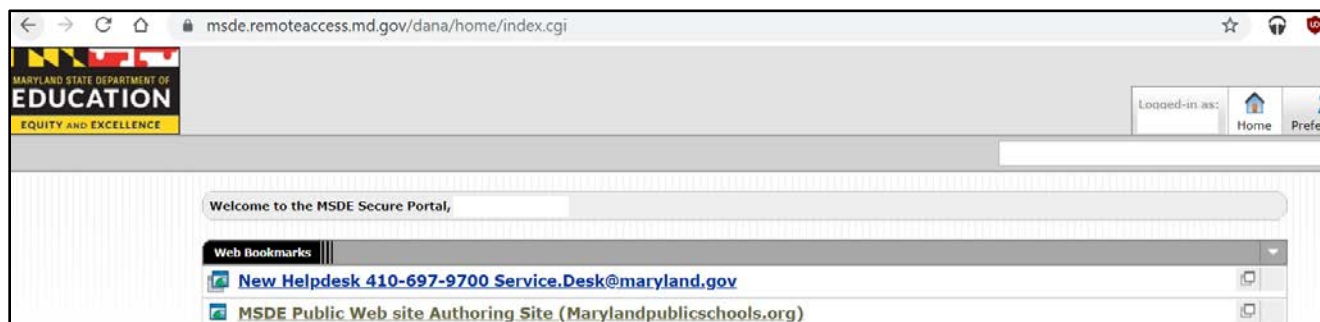
If your division has a Terminal Server connection:

- There will be a link after you login. Only a few divisions have these.
- **You do NOT need to leave a system here on the MSDE network to access it.** This will be available from any machine via VPN.



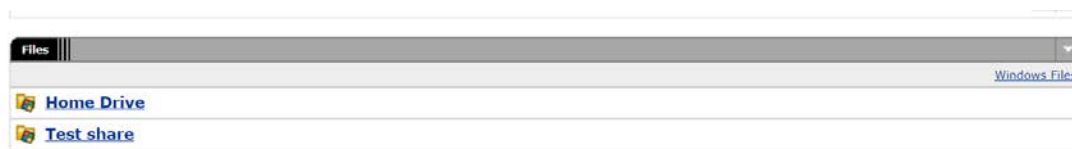
If your division has web based applications that are only accessible internally (e.g., CCATS, EIS):

- There will be a link provided after login. If there is a link you need that does not exist yet, it can be requested via a service request. The application name and URL (<https://name>) need to be provided. If all of the division users use **My Desktop** or terminal services these do not need to be added since they are already accessible via those mechanisms. **Also, web based applications that are accessible via the Internet do not need links.**
- You do **NOT** need to leave a computer at MSDE to access. However if the system contains PII data do not download any information locally to a personal device.



If your division has requested file share links (Kazoo, etc):

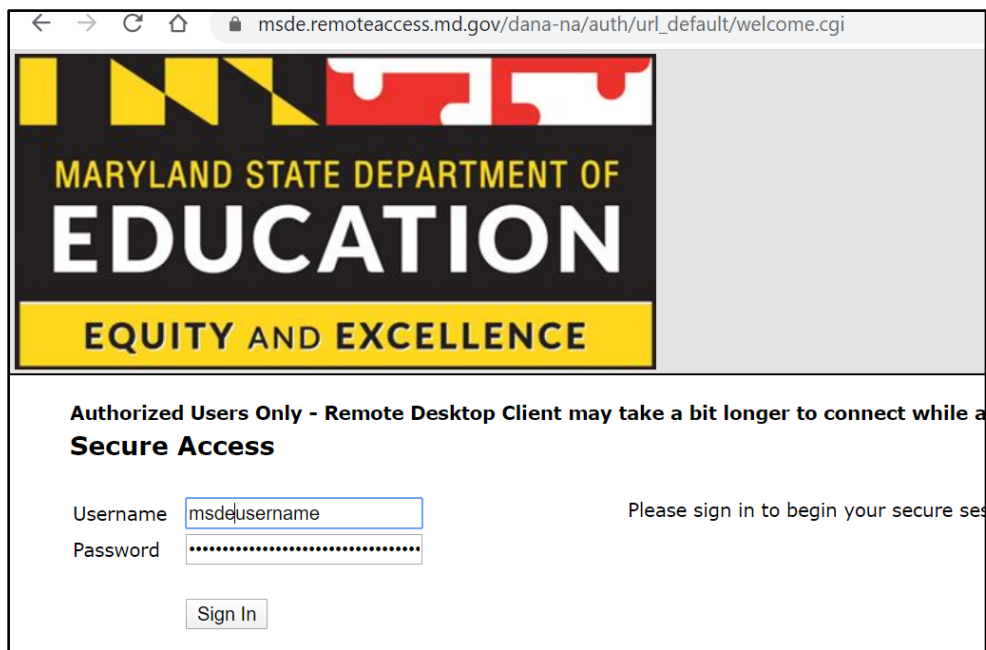
- There will be a link shown after login. This should never be used to work on PII or sensitive data using a home computer because of the risk of those files being copied or compromised outside MSDE network. Most divisions do not have these.



Permanent VPN User Login instructions

To get started, use a supported browser (Latest versions of Chrome or Firefox are strongly preferred, most browsers such as IE, Safari, Edge should work). Type <https://msde.remoteaccess.md.gov/> into the browser bar.

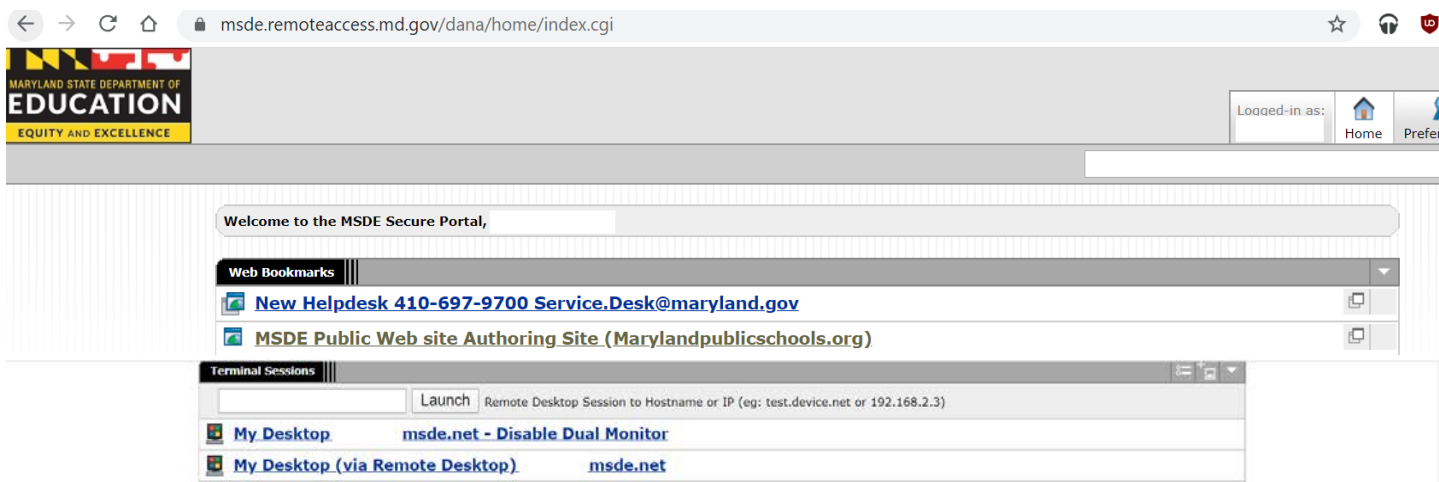
You will get the login screen:



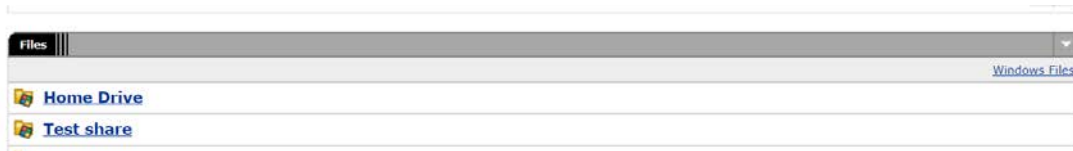
The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying `msde.remoteaccess.md.gov/dana-na/auth/url_default/welcome.cgi`. The page features the Maryland State Department of Education logo with the text "MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION" and "EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE". Below the logo, a message reads: "Authorized Users Only - Remote Desktop Client may take a bit longer to connect while a Secure Access". There are two input fields: "Username" with the placeholder text "msdeusername" and "Password" with masked characters. A "Sign In" button is located below the password field. To the right of the input fields, a message says "Please sign in to begin your secure ses".

Enter your MSDE.net user ID and password and click sign in. Note the VPN will prompt you to change your password as needed and you will need to follow the standard network password rules (over 12 characters and having special characters/numbers)

You will then get a list of what you can access similar to this:



The screenshot shows the MSDE Secure Portal home page. The address bar displays `msde.remoteaccess.md.gov/dana/home/index.cgi`. The page includes the MSDE logo and a "Logged-in as:" section with "Home" and "Preferences" links. A "Welcome to the MSDE Secure Portal," message is followed by a "Web Bookmarks" section containing two links: "New Helpdesk 410-697-9700 Service.Desk@maryland.gov" and "MSDE Public Web site Authoring Site (Marylandpublicschools.org)". Below this is a "Terminal Sessions" section with a "Launch" button and a text input field for "Remote Desktop Session to Hostname or IP (eg: test.device.net or 192.168.2.3)". Two sessions are listed: "My Desktop" with the link "msde.net - Disable Dual Monitor" and "My Desktop (via Remote Desktop)" with the link "msde.net".



If you have any issues with VPN please contact the service desk. **Email:** Service.Desk@maryland.gov

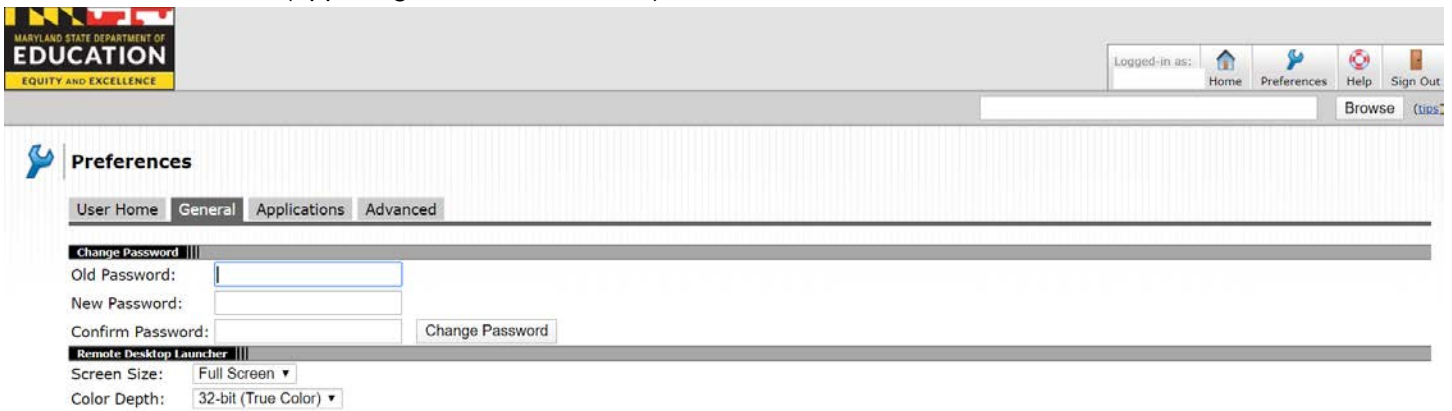
Password Changes/Lockout/Resets

The standard 90 day MSDE/DOIT password change policy applies to logins via vpn.

Around 14 days before your password expires you will start to get reminders to change your password. On the day your password expires the VPN will prompt you to change your password. All normal password requirements remain (12+ characters, complex mixed alpha numeric characters etc)

If you want to manually change your password after login to VPN:

Click on Preferences (upper right corner of screen), then General



The screenshot shows the MSDE VPN interface. At the top left is the MSDE logo with the text "MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION" and "EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE". In the top right corner, there is a "Logged-in as:" label followed by icons for Home, Preferences, Help, and Sign Out. Below these icons is a "Browse" button and a "(tips)" link. The main content area is titled "Preferences" with a wrench icon. Underneath, there are four tabs: "User Home", "General", "Applications", and "Advanced". The "General" tab is selected. Within the "General" tab, there are two sections. The first section is "Change Password" with three input fields labeled "Old Password:", "New Password:", and "Confirm Password:", followed by a "Change Password" button. The second section is "Remote Desktop Launcher" with two dropdown menus: "Screen Size:" set to "Full Screen" and "Color Depth:" set to "32-bit (True Color)".

If you are using a remote desktop (my desktop) session you can always change your password there just as you would if in the office.

If you forget your password, you can contact the service desk. **Email:** Service.Desk@maryland.gov

If you lock your account out with too many bad passwords, please wait about 15 minutes and it will auto unlock