- Lessons from the Field -

Strategies for Safely Returning to School: The Latest Federal Guidance

JULY 14, 2021
To access information and archived materials from previous Lessons from the Field webinars, go to: https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/lessons-field-webinar-series
Logistics

Zoom Control Panel

Technical Issues

For assistance during the webinar, please contact Claire Viscione at cviscione@air.org.

This webinar is being recorded and will be archived at the following location:

The content of this presentation does not necessarily represent the policy or views of the U.S. Department of Education, nor does it imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education.
Initial Polling Questions

1. What is your role?
   - School administrator
   - Teacher
   - Other school staff
   - State Educational Agency
   - Parent
   - Community member

2. What form of instruction is currently planned for opening of school in your community this Fall?
   - In-Person
   - Virtual
   - Hybrid
   - Unknown/Not applicable
Agenda

1. Introduction and Logistics
2. COVID-19 Prevention in Kindergarten (K)-12 Schools
3. Strategies for Safely Returning to School
4. Panel Discussion
5. Wrap Up & Closing
Speakers

Christian Rhodes
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Neha Cramer
Lead, Schools Unit, Community Interventions and Critical Populations Task Force, CDC

Jessica McKinney
Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development; U.S. Department of Education

Bios for the speakers are archived at the following location:
COVID-19 Prevention in Kindergarten (K)-12 Schools

Neha Cramer, MPH
Lead, Schools Unit
Community Interventions and Critical Populations Task Force

cdc.gov/coronavirus
Disclaimer

- This presentation is meant to outline strategies that schools can use to help maintain healthy environments and operations, lower the risk of COVID-19 spread in their programs, prepare for when someone is sick with COVID-19, and support coping and resilience. The information covered in this presentation is not exhaustive.

- For access to CDC's full suite of materials and resources for youth settings, please see CDC’s Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Kindergarten (K)-12 Schools: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html)

- The information in this presentation is current as of July 14, 2021.
Overview

- Updated Guidance
- Prevention Strategies to Reduce Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in K-12 Schools
- Additional Considerations
Updated Guidance
Key Takeaways

- Students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person schools in the fall 2021 is a priority.
- This guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (e.g., using multiple prevention strategies together consistently) to protect people who are not fully vaccinated.
- These strategies may be added or removed over time in response to the risk of COVID-19 in the school or community.
- Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Masks should be worn indoors by all individuals (ages 2 and older) who are not fully vaccinated.
Health Equity Considerations

- Schools play critical roles in promoting equity in learning and health, particularly for groups disproportionately affected by COVID-19.
- Health equity considerations related to the K-12 setting are a critical part of decision-making and have been considered in CDC’s updated guidance for schools.
- School administrators and public health officials can ensure safe and supportive environments by planning and using comprehensive prevention strategies for in-person learning and communicating those efforts.
Prevention Strategies to Reduce Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in K-12 Schools
Why would schools still need prevention strategies?

- To safely open for in-person instruction and remain open
- Children can get sick from COVID-19.
- Children can spread the virus to unvaccinated people.
- Not all students are eligible for vaccination.

Children can get sick from COVID-19.
Children can spread the virus to unvaccinated people.

Not all students are eligible for vaccination.
Primary Factors to Consider for Decision-Making

- Level of community transmission
- COVID-19 vaccination coverage
- Use of a SARS-CoV-2 screening testing program
- COVID-19 outbreaks
- Ages of children served
Prevention Strategies

- Promoting vaccination
- Consistent and correct mask use
- Physical distancing
- Screening testing to promptly identify cases, clusters, and outbreaks
- Ventilation
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
- Staying home when sick and getting tested
- Contact tracing, in combination with isolation and quarantine
- Cleaning and disinfection
Promoting COVID-19 Vaccination

- CDC recommends that everyone ages 12 and older get fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
- To promote vaccination, schools can:
  - Visit vaccines.gov to find local vaccination sites.
  - Educate families about COVID-19 vaccination.
  - Support staff vaccination.

Sources: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/summer-camps.html
Consistent and Correct Mask Use

**Indoors:** Mask use is recommended for people who are not fully vaccinated.

**Outdoors:** In general, people do not need to wear masks.

**During School Transportation:** Passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses.
Physical Distancing

- Implement physical distancing to the extent possible.
- Do not exclude students from in-person learning to keep a minimum distance requirement.
- When feasible, maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance within classroom. When not possible, layer multiple other prevention strategies:
  - Indoor masking
  - Cohorting
  - Improved ventilation
  - Regular cleaning
  - Screening testing

Screening Testing in K-12 Schools

- Screening testing identifies infected people, including those with or without symptoms (or before they develop symptoms) who may be contagious so that measures can be taken to prevent further transmission.
- People who are fully vaccinated do not need to participate in screening testing and do not need to quarantine if they do not have any symptoms.

To be effective, the screening program should test students at least once per week and report results rapidly (within 24 hours).
Ventilation

- Improving ventilation reduces the number of virus particles in the air.
- Bringing fresh outdoor air into a building helps keep virus particles from concentrating inside:
  - Open multiple doors and windows.
  - Use child-safe fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows.
  - Make changes to the HVAC or air filtration systems.
- Funds provided through the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief Programs and the Governors Emergency Education Relief Programs can support improvements to ventilation.

Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette

- Covering coughs and sneezes helps stop the spread of germs.
- Monitor and reinforce these behaviors.
- Provide adequate handwashing supplies.
- Store hand sanitizers up, away, and out of sight of young children, and make sure they are used only with adult supervision for children under 6 years of age.
Staying Home When Sick and Getting Tested

- Students, teachers, and staff who have symptoms should stay home and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care.
- Allow flexible, non-punitive, and supportive paid sick leave policies and practices.
- People who are fully vaccinated and do not have COVID-19 symptoms do not need to quarantine or get tested after an exposure to someone with COVID-19.
Contact Tracing with Isolation and Quarantine

- Collaborate with state and local health departments.
- To the extent allowable by applicable privacy laws, report positive cases to their state or local health department as soon as they are informed.
- To the extent allowable by applicable privacy laws, notify staff and families of children who were close contacts as soon as possible.
Cleaning and Disinfection

- In general, cleaning once a day is usually enough to sufficiently remove potential virus that may be on surfaces.
- If a facility has had a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours, clean AND disinfect the space.
  - Disinfecting (using disinfectants on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency COVID-19 list) removes any remaining germs on surfaces.

https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/about-list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19-0
Additional Considerations
Food Service and School Meals

- Maximize physical distance as much as possible when moving through the food service line and while eating (especially indoors).
- Given the very low risk of transmission from surfaces and shared objects, there is no need to use single-use items and packaged meals.
- Improve ventilation in food preparation, service, and seating areas.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces.
- Promote hand washing.
Sports and Other Extracurricular Activities

- School-sponsored sports and extracurricular activities provide children and adolescents with enrichment opportunities that can help them learn, achieve, and support their social, emotional, and mental health.

- Students, staff, and visitors who are fully vaccinated no longer need to wear a mask or physically distance in any setting, including while participating in sports and extracurricular activities.
  - Students, staff, and visitors who are fully vaccinated can also refrain from quarantine following a known exposure if asymptomatic, facilitating continued participation in in-person learning, sports, and extracurricular activities.

- Coaches and school sports administrators should consider specific sports-related risks for people who are not fully vaccinated.
CDC Youth Resources

COVID-19 General Resources:

- People at Increased Risk: [Do I need to Take Extra Precautions Against COVID-19 | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/index.html)
- [What to do if a Student Becomes Sick at School or Reports a New COVID-19 Diagnosis Flowchart | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/decision-tools/sick-student-flowchart.html)
CDC Youth Resources (Continued)

For Administrators and Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers:

- Guidance for Schools and Child Care Centers: School Settings | COVID-19 | CDC
- Guidance for Direct Service Providers, Parents, Caregivers, and Guardians, and People with Developmental and Behavioral Disorders: Caring for People with Developmental and Behavioral Disorders | COVID-19 | CDC

Coping and Resilience Support Numbers:

- National Distress Hotline: call or text 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255), 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish
For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
Jessica McKinney
Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development
U.S. Department of Education
Collaborative family and community engagement and planning. Schools can:

- Provide a wide variety of ways to engage, early in the decision-making process, including:
  - Town halls or walk-throughs at various times of day and using multiple modalities,
  - Surveys,
  - One-on-one or small group outreach.

- Use a trauma-informed approach, acknowledging the impact of COVID-19.

- Work with trusted partners, such as community-based organizations, to connect with more families and address their concerns.

- Provide access for English learners and students and adults with disabilities.
Promoting vaccination. Schools can:

- **Serve as a vaccination site** or provide information about vaccination locations near school.

- Respond to questions and concerns, such as through information sessions, using [CDC Vaccination Toolkits](#).

- Offer supportive sick leave options (e.g., paid sick leave) for employees to get vaccinated or who have side effects after vaccination.
Education – Public Health Collaboration

- Plan together and work together on vaccination, screening testing, contact tracing, and other prevention strategies and communications.
  - Maintain privacy protections, including consistent with FERPA, IDEA, and PPRA.

- Consider cross-agency assignments or practica for educator or public health emerging professionals.
Supporting all students

- Ensure communications are available in all needed languages and formats.

- Avoid punitive approaches. For example, provide masks when needed. Ensure students can reengage without negative consequences for time missed.

- Where masking is needed because people are not fully vaccinated, use masks with a clear panel where possible to support emerging readers, English learners, students with speech disabilities, and others.

- Consider using behavioral techniques like those found on the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Support’s website that can help all students adjust to changes in routines.
Panel Discussion

LESSONS FROM THE FIELD
3. Select the topic(s) for which you feel additional information is needed. (Select all that apply.)

- Allowable Uses of ARP Funds
- COVID-19 Prevention and Safe Operations Strategies
- Mental Health for Students, Faculty and Staff
- Vaccinating Students, Faculty and Staff
- Re-engaging students
- Early childhood
- Higher education
- Nutrition and wellness
Lessons from the Field Webinar Series
SCHEDULE AND TOPICS FOR BACK-TO-SCHOOL SUMMER SESSIONS

**July**
- **July 28:** Supporting staff and educators

**August**
- **August 11:** Re-engaging students as return to school (1)
- **August 25:** Re-engaging students as they return to school (2)

**September**
- **September 8:** Early childhood
- **September 22:** Nutrition and wellness
Feedback Form

HTTPS://WWW.SURVEYMONKEY.COM/R/LFTF_SESSION8
Thank You!

Should you have any questions, please contact us at NCSSLE@air.org or 800-258-8413. We are happy to help!

NCSSLE Website
https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov

Best Practices Clearinghouse
https://bestpracticesclearinghouse.ed.gov/