



## Schools Overview

On August 11, Pennsylvania Department of Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine and Education Secretary Pedro River jointly announced updated guidance to help Pre-K to 12 schools prepare to reopen and safely educate students for in-person learning. Each school entity will determine if classes resume in person at school buildings, remotely or a combination of both options.

The Chester County Health Department is working on guidance to schools for specific topics that must be considered when reopening. The topics are symptom monitoring, exclusion from and return to school requirements, notifications, and cleaning and disinfecting. This is continually being updated based on state guidance and provided to our school partners. The state allowed all elementary and secondary schools in yellow and green phases to resume in-person instruction and activities on July 1 under a phased reopening approach.

*These materials and any related updates are provided and intended for general public informational purposes and guidance. While intended to be timely and accurate, please note that federal and state regulations and directives are changing often. To that extent, please continue to monitor this site for any significant modifications and developments.*

The following Center for Disease Control (CDC) tips will help schools operate safely, protecting staff and students. Source information can be found here: [Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools](#) and [Considerations for Schools](#). Additionally, the most up-to-date guidance on the reopening of schools in Pennsylvania can be found here: [Public Health Guidance for School Communities in Pennsylvania](#).

## Employer Tips and Guidelines

- The more people a student or staff member interacts with, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread:
  - Lowest Risk: Students and teachers engage in virtual-only classes, activities, and events.
  - More Risk: Small, in-person classes, activities, and events. Groups of students stay together and with the same teacher across school days. Students remain at least 6 feet apart and do not share objects.
  - Highest Risk: Full-sized, in-person classes, activities, and events. Students are not spaced apart, share classroom materials or supplies, and mix between classes and activities.
- Consistently monitor employee wellness and do not let anyone symptomatic report to work. Revisit your leave or sick program to allow for this time off.
- Staff or students who monitor their temperature at home should update their supervisor if they have a temperature exceeding 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit and stay home.
- Have staff and families report if they or their student have symptoms of, a positive test for, or exposure to someone with COVID-19.

- Educate staff and families about when they/their child(ren) should stay home and when they can return to school.
- Develop policies that encourage sick employees and students to stay at home without fear of reprisal, and ensure employees, students, and students' families are aware of these policies.
- Consider not having perfect attendance awards, not assessing schools based on absenteeism, and offering virtual learning and telework options, if feasible.
- Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Increase monitoring to ensure adherence. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Encourage staff and students to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately.
- Teach and reinforce use of cloth face coverings. Face coverings are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult. Individuals should be frequently reminded not to touch the face covering and to wash their hands frequently. Information should be provided to staff, students, and students' families on proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings.
  - Cloth face coverings should not be placed on babies or children under the age of 2, or anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the covering without assistance.
- Support healthy hygiene behaviors by providing adequate supplies, including soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, face coverings and no-touch trash cans.
- Post signs in highly visible locations and broadcast announcements that promote everyday protective measures.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces within the school and on school buses at least daily or between use. Use of shared objects should be limited, and objects cleaned between use.
- If transport vehicles are used by the school, drivers should practice all safety actions and protocols as indicated for other staff.
- Develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection.
- Cleaning products should not be used near children, and staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products.
- Keep each child's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas.
- Assign students sets of supplies to limit sharing, or limit use of supplies by one group of children at a time and clean between use.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air.
- Drinking fountains should be cleaned and sanitized, but encourage staff and students to bring their own water to minimize use.
- Space seating/desks at least 6 feet apart when feasible. Turn desks to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other), or have students sit on only one side of tables, spaced apart.
- Create distance between children on school buses.
- Install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, particularly in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart (e.g., reception desks, bathrooms).
- Provide physical guides or markings to ensure that staff and children remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times.

- Close communal-use shared spaces such as dining halls and playgrounds if possible; otherwise, stagger use and clean and disinfect between use.
- Have children bring their own meals as feasible, or serve individually plated meals in classrooms instead of in a communal dining hall or cafeteria. Ensure safety of children with allergies.
- Use disposable food service items. If disposable items are not feasible, ensure that all non-disposable food service items are handled with gloves and washed.
- Offer virtual options for staff/students at higher risk for severe illness that limit their exposure.
- Ensure privacy of people at higher risk for severe illness regarding underlying medical conditions.
- Pursue virtual group events, gatherings, or meetings, if possible, and promote social distancing of at least 6 feet between people if events are held. Limit group size to the extent possible.
- Limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups.
- Pursue virtual activities and events in lieu of field trips, student assemblies, special performances, school-wide parent meetings, and spirit nights, as possible.
- Practice “cohorting:” Ensure that student and staff groupings are as static as possible by having the same group of children stay with the same staff.
- Stagger arrival and drop-off times/locations by cohort. Put in place other protocols to limit contact between cohorts and direct contact with parents.
- Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices that enable staff to stay home when they are sick, have been exposed, or caring for someone who is sick. Examine and revise policies for leave, telework, and employee compensation.
- Develop policies for return-to-school after COVID-19 illness. CDC’s criteria to discontinue home isolation and quarantine can inform these policies.
- Monitor absenteeism of students and employees, cross-train staff, and create a roster of trained back-up staff.
- If feasible, conduct daily health checks (e.g., temperature screening and/or symptom checking) of staff and students. Conduct safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.
- Encourage any organizations that share or use the school facilities to also follow these considerations.
- For additional support, The Chester County Health Department can be reached at 610-344-6225.

## **How Employees Can Protect Themselves**

- Staff and students should stay home if they have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 symptoms.
- Staff and students who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 should also stay home and monitor their health.
- Staff and students should consider self-monitoring temperature every morning. Those who have a temperature exceeding 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit should stay home.

## **If an Employee/Student Tests Positive**

Refer to the below as well as respective District pandemic/COVID-19 response and continuity plans.

- If the individual receives a positive test notification while at work, follow established Human Resources policy. If the individual receives a positive test notification while NOT at work, the individual should follow established Human Resources policy, stay home and self-isolate in accordance with Chester County Health Department guidance.
- Close off areas visited by the positive individual. Refer to the [CDC's general cleaning & disinfecting guidance](#) and [guidance in facilities where someone is sick](#).
- Determine who had contact with the positive individual during the time the individual had symptoms as well as 48 hours prior to symptoms. Notify employees who were in close contact with the confirmed individual while maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
  - People who had close contact must self-quarantine for 14 days from the date of last contact with the positive individual.
  - "Close contact" is defined as having contact for more than 15 minutes, at a distance of 6 feet or less, with a positive individual.
- Individuals may discontinue home isolation and return to work under the following conditions:
  - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since your fever went away without the use of fever-reducing medication
  - AND improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath)
  - AND At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
- After returning to work, individuals should:
  - Wear a facemask at all times while at work until all symptoms are completely resolved or until 14 days after illness onset, whichever is longer.
  - Be restricted from contact with individuals at a higher risk (e.g., older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness).
  - Adhere to hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette (e.g., cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, dispose of tissues in waste receptacles).
  - Self-monitor for symptoms. Seek immediate re-evaluation from occupational health/primary care provider and do not work if symptoms recur or worsen.
- The Chester County Health Department will be notified of all confirmed cases through established disease reporting protocols and will follow-up with the individual appropriately. Contact the Chester County Health Department at 610-344-6225.

## **Supporting Families and Students**

- Parents should monitor their children at home for signs of illness and may take their child's temperature before arriving at the school. Children should stay home if they show symptoms of illness or have a fever.
- Consider staggering arrival and drop off times and prepare plans for curbside drop-off and pick-up that limits direct contact between parents and staff members.
- Encourage employees and students to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.
- Promote employees and students eating healthy, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind.

- Encourage employees and students to talk with people they trust about their concerns.