



CLAY COUNTY

# PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER



## Full Opening Guidance for Schools

Last updated: March 1, 2021

### Purpose

This guidance was created as a resource for administrators to safely return to full onsite learning in Clay County, Missouri. It must be used in conjunction with all local and state emergency orders and other guidance provided by Clay County Public Health Center (CCPHC). Currently, CCPHC recommends following CDC guidelines for return to onsite learning, based on the 7-day rate of new cases per 100,000 population.

*However, after evaluation of several studies on in-school transmission of COVID-19<sup>1-4</sup>, as well as evaluation of local in-school transmission data based on case investigations & contact tracing<sup>5</sup>, school districts may consider returning to on site learning for 3, 4, or 5 days per week, provided in-school transmission rates remains low, community transmission remains below 100 new cases per 100,000 population over the course of 7 days, and schools are able to successfully implement active mitigation measures. CCPHC recognizes that each school district may have additional planning and/or safety requirements they choose to implement before expanding their current in person learning schedule.*

### Background

On February 12, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued [updated guidance](#)<sup>6</sup> for schools to reopen safely and to remain open. This updated guidance has been considered in conjunction with local conditions of the pandemic<sup>7</sup>, transmission data from the Fall 2020 semester collected in partnership with local school districts<sup>5</sup>, and recently published studies on in-school transmission<sup>1-3</sup>.

### Organization

This support document is organized into 3 areas to address for return to full onsite learning:

1. Active mitigation measures
2. Data-Informed Decision Making
3. Case Identification & contact tracing

### Active Mitigation Measures

The health of teachers, staff, students, and families are first and foremost in planning for full onsite learning. The mitigation measures listed below are not a replacement of a district or school's emergency, crisis, or safety plan(s). Rather, these are specific mitigation measures due to the current COVID-19 pandemic that should be included in any return to learn plan. If schools decide to return to a majority on-site or full on-site learning structure, CCPHC requests written protocols that address the mitigation measures listed. Ways for schools to measure successful implementation of said measures are also included.

Mitigation Measure	Consideration	Ways to Measure Implementation
<b>Universal and correct use of masks</b>	<p>Use of masks should be supported as a culture of prevention &amp; required throughout school buildings and the district offices for all staff and visitors.</p> <p>CDC recognizes there are specific instances when wearing a mask may not be feasible. In these instances, consider adaptations and alternatives.</p> <p>Ensure masks are available for those who forget their mask at home.</p>	<p>Written mask protocol in place, including specification of type of mask that is acceptable</p> <p>Proportion of students wearing mask properly throughout the school day</p> <p>Proportion of teachers &amp; staff wearing mask properly throughout the day</p>
<b>Social distancing</b>	<p>Establish social distancing as the norm, in a way that makes sense based on guidance from public health.*</p> <p>Provide flexible lunch options to allow for greater social distancing during a time when many will not be wearing masks.</p> <p>Cohorting when possible. Cohorts should remain as static as possible by having the same group of students stay with the same teachers or staff (all day for young children, and as much as possible for older children). If additional space is needed to support cohorting, consider all available safe spaces in school and community facilities. Limit mixing between cohorts.</p> <p>Stagger school arrival and drop-off times or locations or put in place other protocols to limit direct contact with parents during drop-off and pick-up.</p> <p>Limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as much as possible.</p>	<p>Written social distancing protocol in place</p> <p>Provision of seating charts for classes and buses</p>
<b>Handwashing and respiratory etiquette</b>	<p>Support personal protective measures such as frequent handwashing, coughing/sneezing etiquette, and keeping hands away from face.</p> <p>Build in time during the day for teachers, staff, and students to engage in frequent hand washing as needed as the norm (e.g., before entry to the building, before/after meals, between classes, in the provision of student services, and</p>	

	when practicing coughing/sneeze etiquette).	
	Ensure adequate access to hand sanitizers with greater than 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol.	Number of hand sanitizer stations available
<b>Cleaning and maintain healthy facilities</b>	<p>Establish a routine for wiping down materials with a solution that contains 70% alcohol in a manner that preserves the item.</p> <p>Wiping down frequently used school supplies (e.g., tablets, computers) and desks/tables during transfer periods.</p> <p>Ensure materials are distributed/transferred in a way that supports social distancing (e.g., items place in a neutral location, families staying in cars for transfer, receiving materials by using appropriate PPE).</p>	Written cleaning protocol in place (can be CCPHC protocol)
<b>Case Identification and Contact Tracing</b>	<p>Schools should continue to collaborate with CCPHC to confidentially provide information about people diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19.</p> <p>Persons with positive test results should isolate, and close contacts should quarantine. Individuals should isolate or quarantine at home, not in school settings, and should stay home until CDC recommendations for isolation or quarantine have been met.</p>	<p>Written protocol in place; should include a robust contact tracing system</p> <p>Proportion of contacts identified within 24 hours</p> <p>In-school transmission rate</p>

*\*Social distancing of at least 6 feet remains one of the best preventative measures for reducing the spread of COVID-19. CDC recommends that schools "space seating/desks at least 6 feet apart when feasible." It is recognized that this is not always feasible and a distance of at least 3 feet between students, with required masking, can also partially reduce transmission.<sup>10</sup>*

### Data-Informed Decision Making

School administrators, working with CCPHC staff, should assess the level of risk in the community since the risk of introduction of a case in the school setting is dependent on the level of community transmission. CDC recommends the use of two measures of community burden to determine the level of risk of transmission: total number of new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days; and percentage of nucleic acid amplification test (NAATs) results that are positive during the last 7 days<sup>6</sup>. CCPCH will use the total number of new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 to assess the incidence and spread of SARS-CoV-2 in the surrounding community (e.g., county). The transmission level for any given location will change over time and will be reassessed weekly for situational awareness and to continuously inform planning.

Indicator	Low Community Transmission	Moderate Community Transmission	Substantial Community Transmission	High Community Transmission
Total new cases per 100K in the past 7 days	0-9	10-49	50-99	>=100

While risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 in a school may be lower when indicators of sustained community spread are lower, this risk is also dependent upon the implementation of school and community mitigation strategies. If community transmission is low but school and community mitigation strategies are not implemented or inconsistently implemented, then the risk of exposure and subsequent transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in a school will increase. Alternately, if sustained community transmission is high, but school and community mitigation strategies are implemented and strictly followed as recommended, then the risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in a school will decrease<sup>6</sup>.

The table below are the updated CDC guidelines for return to learning. Please note, that per CDC guidelines, **schools that are already open for in-person instruction can remain open, but only if they strictly implement mitigation strategies and have few cases.**

Low Community Transmission	Moderate Community Transmission	Substantial Community Transmission	High Community Transmission
<p><b>All schools implement 5 key mitigation strategies:</b> Universal and correct use of masks required; physical distancing; handwashing and respiratory etiquette; cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities; contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine.</p> <p><b>Diagnostic testing:</b> Symptomatic students, teachers, and staff and close contacts referred for diagnostic testing</p>			
<p>K-12 schools open for full in-person instruction.</p> <p>Social distancing of 6 feet or more OR to the greatest extent possible.</p>		<p>Elementary schools in hybrid learning mode for reduced attendance.</p> <p>Social distancing of 6 feet or more is required.</p>	
		<p>Middle and high schools in hybrid learning mode or reduced attendance.</p> <p>Physical distance of 6 feet or more is required.</p>	<p>Middle and high schools in virtual only instruction unless they can strictly implement all mitigation strategies, and have few cases; <b>schools that are already open for in-person instruction can remain open, but only if they strictly implement mitigation</b></p>

			<b>strategies and have few cases.</b>
Sports and extracurricular activities occur; physical distancing of 6 feet or more OR to the greatest extent possible.	Sports and extracurricular activities occur with physical distancing of 6 feet or more OR to the greatest extent possible.	Sports and extracurricular activities occur only if they can be held outdoors, with physical distancing of 6 feet or more.	Sports and extracurricular activities are virtual only.

Some examples of scenarios or metrics that would trigger discussion around closure or return to hybrid learning are below. Schools should have a return to hybrid plan in place to ensure a smooth transition, if necessary

<b>Event</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>
<b>Three clusters* within a school within a 14-day period</b>	District leadership will discuss the safety benefits of school closure with the school board, an independent body, CCPHC, and key stakeholders
<b>More than three clusters** within a 14-day period <u>per</u> 10,000 students in a school district</b>	District leadership will discuss the safety benefits of school closure with the school board, an independent body, CCPHC, and key stakeholders
<b>Substantial secondary transmission*** in a school that does not rise to level of a cluster</b>	District leadership will discuss the safety benefits of school closure with the school board, an independent body, CCPHC, and key stakeholders
<b>Substantial secondary transmission*** in a school district</b>	District leadership will discuss the safety benefits of school closure with the school board, an independent body, CCPHC, and key stakeholders

\*Cluster is defined as 4 or more cases

\*\*In school districts of <10,000, greater than two clusters

\*\*\*Substantial secondary transmission is defined as >5 cases of COVID-19, within-school transmission per 1,000 students within a 14-day period

*Modified from ABC Science Collaborative*

### Case Identification & Contact Tracing

Schools should continue to collaborate with CCPHC to confidentially provide information about people diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19. Persons with positive test results should isolate, and close contacts should quarantine. Individuals should isolate or quarantine at home, not in school settings, and should stay home until CDC recommendations for isolation or quarantine have been met. Continue to follow the guidance provided by CCPHC for case identification, contract tracing and quarantine/isolation.

### DESE/MO DHSS Masking Guidance

Current data collected from schools during the Fall 2020 semester, rates of in-school transmission are low. Therefore, CCPHC has decided to adopt the DESE/MO DHSS guidance regarding masking and exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19<sup>8</sup>.

- If the school has implemented a mask mandate, and appropriate masks were being worn correctly by both individuals during the time of exposure in the school setting, the individual who came in contact with the person with COVID-19 can continue to attend school AND participate in school-related activities, so long as they can wear a mask and maintain social distance. Those exposed individuals should self-monitor for symptoms and should also stay home from school at the first sign they do not feel well. Individuals who were exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19 while at school should continue wearing their mask at all times to further reduce the likelihood of transmitting the virus, and they should continue to quarantine at home for 14 days when not at school. The person who tests positive for COVID-19 is still required to isolate.
  - It is important to note that if either the person with COVID-19 or the person exposed to that positive case was not following the school's mask mandate or was not wearing their mask appropriately during the time of exposure, the close contact should follow previously implemented quarantine protocols and continue to quarantine at home for 14 days.
- If the school has not implemented a mask mandate, close contacts in the school setting should follow previously implemented quarantine protocols and quarantine at home for 14 days.

**Please note** that this new adoption does not relieve the school of contact tracing responsibilities, parent notifications, or symptom monitoring. This protocol option is only effective if other mitigation measures – including contact tracing – are in place and implemented correctly.

#### *New COVID-19 variants and mitigation in schools*

Multiple SARS-CoV-2 variants are circulating globally<sup>9</sup>. This includes several new variants that have been detected in the United States in December 2020 and January 2021. Some of these variants are of concern as they seem to spread more easily and quickly than other variants, which may lead to more cases of COVID-19. Rigorous implementation of and adherence to mitigation strategies is essential to control the spread of variants of SARS-CoV-2. In the event of increased levels of community transmission resulting from a variant of SARS-CoV-2, updates to this guidance may be necessary.

Rigorous and increased compliance with public health mitigation strategies, such as vaccination, use of masks, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and isolation and quarantine, will be essential to limiting the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and protecting public health. CDC, in collaboration with other public health agencies, is monitoring the situation closely and studying these variants quickly to learn more to control their spread. As more information becomes available, it is possible that mitigation strategies and school guidance may need to be adjusted to new evidence on risk of transmission and effectiveness of mitigation.

#### References

1. Falk A, Benda A, Falk P, Steffen S, Wallace Z, Høeg TB. COVID-19 Cases and Transmission in 17 K–12 Schools — Wood County, Wisconsin, August 31–November 29, 2020. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2021;70:136–140. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7004e3external> icon
2. Hobbs CV, Martin LM, Kim SS, et al. Factors Associated with Positive SARS-CoV-2 Test Results in Outpatient Health Facilities and Emergency Departments Among Children and Adolescents Aged <18 Years — Mississippi, September–November 2020. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2020;69:1925-1929. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6950e3>

3. Zimmerman, K., Akinboyo, I., Brookhart, M., Boutzoukas, A., McGann, K., Smith, M., Maradiaga Panayotti, G., Armstrong, S., Bristow, H., Parker, D., Zadrozny, S., Weber, D. and Benjamin, D., 2021.
4. Incidence and Secondary Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 Infections in Schools. *Pediatrics*, [online] Prepublication, p.e2020048090. Available at: <[https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2021/01/06/peds.2020-048090.full.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3TuLgi9Htw39ClA7kwjrd8pf\\_6xEgW28-LLuxdZKVhFY0lrzhLzs2u7Qk](https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2021/01/06/peds.2020-048090.full.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3TuLgi9Htw39ClA7kwjrd8pf_6xEgW28-LLuxdZKVhFY0lrzhLzs2u7Qk)> [Accessed 20 February 2021].
5. Trang, K. Clay County Public Health Center, 2021. *Transmission of SARS-Cov-2 within School Districts in Clay County, Missouri*. Liberty. For a copy, email Elizabeth Yoder [eyoder@clayhealth.com](mailto:eyoder@clayhealth.com)
6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19. 2021. Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation. [online] Available at: <<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html#>>[Accessed 20 February 2021].
7. Clay County Public Health Center Data Hub. 2020. Epidemiology Data. [online] Available at: <[https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/34f9ef5e486b4ef3a0a1364c457944bb/page/page\\_1/](https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/34f9ef5e486b4ef3a0a1364c457944bb/page/page_1/)> [Accessed 20 February 2021].
8. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020. Missouri School Reopening & Operating Guidance. MO DHSS & DESE, pp.14-15. [online] Available at: <<https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/COVID-MO-K12-Reopening-Guidance.pdf>. [Accessed 20 February 2021].
9. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). 2021. Variants of the Virus that Causes COVID-19. [online] Available at: <<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/index.html>> [Accessed 20 February 2021].
10. Melnick H, Darling-Hammond L, Leung M, et al. Reopening schools in the context of COVID-19: Health and safety guidelines from other countries (policy brief). Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute; 2020. Available at: <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/reopening-schools-covid-19-brief>