

Critical Area of Operation #1: General Health and Safety Guidelines

Anticipated Minimum Standards

- In all stages and phases of pandemic response and recovery, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends actions, which schools and districts should incorporate into reopening plans:
 - Establishing and maintaining communications with local and state authorities to determine current mitigation levels in your community
 - Protecting and supporting staff and students who are at higher risk for severe illness, such as providing options for telework and virtual learning
 - Following CDC's Guidance for Schools and Childcare Programs
 - Promoting behaviors that reduce spread:
 - Stay home when appropriate
 - Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette (See, *DOH 8/13/20, p.5-6 for required school protocols*)
 - Face coverings (See, *DOH 8/13/20, p. 6-7 for specific protocols*)
 - Signs and messages
- Reasonable accommodations should be provided for individuals that the Centers for Disease Control identifies as having a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including older adults (aged 65 years and older) and individuals with disabilities or serious underlying medical conditions, which may include:
 - Chronic lung disease or asthma (moderate to severe)
 - Serious heart conditions
 - Immunocompromised
 - Severe obesity (body mass index, or BMI, of 30 or higher)
 - Diabetes
 - Chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
 - Liver disease
 - Medically fragile students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
 - Students with complex disabilities with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
 - Students who require accommodations under a Plan in accordance with the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504 Plan).

Critical Area of Operation #2: Classrooms, Testing, and Therapy Rooms

Implementing social distancing practices in all instructional and non-instructional spaces is critical to ensuring the health and safety of students and staff. To that end, student desks and seating in the classrooms, cafeterias, multi-purpose rooms, and other spaces should be separated by at least six feet to the maximum extent practicable. Where such physical distancing is not feasible or difficult to maintain, protective measures such as physical barriers between students and arranging seating such that all individuals face the same direction can help reduce transmission.

Anticipated Minimum Standards

Schools and districts must allow for social distancing within the classroom to the maximum extent practicable. This can be achieved by ensuring students are seated at least 6 feet apart. If schools are not able to maintain this physical distance, additional modifications should be considered. (See also, *DOH 8/13/20, p. 4*)

These include using physical barriers between desks and turning desks to face the same direction (rather than facing each other) or having students sit on only one side of the table, spaced apart.

- When social distancing is difficult or impossible, face coverings are required for students, and face coverings are always required for visitors and staff unless it will inhibit the individual's health. It is necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities. **(EO 175**
 - In a classroom setting where social distancing can take place (e.g., desks are 6 feet apart) or physical barriers are in place, face coverings can be removed while students are seated at desks but should be worn when moving about the classroom.
- All instructional and non-instructional rooms in school and district facilities must comply with social distancing standards to the maximum extent practicable. See "Additional Considerations" below for information helpful in calculating appropriate room occupancy to account for social distancing.
- Use of shared objects should be limited when possible or cleaned between use.
- Schools and districts must ensure that their indoor facilities have adequate ventilation, including operational heating and ventilation systems where appropriate.
 - Recirculated air must have a fresh air component.
 - Open windows if A/C is not provided.
 - Filter(s) for A/C units must be maintained and changed according to manufacturer recommendations.
- Prepare and maintain hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol):
 - In each classroom (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer)
 - At entrances and exits of buildings
 - Near lunchrooms and toilets
 - Children ages 5 and younger should be supervised when using hand sanitizer.
 - For classrooms that have existing handwashing stations, prepare stations with soap, water, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol).

- Students should wash hands for at least 20 seconds at regular intervals, including before eating, after using the bathroom, and after blowing their nose/coughing/sneezing.
 - Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) if washing with soap and water is not possible.

Critical Area of Operation #3: Transportation

Transporting students poses a particularly difficult challenge to restarting school operations in the presence of COVID-19. In the 2019-2020 school year, nearly 740,000 students were transported to and from school. As the 2020-2021 school year approaches, districts that transport students will need to consider how to get students to and from school buildings while protecting the health and safety of those students and the personnel who provide these services. This section explores possibilities that would support that objective.

School districts should maintain social distancing practices on buses (at least six feet of distance between riders) to the maximum extent practicable. Several methods are available to achieve such social distancing:

- The CDC recommends that school districts modify the manner students are seated on a school bus such that there is one student seated per row, skipping a row between each child, if possible. Under this scenario, a 54-passenger school bus would only have 11 passengers (seating students who reside in the same household in the same row, whenever possible, would increase capacity).
- Alternatively, a district may consider seating one student per row, as has been done in some countries and recommended in Montana, doubling the vehicle's capacity.
 - For example, several companies have started marketing physical barriers that separate rows on a school bus. Such equipment would allow students to be seated in each row, thereby doubling the socially distant capacity that was previously noted.

However, recognizing the potentially significant economic and operational challenges that might arise in achieving these standards, the NJDOE is providing the following anticipated minimum standards and considerations.

Anticipated Minimum Standards

- If a district is providing transportation services on a school bus ~~but is unable to maintain social distancing~~, a face covering must be worn by all students ~~who are able to do so~~ upon entering the bus **unless doing so would inhibit the student's health. It is necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.** (DOE updated 8/3/20)
 - **For exceptions to face covering requirements, see Critical Area of Operation #5** (DOE added 8/3/20)
 - Accommodations for students who are unable to wear a face covering should be addressed according to that student's particular need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.
- Adopt best practices for cleaning and disinfecting school buses and other transport vehicles (see guidance for bus transit operators).

Minimizing Demand on Transportation Resources

To the extent that they would reduce bus capacity, these health and safety provisions might require a substantial increase in resources in terms of expenditures, buses, drivers, and routes to accommodate the new configuration. Assuming such an increase in resource allocation is not

feasible, a district might explore options that reduce the overall demand for transportation between home and school.

For the 2020-2021 school year, school districts should evaluate their ability to provide courtesy busing as outlined in N.J.S.A. 18A:39-1c. Districts might elect to provide such busing due to local preferences or to address concerns that certain routes between home and school may be hazardous. State law also allows a parent whose child is eligible for mandated busing to waive those services for the school year. To minimize demand on transportation resources in light of the health and safety standards described above:

- School districts might reconsider providing courtesy busing during the 2020-2021 school year. Nearly one-third, or close to 235,000 students receive non-mandated courtesy busing services. In order to provide for possible social distancing on a school bus, a district might consider reducing or eliminating this service for the school year, affording it the possibility of achieving social distancing without requiring a substantial increase in resources.
 - If a district considers eliminating such courtesy busing routes, it should be done in conjunction with municipal officials and should include discussions of alternatives to ensure safe travels between home and school (such as employing crossing guards or installing sidewalks).
 - For some districts, courtesy busing accounts for a significant share of their transportation expenditures. Reducing such spending would allow for reallocation towards new expenses that will be incurred due to the pandemic.
- School districts should attempt to increase parents' awareness of the ability to waive transportation for the school year. The extent to which parents are aware of this possibility is not clear and it has been suggested that some parents may be uncomfortable with having their children board a school bus until the COVID-19 pandemic is more thoroughly contained. By advising parents of this option, a district may be able to collect accurate data that allows them to assess the demand for transportation and to plan accordingly. Further, a district might explore an option whereby parents receive a payment to waive transportation services in accordance with 18A:39-1c. Such an option should specify the time period, up to the full school year, and the corresponding payment, that would be provided.

Critical Area of Operation #4: Student Flow, Entry, Exit, and Common Areas

Anticipate Minimum Standards

- School District Reopening Plans should establish the process and location for student and staff health screenings. See below Critical Area of Operation #5 “Screening, PPE, and Response to Students and Staff Presenting Symptoms” for additional information.
- If physical distancing (six feet) cannot be maintained for individuals in line waiting to enter or exit a building, require utilization of face coverings. Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to help ensure that staff and students remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating “one-way routes” in hallways).

Critical Area of Operation #5: Screening, PPE, and Response to Students and Staff Presenting Symptoms

Anticipated Minimum Standards

- School districts must adopt a policy for screening students and employees upon arrival for symptoms and history of exposure. Policies must include the following:
 - Staff must visually check students for symptoms upon arrival (which may include temperature checks) and/or confirm with families that students are free of COVID-19 symptoms.
 - Health checks must be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.
 - Results must be documented when signs/symptoms of COVID-19 are observed.
 - Any screening policy must take into account students with disabilities and accommodations that may be needed in the screening process for those students.
 - **Screenings should occur daily (DOH added 8/13/20)**
 - **Schools should have a plan for screening students if not screened by parents prior to arrival (DOH added 8/13/20)**
 - **Schools should implement a plan to screen teachers and staff before or upon arrival at school. (DOH added 8/13/20)**
 - **Staff should monitor daily attendance records to identify those who are absent due to COVID-19 symptoms (DOH added 8/13/20)**
- School districts must adopt procedures for symptomatic staff and students. Procedures must include the following:
 - Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others. Follow current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting.
 - If the school district becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in a district facility tests positive for COVID-19, district officials must immediately notify local health officials, staff, and families of a confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality.
 - District should implement a policy to prepare for when someone tests positive for COVID-19 that include written protocols detailing the district's COVID-19 related response for symptomatic students and staff. Protocols must be consistent with the district's contact tracing policy (see "Critical Area of Operation #6: Contact Tracing") to the maximum extent practicable. Protocols must include:
 - Establishment of an isolation space. Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others. Students should remain in isolation with continued supervision and care until picked up by an authorized adult.
 - **An area separate from the nurse's office would be ideal for the isolation area so the nurse's office can be used for routine visits such as medication administration, injuries and non COVID-19 related visits. (DOH added 8/13/20)**
 - **Ensure there is enough space for multiple people placed at least 6 feet apart. (DOH added 8/13/20)**

- **Ensure that hygiene supplies are available, including additional cloth masks, facial tissues, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
 - Follow current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting.
 - Adequate amount of personal protective equipment (PPE) available, accessible, and provided for use.
 - Methods to assist in contact tracing including records of groups/cohorts, assigned staff, and daily attendance.
 - Continuous monitoring of symptoms.
 - **Staff assigned to supervise students waiting to be picked up do not need to be healthcare personnel and should follow social distancing guidelines.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
 - Readmittance policies consistent with Department of Health guidance and information for schools and Department of Health/Communicable Disease Service’s Quick Reference guidance on Discontinuation of Transmission-Based Precautions and Home Isolation for Persons Diagnosed with COVID-19.
 - Written protocols to address a positive case.
- **Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who is sick to their home or to a healthcare facility. If you are calling an ambulance or bringing someone to the hospital, try to call first to alert them that the person may have COVID-19.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- **Children and staff with COVID-19 symptoms should be placed away from others and asked to wear a face covering/mask until they can be sent home. Per state policy, all students’ (age 2 and older) noses and mouths should be covered with a mask or cloth face covering. If a mask is not tolerated by the ill 11 student or staff member due to their illness, other staff should be sure to adhere to the universal face covering policy and follow social distancing guidelines (6 ft. away).** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- Encourage parents to be on alert for signs of illness in their children and to keep them home when they are sick.
- **Schools should ensure that parents and staff notify school authorities if they test positive for COVID-19. Schools should notify the LHD and provide the following information, where available:** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
 - **Contact information for the person(s) who tested positive for COVID-19;** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
 - **The date the COVID-19 positive person developed symptoms (if applicable), tested positive for COVID-19 (if known), and was last in the building;** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
 - **Types of interactions (close contacts, length of contact) the person may have had with other persons in the building or in other locations;** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
 - **Names, addresses, and telephone numbers for ill person’s close contacts in the school;** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*

- **Any other information to assist with the determination of next steps.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- **As long as routine cleaning and disinfecting have been done regularly (at least daily), additional cleaning measures are not necessary unless the COVID-19 positive person is in school on the day school officials are notified of the positive test.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- **Notify the school community as per school protocol.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*

Face Coverings

- School staff and visitors are required to wear face coverings unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health or the individual is under two years of age.
- Students are ~~strongly encouraged~~ **required** to wear face coverings, unless doing so would inhibit the student's health. It is ~~also~~ necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities. *(DOE updated 8/3/20)*
 - Accommodation for students who are unable to wear a face covering should be addressed according to that student's need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.
- **Cloth face coverings should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled or damp/wet.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- **Disposable face masks should be changed daily or when visibly soiled, damp or damaged.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- **Students and schools should have additional disposable masks or cloth face coverings available for students, teachers, and staff in case a back-up face covering is needed (e.g. face covering is soiled or lost during the day).** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- Exceptions:
 - Doing so would inhibit the individual's health.
 - The individual is in extreme heat outdoors.
 - The individual is in water.
 - A student's documented medical condition, or disability as reflected in an Individualized Education Program (IEP), precludes the use of face covering.
 - The student is under the age of two (2) and could risk suffocation.
 - **During the period that a student is eating or drinking** *(DOE added 8/3/20)*
 - **Face coverings should not be placed on anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, or anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance (e.g. face coverings should not be work by Pre-K students during nap time).** *(DOE added 8/3/20)*
 - **The student is engaged in high intensity aerobic or anaerobic activities.** *(DOE added 8/3/20)*
 - **Face coverings may be removed during gym and music classes when individuals are in a well-ventilated location and able to maintain a physical distance of six feet apart.** *(DOE added 8/3/20)*
 - **When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task.** *(DOE added 8/3/20)*
- **Appropriate and consistent use of face coverings may be challenging for some students, teachers, and staff, including:** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*

- **Students, teachers, and staff with severe asthma or other breathing difficulties.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- **Students, teachers, and staff with special educational or healthcare needs, including intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, and sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- **For staff who are unable to wear a face covering for health reasons such as those outlined above, schools may consider assigning other duties or locations to limit interaction or allow teleworking** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- **Clear face coverings that cover the nose and wrap securely around the face may be considered in certain circumstances, if they do not cause breathing difficulties or overheating for the wearer. Clear face coverings are not face shields. CDC does not recommend use of face shields for normal everyday activities or as a substitute for cloth face coverings because of a lack of evidence of their effectiveness for source control.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- **Teachers and staff who may consider using clear face coverings include:** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
 - **Those who interact with students or staff who are deaf or hard of hearing, per the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
 - **Teachers of young students learning to read.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
 - **Teachers of students in English as a Second Language classes.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
 - **Teachers of students with disabilities.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- **If a visitor refuses to wear a face covering for non-medical reasons and if such covering cannot be provided to the individual at the point of entry, entry to the school/district facility may be denied.**
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Critical Area of Operation #6: Contact Tracing

Contact tracing is the process used to identify those who come into contact with people who have tested positive for many contagious diseases, including COVID-19. It is a long-standing practice in New Jersey and around the world and is an integral function of local health departments in keeping communities safe from the spread of disease. Upon notification that a resident has tested positive for COVID-19, a local health department will call to determine close contacts to whom they may have spread the virus, where close contact is defined as being within six feet for a period of at least 10 minutes. Trained professionals from the community then get in touch with those close contacts to recommend next steps, such as self-quarantining, and to provide critical education and support in risk mitigation strategies. Increasing the number and capacity of contact tracers that been a top priority of the Governor as these practices can help slow the spread of COVID-19.

All school and district administrators, school safety specialists, counselors, and any other staff deemed appropriate by the school and district, should be provided information regarding the role of contact tracing in keeping school communities safe from the spread of contagious disease (see resources below). Schools and districts should engage the expertise of their school nurses to educate the broader school community on the importance of contact tracing. The NJDOE will credit certified school safety specialists with three hours of training upon completion of John Hopkins University's COVID-19 Contact Tracing course.

- **Ask ill student (or parent) and staff about potential exposure to COVID-19 in the past 14 days:** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
 - **Close contact (within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 10 minutes) with a person with confirmed COVID-19** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
 - **Travel to an area with a high level of COVID-19 transmission** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- **Individuals should be sent home and referred to a healthcare provider for evaluation on whether testing is needed. Testing for COVID-19 is recommended for persons with COVID-19 symptoms.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
 - **If COVID-19 risk is low (or COVID-19 Regional Risk Matrix, green), ill individuals without potential exposure to COVID-19 should follow the NJDOH School Exclusion List. No public health notification is needed UNLESS there is an unusual increase in the number of persons who are ill (over normal levels), which might indicate an outbreak.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
 - **If ill students have potential COVID-19 exposure OR if COVID-19 risk is moderate or high (COVID-19 Regional Risk Matrix, yellow or orange), they should be excluded according to the COVID-19 Exclusion Criteria.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- **Schools should notify LHDs when students or staff are ill and have potential COVID-19 exposure, are ill when COVID-19 risk level is high (orange), or when they see an increase in the number of persons with compatible symptoms.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- **Schools should be prepared to provide the following information when consulting with the LHD: Contact information for the ill persons;** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*

- **The date the ill person developed symptoms, tested positive for COVID-19 (if known), and was last in the building;** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- **Types of interactions (close contacts, length of contact) the person may have had with other persons in the building or in other locations;** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- **Names, addresses, and telephone numbers for ill person's close contacts in the school;** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*
- **Any other information to assist with the determination of next steps.** *(DOH added 8/13/20)*

Critical Area of Operation #7: Facilities Cleaning Practices

Anticipated Minimum Standards

Districts must continue to adhere to existing required facilities cleaning practices and procedures, and any new specific requirements of the local health department as they arise. Each school district must develop a procedure manual to establish cleaning/disinfecting schedules, targeted areas to be cleaned, and methods and materials to be used. Districts must:

- Develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection included in the district's policy.
- Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched. This may include cleaning objects/surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, classroom sink handles, countertops). Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label. For disinfection most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available on the EPA's website. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.) Examples of frequently touched areas in schools:
 - Classroom desks and chairs
 - Lunchroom tables and chairs
 - Door handles and push plates
 - Handrails
 - Kitchens and bathrooms
 - Light switches
 - Handles on equipment (e.g. athletic equipment)
 - Buttons on vending machines and elevators
 - Shared telephones
 - Shared desktops
 - Shared computer keyboards and mice
 - Drinking fountains
 - School bus seats and windows
- Sanitize bathrooms daily, or between use as much as possible, using protocols outlined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- **Immediately close off areas used by the person who is sick, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area and wait 24 hours before you clean or disinfect. Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick as outlined in cleaning and disinfection section, including isolation area. Once area has been appropriately disinfected, it can be opened for use. (DOH added 8/13/20)**
 - **If the number of ill students exceeds the number of isolation areas and the areas cannot be closed for 24 hours, clean and disinfect between ill persons. (DOH added 8/13/20)**
- **As long as routine cleaning and disinfecting have been done regularly (at least daily), additional cleaning measures are not necessary unless the COVID-19 positive person is in school on the day school officials are notified of the positive test. (DOH added 8/13/20)**

- **Schools should follow standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting with an EPA-registered product for use against SARS-CoV-2. This means at least daily sanitizing surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, phones and toys. Information on cleaning and disinfecting your facility can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>. Increasing the frequency of cleaning when there is an increase in respiratory or other seasonal illnesses is always a recommended prevention and control measure. (DOH added 8/13/20)**
- **Cleaning and disinfecting after:**
 - **Notification of a confirmed case of COVID-19: (DOH added 8/13/20)**
 - **As long as routine cleaning and disinfecting have been done regularly (at least daily), additional cleaning measures are not necessary unless the COVID-19 positive person is in school on the day school officials are notified of the positive test. Depending on when the person with COVID-19 was last on site, it may be difficult to know what areas they were in and what objects or surfaces they may have touched after they became sick. (DOH added 8/13/20)**
 - **If routine cleaning and disinfection have not been performed at least daily, or if the COVID-19 positive person is in school the day school officials are notified, close off areas used by the person who tested positive for COVID-19 (e.g. offices, bathrooms, classrooms, and common areas), open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area and wait 24 hours after the COVID-19 positive person was last in school before cleaning and disinfection. If it has been more than 7 days since the person who tested positive for COVID-19 was at school, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. (DOH added 8/13/20)**
 - **Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas used by the ill person such as offices, classrooms, bathrooms, common areas, and shared electronic equipment (like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls), focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces. (DOH added 8/13/20)**
 - **Once area has been appropriately disinfected, it can be opened for use. (DOH added 8/13/20)**
 - **An individual becomes ill with COVID symptoms and meets COVID-19 exclusion criteria while in school (refer to COVID-19 Regional Risk Matrix): (DOH added 8/13/20)**
 - **Immediately close off areas used by the person who is sick with COVID-19 symptoms (e.g. offices, bathrooms, classrooms, and common areas), open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area and wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfection. (DOH added 8/13/20)**
 - **Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas used by the ill person such as offices, classrooms, bathrooms, common areas, and shared electronic equipment (like tablets, touch screens, keyboards,**

remote controls), focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.
(DOH added 8/13/20)

- **Once area has been appropriately disinfected, it can be opened for use.** (DOH added 8/13/20)

Critical Area of Operation #8: Meals

Anticipated Minimum Standards

If cafeterias or group dining areas are used:

- Stagger times to allow for social distancing, and clean and disinfect between groups.
- Discontinue family style, self-service, and buffet.
- Clean and sanitize tables/surfaces between each meal service, pursuant to the protocols outlined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Space students at least six feet apart.
- Individuals must wash their hands after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items.

(Below added via NJ Department of Agriculture on 8/7/20)

All public schools participating in the Child Nutrition Program must offer meal during days of virtual or remote instruction. Meals must be offered to all enrolled children. These meal service requirements apply to those participating public and nonpublic schools on four-hour school days and remote instruction school days during the 2020-2021 academic school year.

- N.J.S.A. 18A:33-4 requires each public school district to make school lunch available to all children enrolled in the district. Free and reduced-price lunches shall be offered to all children qualifying under Statewide eligibility criteria. N.J.S.A. 18A:33-5 allows public school districts with fewer than 5% of its enrolled students eligible for free and reduced-price meals to be exempt from this requirement. Additionally, N.J.S.A. 18A:33-10 requires each public school in which 20% or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program to establish a School Breakfast Program. **Public schools meeting or exceeding the 5% or 20% free and reduced price eligibility criteria must participate in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, respectively.**
- Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3, a full school day shall consist of not less than four hours, except that one continuous session of two and one-half hours may be considered a full day in kindergarten. Given that four hours constitutes a full school day, **a school breakfast and school lunch must be offered by public schools participating in the Child Nutrition Programs.**
- Nondiscrimination practices mandated in 7 CFR 245.8, and the federal Free and Reduced-Price Policy, require that children eligible to receive free and reduced-price meals and free milk shall not be overtly identified. **All participating public schools required to participate in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs and those that voluntarily opt-in to those programs must offer required meals to all children, regardless of eligibility, even when the school day is four hours.**
- The recently enacted amendment to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9 provides that in the event that a school district is required to close the schools of the district for more than three consecutive school days due to certain emergent events, the district can apply to the Commissioner of Education to use one or more days of virtual or remote instruction to meet the 180-day statutory requirement. Under that provision, a day of virtual or remote instruction counts as a full day of school attendance. **Therefore, all public schools**

required to participate in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, and those that voluntarily opt-in to these programs must offer meals during days of virtual or remote instruction.

All participating nonpublic schools must offer meals during school days and virtual or remote instruction. Meals must be offered to all enrolled children.

- Non-public schools that participate in the Child Nutrition Programs must adhere to the regulatory requirements set forth in 7 CFR 210.10 and 220.8, which require meals to meet specific minimum nutritional standards over a five day school week for those meals the school has been approved to provide in the 2020-2021 Application Packet. All school days and virtual or remote instruction days are considered to be a part of the five day school week. Therefore, **non-public schools participating in the Child Nutrition Programs must provide meals during all school days and during days of virtual or remote instruction.**
- Nondiscrimination practices mandated in 7 CFR 245.8, and the federal Free and Reduced-Price Policy require that children eligible to receive free and reduced-price meals and free milk shall not be overtly identified. **Thus, all participating nonpublic schools must offer meals to all children, regardless of eligibility.**

Individual students who have chosen to participate in virtual learning are also eligible for free and reduced-price meals on days when meals are available to other students.

To that end, we charge our districts and schools to ensure the seamless and continuous feeding of New Jersey's approximate 1.4 million students during **all** phases of school reopening. Schools participating in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs must offer meals **during all school days throughout the 2020-2021 academic school year.**

Critical Area of Operation #9: Recess/Physical Education

Anticipated Minimum Standards

- Stagger recess. If two or more groups are participating in recess at the same time, they should have at least 6 feet of open space between them.
- Use cones flags, tape, or other signs to create boundaries between groups.
- Always wash hands immediately after outdoor playtime.
- Stagger the use of playground equipment and establish frequent disinfecting protocols.
- Complete an inventory of outdoor spaces (athletic fields, track, green spaces open space, and local parks) and designate zones, use stations, mark off areas, floor markers, floor tape, poly spots, etc., to ensue separation among students (six feet for social distancing).
- Consider closing locker rooms to mitigate risk and prohibit students and staff from confined spaces with limited ventilation and/or areas with large amounts of high contact surfaces.
 - If not feasible to close, stagger use and clean and disinfect between use.
 - Students may be encouraged to wear comfortable clothing and safe footwear to school that allows for safe movement and is appropriate for the weather in order to participate in physical education without the use of a locker room.
- Mitigate risk, limit and/or eliminate direct contact with equipment (lessons with no equipment) and do not allow sharing of equipment. If equipment must be shared, clean and disinfect between each use.
- Designate specific areas for each class during recess to avoid cohort mixing.

Critical Area of Operation #10: Field Trips, Extra-curricular Activities, and Use of Facilities Outside of School Hours

Anticipated Minimum Standards

- Adhere to all applicable social distancing requirements and hygiene protocol during any extra-curricular activities.
- Require any external community organizations that use school/district facilities to follow district guidance on health and safety protocols.
- **Procedures for resumption of athletics programs and extracurriculars, if applicable.**
(EO175 added 8/13/20)

Critical Area of Operation: Remote Learning (DOE added 7/24/20)

This additional anticipated minimum standard provides that, in addition to the methods and considerations explicitly referenced in the guidance for scheduling students for in-person, remote, or hybrid learning, families/guardians may submit, and school districts shall accommodate, requests for fulltime remote learning. Such requests may include any service or combination of services that would otherwise be delivered on an in-person or hybrid schedule, such as instruction, behavioral and support services, special education and related services. A family/guardian may request that some services be delivered entirely remotely, while other services follow the same schedule they otherwise would according to the district's reopening plan. To ensure clarity and consistency in implementation of such fulltime remote learning, it is essential that district boards of education and charter school or renaissance school boards of trustees adopt policies that address at a minimum:

Anticipated Minimum Standards

1. **Unconditional Eligibility for Fulltime Remote Learning:** All students are eligible for fulltime remote learning; eligibility cannot be conditioned on a family/guardian demonstrating a risk of illness or other selective criteria. This includes students with disabilities who attend in-district schools or receiving schools (county special services school districts, educational services commissions, jointure commissions, Katzenbach School for the Deaf, regional day schools, college operated programs, and approved private schools for students with disabilities).
2. **Procedures for Submitting Fulltime Remote Learning Requests:** It is important to clearly define procedures that a family/guardian must follow to submit a request for fulltime remote learning, including requests to begin the school year receiving full time remote learning and requests to transition from in-person or hybrid services to fulltime remote learning during the school year. Procedures should meet the following guidelines:
 - i. Clearly define deadlines for submitting a request and district's expected timeline for approving requests;
 - ii. Identify points of contact for questions and concerns;
 - iii. Clearly describe information or documentation that the family/guardian must submit with their request. In accordance with #1 above, such documentation shall not exclude any students from the school's fulltime remote learning option, but rather be limited to the minimum information needed to ensure proper recordkeeping and implementation of successful remote learning.
 - iv. For students with disabilities, districts must determine if an IEP meeting or an amendment to a student's IEP is needed for fulltime remote learning.

Upon satisfaction of these minimum procedures, the district must approve the student's fulltime remote learning request.

3. **Scope and Expectations of Fulltime Remote Learning:** A student participating in the board's fulltime remote learning option must be afforded the same quality and scope of instruction and other educational services as any other student otherwise participating in district programs (e.g. students participating in a hybrid model). This includes, for

example, access to standards-based instruction of the same quality and rigor as that afforded all other students of the district, the district making its best effort to ensure that every student participating in remote learning has access to the requisite educational technology, and the provision of special education and related services to the greatest extent possible. Like in-person and hybrid program, fulltime remote learning must adhere to the length of school day requirements pursuant N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3, local attendance policies, and any other local policies governing delivery of services to, and district expectations of, students participating in remote programs and their families. For families/guardians requesting that a service transition from in-person or hybrid delivery to fulltime remote delivery, the district must clearly define any additional services, procedures, or expectations that will occur during the transition period. Districts should endeavor to provide supports and resources to assist families/guardians, particularly those of younger students, with meeting the expectations of the district's remote learning options.

4. **Procedures to Transition from Fulltime Remote Learning to In-Person Services:**

- i. Definition of the minimum amount of time a student must spend in fulltime remote learning before being eligible to transition to in-person services. This will allow families/guardians to make the arrangements needed to effectively serve students' home learning needs and will support educators in ensuring continuity of instruction.
- ii. It is important to clearly define procedures that a family/guardian must follow to submit a request to transition from fulltime remote learning to in-person services, including any relevant timelines, points of contact for questions and concerns, and information or documentation that must accompany a request.
- iii. Definition of the specific student and academic services that will accompany a student's transition from fulltime remote learning to in-person learning to better assist families/guardians anticipate their students' learning needs and help educators maintain continuity of services. School districts that offer Pre-K should consult their Pre-K curriculum providers regarding appropriate measures to assess a Pre-K students' learning progress during the transition from fulltime remote learning to in-person learning.

5. **Reporting:** To evaluate fulltime remote learning, and to continue providing meaningful guidance for districts, it will be important for the NJDOE to understand the extent and nature of demand for fulltime remote learning around the State. Therefore, school districts will be expected to report to the NJDOE data regarding participation in fulltime remote learning. Data will include number of students participating in fulltime remote learning by each of the following subgroups: economically disadvantaged, major racial and ethnic groups; students with disabilities and English learners.

6. **Procedures for Communicating District Policy with Families:** Clear and frequent communication with families/guardians, in their home language, to help ensure that this important flexibility is as readily accessible as possible. Communication must include, at a minimum, information regarding:

- i. Summaries of, and opportunities to review, the district's fulltime remote learning policy;
- ii. Procedures for submitting fulltime remote learning requests;
- iii. Scope and expectations of fulltime remote learning;
- iv. The transition from fulltime remote learning to in-person services and vice-versa; and
- v. The district's procedures for ongoing communication with families and for addressing families' questions or concerns.

Reopening Planning (*DOE added 8/3/20*)

Anticipated Minimum Standards

- Implement a schedule for the 2020-2021 school year that includes in-person instruction in some capacity and provides public school facilities for at least 180 days in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9
 - **Public school districts that are or become unable to satisfy the health and safety requirements for in-person instruction, may provide full-time remote instruction to all students pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9 (*EO 175 added 8/13/20*)**
- Incorporate a policy regarding fulltime remote learning services, in accordance with the Department’s guidelines
- **Public school districts that determine that they cannot provide in-person instruction must submit documentation to the Department of Education that identifies:**
 - **The school building(s) or grade level(s) within the district that will provide full-time remote instruction;**
 - **The specific health and safety standard(s) that the school is unable to satisfy;**
 - **The school’s anticipated efforts to satisfy the identified health and safety standard(s); and**
 - **A date by which the school anticipates the resumption of in-person instruction.**

Such documentation must be submitted at minimum one week prior to the public school district’s first day of school. (*EO 175 added 8/13/20*)

- Ensure, consistent with N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3, that each student is provided at least four hours of instructional contact time per school day, or one continuous session of two and one-half hours for kindergarten students (such instructional time may be achieved through in-person, synchronous remote, or asynchronous remote activities)
- Prepare for a potential shift back to entirely remote learning models by implementing measures to strengthen remote learning capabilities
- If a member of the NJSIAA, conduct high school athletics in accordance with protocol issued by the NJSIAA.
- Establish or designate in each school a diverse Pandemic Response Team to oversee each school’s implementation of the district’s reopening plan, particularly health and safety measures. If establishing a new Pandemic Response Team, that team includes, if applicable:
 - School principal or lead person;
 - Teachers representing each grade band served by the school;
 - Child Study Team member;
 - School counselor or mental health expert;
 - Subject area chairperson/director;
 - School nurse;
 - School safety personnel;
 - Members of the school safety team;
 - Custodian; and
 - Parents

- **Public school districts shall submit a reopening plan to the DOE at minimum thirty days prior to the first day of school. A public school district that has already submitted such Plan pursuant to the standards outlined in “The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education” will be considered to have satisfied this requirement if the Plan is otherwise consistent with the requirements of this Order.**
(EO 175 added 8/13/20)
- **In addition to the Plan, a minimum of seven days prior to the first day of school, the chief school administrator or his/her designee must also certify to the Department of Education that the district has policies and procedures in place to meet the minimum health and safety standards.** *(EO 175 added 8/13/20)*

School Closure Guidance *(DoH added 8/13/20)*

The COVID-19 Regional Risk Matrix is one tool that can inform the decision-making process for school districts when considering when remote learning might be indicated. Local circumstances should be considered when making decisions impacting specific school districts and schools. Many factors would need to be considered when deciding to close schools such as the distribution of cases within the school. **Closure is a local decision that should be made by school administrators in consultation with local public health. While it is not possible to account for every scenario that schools may encounter over the course of the school year, the following scenarios may help inform the decision for when schools should temporarily close.**

SCENARIO	CLOSURE
1 confirmed case in the school	School remains open*; students and staff in close contact with positive case are excluded from school for 14 days.
2 or more cases in the same classroom (outbreak limited to one cohort)	School remains open*; students and staff in close contact with positive case are excluded from school for 14 days. Recommendations for whether the entire classroom would be considered exposed will be based on public health investigation.
2 or more cases within 14 days, but are linked to a clear alternative exposure that is unrelated to the school setting and unlikely to be a source of exposure for the larger school community (e.g. in same household, exposed at the same event outside of school)	School remains open*; students and staff in close contact with positive cases are excluded from school for 14 days.
2 or more cases within 14 days, linked together by some activity in school, but who are in different classrooms (outbreak involving multiple cohorts)	Recommendations for whether school closure is indicated will be based on investigation by local health department.
A significant community outbreak is occurring or has recently occurred (e.g., large event or large local employer) and is impacting multiple staff, students, and families served by the school community	Consider closing school for 14 days, based on investigation by local health department.
2 or more cases are identified within 14 days that occur across multiple classrooms and a clear connection between cases or to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 cannot be easily identified (outbreak involving multiple cohorts)	Close school for 14 days.
Very high risk of community transmission (refer to COVID-19 Regional Risk Level Matrix)	Close school until COVID-19 transmission decreases.

* Note: A temporary closure may also be considered for a period of 2-5 days if a student or staff member attended school while potentially infectious, before being confirmed as having COVID-19. This short-term dismissal allows time for local health officials to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation impacting the school and perform contact tracing.

Period of closure: After switching to remote learning due to high levels of viral transmission in the school or local geographic community, districts or schools should wait a minimum of 14 days before bringing any students back for in-person learning. This timeframe is sufficient so that most people in the school community who will develop symptoms as a result of a school exposure could be identified and self-isolate, as appropriate.

The COVID-19 Regional Risk Matrix provides data and public health recommendations for local health departments and schools to consider based on the level of COVID-19 transmission in their region. The matrix is for the LHDs in collaboration with the local school districts and the Communicable Disease Service. Regional risk levels are just one tool that local health departments and schools can use when assessing COVID-19 risk. Local health departments have additional knowledge of COVID-19 in their jurisdictions that can inform local planning and response actions. **Implementation of these public health recommendations should be guided by what is feasible, practical, acceptable, and tailored to the needs of each community.**

The COVID-19 Regional Risk Matrix provides public health recommendations regarding the type of instruction (in-person, hybrid, remote), response to ill staff or students, exclusion criteria, and activities that involve interaction with multiple cohorts.

Regions:

- Northwest: Morris, Passaic, Sussex, Warren
- Northeast: Bergen, Essex, Hudson
- Central West: Hunterdon, Mercer, Somerset
- Central East: Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Union
- Southwest: Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Salem
- Southeast: Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland

LHDs should use the COVID-19 Regional Risk Matrix when providing guidance for schools on actions they should take based on the level of COVID-19 risk in their region.

COVID-19 Regional Risk Matrix

**For use by LHDs when providing guidance to school districts*

Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk	Very High Risk
<p>Evaluate whether there are students or staff who are at increased risk of severe illness and seek alternatives to ensure continuity of work or educational services.</p> <p>In response to COVID-19 positive staff or student, follow COVID-19 exclusion criteria; work with local health department to identify and exclude close contacts following CDC guidance; refer to guidance on cleaning and disinfection.</p> <p>In response to ill students and staff, follow NJDOH School Exclusion List</p> <p>* If ill person had potential exposure in past 14 days, follow COVID-19 exclusion criteria; wait at least 24 hours and clean/disinfect areas where ill person spent time.</p> <p>Permit limited activities involving interaction with multiple cohorts, ensuring adherence to precautions.</p>	<p>Implement remote learning for students and staff at high risk of severe illness; consider hybrid learning approaches, and/or fully remote learning.</p> <p>In response to COVID-19 positive staff or student, follow COVID-19 exclusion criteria; work with local health department to identify and exclude close contacts following CDC guidance; refer to guidance on cleaning and disinfection.</p> <p>In response to ill students and staff, follow COVID-19 exclusion criteria; wait at least 24 hours and clean/disinfect areas where ill person spent time.</p> <p>Minimize activities that involve interaction with multiple cohorts.</p>	<p>Implement fully remote learning unless school can ensure complete adherence to all prevention & control measures.</p> <p><i>If schools remain open for in-person learning:</i></p> <p>In response to staff or student who is COVID-19 positive <u>or who has COVID-19 symptoms</u> (not yet tested), follow COVID-19 exclusion criteria; work with local health department to identify and exclude close contacts according to CDC guidance; refer to guidance on cleaning and disinfection.</p> <p>* Decisions on when ill person's close contacts can return to school are dependent on the ill person's medical evaluation and COVID-19 test results.</p> <p>Restrict activities that involve interaction with multiple cohorts.</p>	<p>Implement fully remote learning</p>
<p>RISK LEVELS GREEN, YELLOW, AND ORANGE (IF OPEN FOR IN-PERSON LEARNING):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require staff and students to stay home when sick or if they have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 within the past 14 days. Parents/guardians, students and staff should notify school administrators of illness. Have a policy for daily symptom screening for students and staff; have plans for students and staff to report symptoms that develop during the day. In conjunction with local health department, identify COVID-19 rapid testing resources (viral testing) for when staff and students develop COVID-19 compatible symptoms. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily. Ensure adequate hand hygiene supplies are readily available. Implement physical distancing measures (e.g., reducing occupancy (staggered schedules, use of alternate spaces), installation of partitions/physical barriers, cancelling large gatherings/events, maintaining defined cohorts). Implement source control through wearing face coverings. 			
<p>ALL RISK LEVELS</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep abreast of NJDOE and NJDOH COVID-19 guidance and surveillance indicators. Exchange after-hours contact information with your local health department. 			