

District Guidance on the Development of a  
**Safe Return to In-Person Instruction  
and Continuity of Services Plan**

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MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

Ensuring a bright future for every child

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**STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION**

## INTRODUCTION

As a requirement of the American Rescue Plan: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP / ESSER III) fund, school districts (LEAs) receiving funds must develop a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services. There are several requirements of this plan:

- The plan must be developed and made publicly available not later than 30 days after receiving the ARP allocation.
- Before making this local plan publicly available, LEAs must seek and incorporate public comment.

The ARP requires LEAs to “develop and make publicly available on the LEA’s website, not later than 30 days after receiving the allocation of funds, a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of service”. With the release of allocations on April 28, LEAs must make the plan publicly available by May 28, 2021. Per the law, “the LEA shall seek public comment on the plan and take such comments into account in the development of the plan.”

Districts must develop and make publicly available a *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* that meets the following requirements from the interim final requirements (IFRs) released by the United States Department of Education (ED) on April 22:

- The extent to which the LEA has adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the following health and safety strategies: universal and correct wearing of masks; physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding; handwashing and respiratory etiquette; cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation; contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or departments; diagnostic and screening testing; efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible; and appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies, and
- How the LEA will ensure continuity of services including but not limited to services to address the students’ academic needs, and students’ and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services.

If a district developed a plan before ARP was enacted that does not address the above requirements, the LEA must revise its plan no later than six months after it last

reviewed its plan.

The IFRs require these plans to be in an understandable and uniform format; to the extent practicable, written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable, orally translated; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability, provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent.

Please note that LEAs must update the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan at least every six months through September 30, 2023, and must seek public input on the plan and any revisions, and must take such input into account.

A direct link to the approved LEA plan (not to the general district website) must be emailed to [mssucceeds@mdek12.org](mailto:mssucceeds@mdek12.org). As the plan is revised and approved at least every six months, a link to the updated plan reflecting the date of revision must be emailed to this address.

Previously developed plans will meet this requirement if the following are met:

- the LEA has developed a plan on or before January 3, 2021,
- the plan was posted on the LEAs website, and
- the public was allowed to make comment and comments were taken into account in the development of the plan.

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) remains committed to providing essential technical guidance and support mechanisms to assist districts during the continued transition back to in-person learning. The MDE expects in-person learning to be the primary delivery model for districts no later than the beginning of the 2021-22 school year.

Over the last year, the MDE worked with a group of district superintendents and Instruction Partners to release quarterly guidance documents and virtual discussions with district leaders. These resources remain available online for reference as districts plan for the upcoming school year:

- [Considerations for Reopening Mississippi Schools](#) (June 2020)
- [Considerations for Equitable Instructional Systems](#) (September 2020)
- [Considerations for Equitable Mississippi Student and Family Experiences](#) (December 2020)
- [Considerations for Mississippi Summer Programming](#) (March 2021)

As a part of this plan, districts should consider how to address issues related to

academic programming, operations, family and community support, communications, health and safety, and technology. The series of questions on the following pages may be helpful to districts as plans are crafted for approval and implementation.

## ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING

1. How will the district ensure continuity of services for academic needs of students?
2. What is the school district's plan for safely scheduling face-to-face instructional delivery students when school opens? (prioritized content, accelerated learning opportunities, intensive tutoring, after-school learning opportunities, etc.)
3. What is the school district's contingency plan for scheduling instructional delivery to students should the district or school(s) have to close due to an outbreak (i.e., COVID-19, influenza)?
4. How will the school district monitor student progress at the elementary, middle, and secondary level, for both in-person students and students who may be receiving virtual instruction due to an underlying medical condition?
5. How will the school district ensure continuity of staff observation and feedback cycles, for both in-person and virtual instruction?
6. How will the school district gather feedback from staff about instructional programming and needed supports?

## OPERATIONS

7. What is the school district's process for student arrival and dismissal?
8. How will the school district provide transportation? (include description of district protocols: windows, masks on bus, cleaning schedule, seating arrangement based on loading order / unloading order)
9. Where will the school district provide meals to students?

10. What is the school district's academic calendar for the 2021-22 school year?

## FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

11. How will the school district provide academic support to families?

12. How will the school district gather feedback from families of diverse student groups about instructional programming and needed supports?

## COMMUNICATIONS

13. How will the school district communicate regularly with families to promote healthy behaviors to reduce spread?

14. How will the school district communicate health and safety issues or necessary changes to the district's regular operating schedule?

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

15. What specific policies has the district adopted regarding CDC safety recommendations?

16. How will the district address the social, emotional, mental health, and other needs of students and staff?

17. What specific steps has the school district taken to address air quality within school facilities?

18. Does the school district plan to require daily health screening by families before students come to school?

19. Does the school district plan to conduct temperature checks for staff and students upon arrival?

20. Does the school district plan to require masks of students and adults while being transported and on campus?

21. If requiring masks of students, what ages / grade levels will be required to wear a mask?
22. What is the school district's comprehensive plan for regularly cleaning the following areas?
  - Buildings, classrooms, and common areas
  - Food and nutritional service areas
  - Transportation (buses, service areas, and equipment)
  - Areas associated with cocurricular or extracurricular events
23. How will the school district identify and address the needs of students and staff with underlying health conditions?
24. Who is responsible for overseeing health and safety within the school district?
25. How does the school district intend to ensure safety of students, staff, and spectators involved in cocurricular and extracurricular activities (athletics, band, choir, etc.)?

## TECHNOLOGY

26. How will the district utilize technology to enhance in-person learning and support remote learning for students as needed?
27. How will the district identify the professional learning needs of staff in utilizing technology to enhance in-person learning and support remote learning?