



School Reopening Guidance Overview

California State Special Schools

August 2020

Introduction

This guidance document provides an overview of the health and safety guidelines that the State Special Schools are establishing and will follow when reopening campuses to students and staff for the 2020-2021 school year. All health and safety guidance should be considered “living documents” that are responsive to current and changing public health conditions and directives. Staff, families, and the school community will be regularly updated and kept fully informed during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The health, safety and well-being of our students and staff in our schools and Diagnostic Centers is paramount. Each State Special School and Diagnostic Centers are establishing a comprehensive, site-specific plan that incorporates the recommendations of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). It will regularly be revisited for compliance and changing conditions. In addition to the guidance provided by CDPH, each site’s reopening plan is aligned with their respective local County Public Health and County Office of Education Guidance, and the Health and Safety Guidance of the California Department of Education (CDE).

General Health and Safety Guidelines

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends these five guidelines to mitigate the spread of COVID-19:

1. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. When handwashing is not an option, use approved hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
2. Avoid close contact with individuals who are sick and maintain social distance (six feet apart) at all times.
3. Cover your nose and mouth with a cloth face cover when around others.
4. Monitor your health condition closely. Stay at home when you are sick. Cover coughs and sneezes and wash hands after.
5. Clean high touch surfaces multiple times per day with approved disinfectants.

Cleaning

- Sufficient amounts of school-appropriate cleaning supplies to continuously disinfect the school site in accordance with CDPH guidance have been purchased.
- Sufficient supplies of hand sanitizers, soap, handwashing stations, tissues, and paper towels have been purchased.
- An ongoing supply of cleaning supplies will be maintained via scheduled ordering of supplies.

Face Coverings

Face coverings must be used in accordance with CDPH guidelines, unless a person is exempt as explained in the guidelines, particularly in indoor environments, on school buses, and areas where physical distancing alone is not sufficient to prevent disease transmission. Training and information will be provided to staff and students on proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings and on how people who are exempt from wearing a face covering will be addressed.

STUDENTS

Age	Face Covering Requirement
Under 2 years old	No
2 years old – 2 nd grade	Strongly encouraged**
3 rd grade – High School	Yes, unless exempt

**Face coverings are strongly encouraged for young children between two years old and second grade, if they can be worn properly. A face shield is an acceptable alternative for children in this cohort who cannot wear face coverings properly.

In addition to wearing masks in the classroom setting, students should wear face coverings:

- While waiting to enter the school campus.
- While on school grounds (except when eating or drinking).
- While leaving school.
- While in a state-owned vehicle or bus.
 - Driver has access to surplus masks to provide to students who are symptomatic while in transport.

In order to comply with CDPH guidance, schools must exclude students from campus if they are not exempt from wearing a face covering and refuse to wear one provided by the school. Alternative educational opportunities will be provided for students who are excluded from campus.

STAFF

- All staff must use face coverings in accordance with CDPH guidelines unless Cal/OSHA standards require respiratory protection.
- Teachers may use face shields in limited situations where a face covering cannot be used (i.e., for pedagogical or developmental reasons) as long as the wearer maintains physical distance to the extent practical. Staff must return to using a face covering outside of the classroom

- Masks will be available upon request if the employee does not have a clean face covering.
- Cloth face coverings must cover the nose and mouth.
- Do not share cloth face coverings.
- Wash cloth face coverings daily.
- Consider procuring two cloth face coverings for each student and staff so there is a clean one while the other is being washed.

Handwashing Practices

In accordance with CDPH and Cal/OSHA guidance and in consultation with local public health officials, each site will develop a plan for handwashing that includes:

- Providing opportunities for students and staff to meet handwashing frequency guidance throughout the day; before and after eating; after coughing or sneezing; after classes where shared items are handled; before and after using the restroom.
- Ensuring sufficient access to handwashing and sanitizer stations.
- Ensuring fragrance-free hand sanitizer (with a minimum of 60 percent alcohol) is available at or near all workstations, in classrooms, and in state-owned vehicles. Children under age nine should use hand sanitizer under adult supervision.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Protective equipment will be provided, as appropriate for work assignment.

- For front office and food service employees, face coverings and disposable gloves will be provided.
- For custodial staff, equipment and PPE for cleaning and disinfecting will be provided, including:
 - For regular surface cleaning, **gloves** appropriate for all cleaning and disinfecting.
 - Classified staff engaged in deep cleaning and disinfecting will be provided proper PPE for COVID-19 disinfection (disposable gown, gloves, eye protection, and mask or respirator) in addition to PPE as required by product instructions. All products must be kept out of children's reach and stored in a space with restricted access.
 - Cal/OSHA requires that PPE be provided and worn to effectively protect employees from the hazards of the cleaning products used and training be provided to staff on the hazards of chemicals.

Classrooms

- Maximize space between desks.
- Teacher and other staff desks to be placed at least 6 feet away from student desks.
- Prioritize use of outdoor space whenever practical.
- Instruction outside whenever possible and appropriate.
- Rearrange furniture to maintain separation and redesign activities for smaller groups.
- Consider privacy boards or clear screens to enforce separation between students and staff to minimize contact.
- Ensure adequate supplies to avoid sharing (electronic devices, toys, books, games, etc.). When sharing occurs, disinfect in between use.
- Keep each child's belongings separated and labeled in individual storage containers.

Early Childhood and Elementary Students:

- Students will remain in the same space and in small cohorts for class, recess and lunch; keep the same students and teacher or staff with each group.
- Keep students with one group of students the entire day.
- Serve meals in classroom, cafeteria, and other large rooms where students can eat while following the 6 feet of physical distancing rule, and avoid sharing utensils.
- Hold recess activities in separate areas designated by class.
- Send each child's belongings home daily to be cleaned.

Secondary Students:

- Plan for ways to avoid mixing cohorts.
- Minimize group movement through hallways as much as possible.
- Stagger enter and exit passing.
- Create passing guidelines in the hallway, on the floor.
- Eliminate use of lockers.
- Create cohort groups and block schedules to keep groups of students together.
- Serve meals in classroom, cafeteria, and other large rooms where students can eat while following the six feet of physical distancing rule, and avoid sharing utensils.

Student Services

Food Service

Schools will implement a cleaning schedule to clean and disinfect high touch areas in the food prep or serving areas at least three times per shift.

- Provide access to handwashing and/or hand sanitizer prior to meals.
- Remind students daily of the importance of handwashing, especially prior to meals.
- Strategies will be considered to limit physical interactions during meal preparation and meal service (e.g. serving meals in classrooms).
- Allow students to eat in the classroom or outdoors when feasible.
- Boxed lunches or grab-and-go delivery are ideal.
- Self-serve lines are prohibited.

Non-Classroom Spaces

- Limit use of communal areas and stagger use; disinfect in between uses.
- Students encouraged to wear cloth face coverings in community spaces.
- Schools shall implement plans and appropriate signage to minimize student contact whenever possible, such as limiting traffic flow in hallways, to a single direction.
- Water fountains may be used but must be cleaned and disinfected at the beginning and end of the day as well as after each passing period; however, sites may consider closing water fountains.
- Bottle filling stations may be used but must be cleaned and disinfected at the beginning and end of the day.

Student Transportation

This guidance applies to when the California State Special Schools provide transportation. If your local school district is providing your child's transportation to and from school, then please contact your school district for their health and safety guidelines.

- Provide hand sanitizer on the bus. All students and adults should sanitize hands before getting on the bus and after getting off the bus.
- School vans or buses will be cleaned per CDC recommendations after each use.
- Capacity for students in each vehicle will be determined to comply with 6-foot physical distancing objectives.
- Students will be instructed to maintain 6-foot distancing at transportation area, and while loading and unloading.

- Students and staff should wear face coverings while in the transportation areas, and while in vehicles.
- Adults (including the driver) will wear cloth face coverings (unless qualifying for an exception) while on the bus and windows should be open whenever possible to allow air to circulate.
- Meet physical distancing standards in school vehicles.
- Per CDC guidance, children should sit one to a seat and every other seat while on the bus if possible. If it is not possible, leave seats open between children.
- Students not allowed to switch seats.
- Maintain a seating chart to assist with contact tracing if needed.
- Limit snacks limited on the school bus or charter bus when possible. If students must eat (e.g., trip is several hours long), require students to bring their own food from home or pass out prepackaged snacks.
- Do not allow students to share snacks or drinks.
- Isolate any student or adult who becomes ill while in transit. Notify the school and follow any directions provided.

***Some recommended guidance from this section is used with permission and in collaboration with the Tennessee School for the Blind**

Residential Facilities

- Group students in cottages by age and avoid mixing older students with younger students.
- Assign one student per room whenever possible.
- To minimize the risk of COVID-19 spread in a room occupied by two students, arrange beds at least three feet apart (six feet is ideal) and position the beds head to toe.
- Stock cleaning materials in all bathrooms. Require the students to wash their hands and wipe off high-touch areas (e.g., sink, toilet, door) right before they exit.
- Wash eating utensils in dishwasher or hand wash in hot, soapy water after each use.
- Cohort children as much as possible. Groups of students should take meals together and have recreation together whenever possible.
- Encourage students to wear cloth face coverings in community spaces.
- Students are not required to wear face coverings in their bedrooms.
- Limit visits to essential visits only.
- Clean and disinfect common areas and high touch areas (e.g., microwave, handles, tables) at least twice per day.

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Faculty & Staff

- All staff will wear a cloth face covering at all times, unless exempt.
- Conduct all staff meetings, professional development training and education, and other activities involving staff with physical distancing measures in place, or virtually, where physical distancing is not possible.
- Minimize the use of staff break rooms and other settings that can create a congregation of adults in indoor spaces.
- Train all staff on safety protocols
- Provide staff with access to handwashing and sanitizer stations.
- Maintain communication systems that allow staff and families to self-report, receive prompt notification of exposures, and as required by state law and FERPA, allow privacy of educational records.
- Develop a daily check -in system for staff when they arrive on campus
- Maintain confidentiality (FERPA and HIPPA compliance) at all times.
- Any staff member who develops symptoms during the school day shall immediately don a cloth face covering or other mask and call or notify their supervisor of the situation.
- Limit non-essential visitors, volunteer and activities involving other groups at the same time.

COVID-19 Liaison

Each school will designate a staff liaison as a Point of Contact (POC) for responding to COVID-19 concerns and can be contacted via email or phone. Once identified and trained, the school will communicate the contact information for the liaison.

Healthy Operations

- Monitor staff absenteeism and have a roster of back-up trained staff.
- Each school shall develop a plan for cleaning areas accessed by a person who has been diagnosed with or exhibits the symptoms of COVID-19, following recommended public health protocol.
- Provide educational materials to families.
- Provide disposable masks for anyone on campus that does not have one.
- Visitation to school campus will be limited. All visitors two years old and older are required to wear a cloth face covering while in the school building.
- A cleaning schedule shall be implemented at each school to clean and disinfect high-touch areas and high-traffic areas multiple times throughout the day.
- All approved visitors shall have their temperature measured.
- All approved visitors shall answer the screening questions below. Any visitor who answers “yes” to any screening question or who displays a temperature of 100.4 or above will be denied admittance to the school.
 - Have you been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the past 14 days?

- Are you experiencing a cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, or stomach symptoms?
- Have you had a fever in the last 48 hours?
- Have you had new loss of taste or smell?
- Have you had vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hours?

School Closure and Response Protocols

All decisions for school closure shall be made in conjunction with CDPH, CDE and local county public health officials.

- Schools and residential programs may choose to close the school for 14 days for individual cases. This decision must be made in consultation with CDPH, CDE, and local public health departments.
- Schools shall notify families in the event of a school closure and dates for reopening after a closure.
- Upon closure, schools shall implement support and resources for virtual or distance learning to maintain access to education and continuity of learning.

If a student, teacher or staff member has symptoms, is a contact of someone infected, or is diagnosed with COVID-19, the following protocol, provided by CDPH, will be followed:

	Student or Staff with:	Action	Communication
1	COVID-19 Symptoms (examples: fever, cough, loss of taste or smell, difficulty breathing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send home • Recommend testing If positive – see #3 If negative – see #4 	No action needed
2	Close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send home • Quarantine for 14 days from last exposure • Recommend testing (but will not shorten 14-day quarantine) • School/classroom remain open 	Consider school community notification of a known contact
3	Confirmed COVID-19 case infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify the local public health department • Isolate case and exclude from school for 10 days from symptom onset or test date • Identify contacts, quarantine & exclude exposed contacts for 14 days after the last date the case was present at school while infectious • Recommend testing of contacts, prioritize symptomatic contacts (but will not shorten 14-day quarantine) • Disinfection and cleaning of classroom and primary spaces where case spent significant time • School remains open 	School community notification of a known case
4	Tests negative after symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May return to school 3 days after symptoms resolve • School/classroom remain open 	Consider school community notification if prior awareness of testing