



COVID-19 Safety Plan & Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

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American Rescue Plan Act Elementary and Secondary School Relief Fund (ESSER III) Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

Background on ESSER

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) signed into law on March 11, 2021, provided nearly \$122 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Relief Fund (ESSER). ARP ESSER, also known as ESSER III, funds are provided to State educational agencies in the same proportion as each State received under Title I-A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in fiscal year (FY) 2020. The U.S. Department of Education (ED) published Interim Final Requirements (IFR) on April 22, 2021 requiring Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) receiving ESSER III funds to submit an LEA Plan for the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services. If an LEA had already developed a plan for safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services prior to the enactment of ARP that meets the statutory requirements of section 2001(i) but did not address all of the requirements in the IFR, the LEA must revise and post its plan no later than six months after receiving its ESSER III funds. This applies even if an LEA has been operating full-time in-person instruction but does not apply to fully virtual schools and LEAs.

The Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan include the following components:

1. The LEA will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and LEA staff, and the extent to which it has adopted policies, and a description of any such policies, on each of the CDC's safety recommendations, including: universal and correct wearing of masks; modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing; 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 Tribal health departments; diagnostic and screening testing; efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities; appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies; and coordination with State and local health officials.

2. The LEA will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health and other needs, which may include student health and foodservices.

The Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan required under ESSER III also complies with the COVID-19 Safety Plan requirement set forth by California Assembly Bill 86 (COVID-19 Relief and School Reopening, Reporting, and Public Health Requirement)

COVID-19 Safety Plan

The MCOE COVID Safety Plan, which consists of two elements: the **COVID-19 Prevention Program (CPP)**, pursuant to CalOSHA requirements, and the **CDPH COVID-19 Guidance Checklist** and accompanying documents, satisfy the requirements for the safe reopening and continued in-person instruction of schools per CDPH Guidance on Schools

(https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Consolidated_Schools_Guidance.pdf).

Stable Group Structures

How students and staff will be kept in stable groups with fixed membership that stay together for all activities (e.g. instruction, lunch, recess) and minimize/avoid contact with other groups or individuals who are not part of the stable group including the number of students and staff in each planned stable, group structure? (If planning more than one type of group, what is the minimum and maximum number of students and staff in the groups?)

Stable Groups Guidelines

Stable groups of students will be established that will stay together for all activities. The stable group structure minimizes the mixing and movement of students and staff, which mitigates the spreading of germs, enables health providers to trace contacts in the event of an infection, and minimizes the need for potential closures. The guidelines governing the stable group model for students are as follows:

- Stable group sizes will be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on classroom and school space to allow adequate physical distancing.
- Stable groups of students will share the same classroom each day and have the same meal and recess times (except where otherwise noted).
- Student desks and chairs will be at least 3 feet away from one another with required face masks. Maintain 6 feet distancing as

- much as possible during times when students or staff are not masked (e.g. due to eating or drinking).
- Short-term exposures of less than 6 feet between students and staff are permitted (e.g., a teacher assisting a student one-on-one), but the duration should be minimized and appropriate face-coverings worn (except where exemptions apply).
 - The use and maximization of outdoor spaces will be prioritized.
 - Activities where there is increased likelihood for transmission (such as singing) are permitted outdoors only, provided that physical distancing and use of face coverings are implemented to the maximum extent.
 - Bell schedules will be configured to minimize interaction between groups upon arrival/departure and during passing times.
 - No non-essential visitors will be permitted on campuses.

Departmental Instruction

The exact structure of departmentalized classes will depend upon the needs and resources at a given school site. Departmentalized classes may be structured in the following ways:

- A single stable group occupies one classroom and educators rotate between groups, or smaller groups move together in staggered passing schedules to other rooms/areas they need to use (e.g., science labs) without allowing students or staff to mix with others from distinctive groups.
- Teachers and support staff from different content areas may work in teams that serve a stable group. For example: math, science, English, and history teachers might work as a team with a set group of students they share.
- Students in one stable group that stays together may receive in-person instruction from one or two teachers and support staff dedicated to that group and receive virtual instruction from teachers in other subject areas.
- Block scheduling may be utilized to reduce the number of courses students take in any one day, therefore minimizing student/staff interactions.
- Stable groups could switch schedules or membership after a break at

- the quarter, trimester, or semester to provide opportunities for students to take additional classes without substantial group mixing.
- The school year may be divided into even smaller time units in which students study one or two subjects intensively, completing all of the work they might normally have completed in a semester or a year, staying in stable groups with only 1 or 2 teachers during this time.

Elective Classes

Electives may be offered virtually or organized so that no group of students takes more than one elective in a term and the elective teachers do not work with more than one or two groups.

- Elective teachers may be made part of stable groups.
- Elective teachers may employ other techniques to minimize cross-group exposure, such as teaching outdoors and/or maintaining twelve (12) feet of distance.

Entrance, Egress and Movement within the School

Entrance, Egress, and Movement within the School: How movement of students, staff and parents will be managed to avoid close contact and/or mixing of cohorts.

- Coordinators, teachers, and Principals will develop directionality plans to minimize clusters of students and staff entering/exiting buildings and classrooms.
- Arrival and drop off-times and locations will be staggered to minimize exposure across groups.
- Routes for entry and exit will be clearly marked, using as many entrances and exits as possible.
- Entrance and exit of school transportation vehicles will be staggered to minimize students congregating.
- Directionality/Signage will be in place for each campus to encourage distancing in passing areas.
- Distance markings in classrooms will be in place to remind students to maintain appropriate distance.

- All signage, directionality plans, and distance markings will be developmentally appropriate and easy for students to understand.
- Minimizing contact between adults will be prioritized at all times.
- Staff will not congregate without maintaining the maximum distance possible (always at least 6 feet) and will avoid congregating during breaks and meal times.
- Recess, meal, and restroom breaks will be staggered across stable groups. Emergency restroom breaks will be handled on a case-by-case basis in a way that does not allow for contact between stable groups.
- Furniture and play spaces will be rearranged to maximize distance
- Outdoor space will be utilized when practical.
- Non-essential visitors will not be allowed on campus.
- Parents will wait in their vehicles when picking up/dropping off students. Special Education students will be escorted to the parent's vehicle by a staff member.
- For schools that utilize metal detectors, Principals will consult with the School Resource Officer and Campus Student Supervisors to develop a plan for minimizing contact during wandering.
- For schools where student altercations are a concern, Principals will consult with the School Resource Officer and Campus Student Supervisors for guidance on minimizing contact between staff and students during conflicts.

Face Coverings and Other Essential Protective Gear

All staff and students will utilize face coverings in accordance with CDPH guidelines (<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/guidance-for-face-coverings.aspx>) unless a person is exempt as explained in the guidelines. People are exempt from the requirement if they are under age 2, have a medical or mental health condition or disability that would impede them from properly wearing or handling a face covering, those with a communication disability, or when it would inhibit communication with a person who is hearing impaired.

General Guidelines Related to Face Coverings and Other Protective Gear

- Persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition, as confirmed by school district health team and therapists, must wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it.
- A cloth face covering or face shield should be removed for meals, snacks, naptime, or when it needs to be replaced. When a cloth face covering is temporarily removed, it should be placed in a clean, safe area and clearly marked with the student's name and date, until it needs to be put on again.
- Participants in sports and physical education should wear face coverings when participating in the activity, both indoors and outdoors.
- Education/training will be provided to all staff and families in the school community on the proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>). Training will also include policies on face covering exemptions (<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/guidance-for-face-coverings.aspx>).
- Schools will offer masks or other appropriate face coverings to any student without one.
- Any student who does not meet the exemption requirements and refuses to wear a mask must be excluded from school. Schools will offer alternative educational opportunities for students who are excluded from campus because they will not wear a face covering.
- Face covering policies apply on school buses and any vehicle affiliated with the school that is used to transport students, staff, or teachers to and/or from a school site
- School transportation vehicles will have a supply of unused masks for students who may not have one, and bus drivers will be trained on exemption guidelines.
- For staff who come into routine contact with others, the use of disposable 3-ply surgical masks is recommended.
- Special Education staff who work at multiple sites/with multiple stable groups should change their face coverings across settings/groups.
- Workers or other persons handling or serving food must use gloves

- in addition to face coverings.
- Disposable gloves will be provided to staff in other appropriate situations, such as in the handling of frequently touched objects.
 - Face coverings, goggles, and disposable gowns are available for staff as needed.
 - Desk shields will be placed on each teacher's desk.
 - Desk shields will be placed on each student's desk or student center tables when 3 feet physical distancing cannot be maintained in the classroom.
 - Essential sanitizing equipment will be provided (hand sanitizer, hand soap, disinfectant sprays/wipes)

Specific Guidelines for Staff:

Each work site will provide clean, undamaged face masks and ensure they are properly worn (over the nose and mouth) as required by orders from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) or local health department. Employees may provide their own face masks or use the disposable face masks provided at the point of entry to the site. The following are exceptions to the use of face masks in the workplace:

- When an employee is alone in a room
- While eating and drinking at the workplace, provided employees are at least six feet apart and outside air supply to the area has been maximized to the extent possible if indoors
- Employees wearing respiratory protection in accordance with CCR Title 8 Section 5144 or other safety orders.
- Employees who cannot wear face masks due to a medical or mental health condition or disability, or who are hearing-impaired or communicating with a hearing-impaired person. Alternatives will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Specific tasks that cannot feasibly be performed with a facemasks, where employees will be kept at least six feet apart.

Health Screenings for Staff and Students

Employee Health Screenings

- Before first returning to in-person work, employees must review the MCOE COVID-19 Protection Program (CPP) (<https://www.mcoe.org/deptprog/super/Documents/MCOEC19pp01212021.pdf>)
- Each day every employee must ensure they are Covid-19 symptom free and have not had close contact with a positive case. Employees should self assess in accordance with **CPP Appendix C: MCOE Notice and Acknowledgement Regarding Daily Health Self-Assessment in the Covid-19 Prevention Program.**
- Any staff with fever (temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher), or symptoms are to stay home and follow the protocol for quarantining/testing/returning to work as described in the CPP. Any staff exhibiting symptoms during the workday will be immediately sent home.

Student Health Screenings

- Parents will conduct health screening questions and temperature checks of students before students are sent to school or enter school transportation and instructed to keep their child at home if the child is feeling ill or has symptoms of COVID-19, even if symptoms are very mild, and to get their ill child tested for SARS-CoV2.
- Each classroom maintains thermometers, face coverings, gloves, hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray/wipes.
- Nursing and trained office staff are available to assist with screenings as needed.
- Staff will conduct health screening questions and take student temperatures upon initial entry into the classroom/campus (note: Special Education students will be screened upon initial entry into the classroom).
- If a student's temperature is 100.4 degrees or above, the student will be isolated and sent home.
- Students will be monitored for signs of illness and immediately isolated/sent home if they exhibit any of the following:

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Shortness of Breath or difficulty breathing
- Cough
- Muscle or body aches
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Inability to participate in routine activities
- Behavior changes
- Persistent crying.

Self-Monitoring

- Staff and students should self-monitor throughout the day for signs of illness; staff should observe students for signs or symptoms of illness to support students who are less able to self-monitor or less likely to self-report.
- Any students exhibiting symptoms will wait in isolation until picked up by their parent/guardian and be required to wear a face covering in all settings.

Student Isolation Protocol

- Staff will contact the student's parent/guardian.
- The student will be taken directly into the private isolation room/area of the classroom with staff supervision.
- The door/space of the isolation room/area will remain closed off as much as possible.
- Signage will be placed on the door/area to indicate it is an "ISOLATION ROOM/AREA".
- Staff should limit entering and exiting the isolation room/area to avoid unnecessary exposure. If it is safe to do so, only one staff member should be assigned to the isolation room/area.
- While in the isolation room/area, staff will wear a face mask, KN95 mask or face shield with drape. If staff needs to attend directly to the student and cannot safely social distance, they should also

- wear gloves and a disposable gown.
- While staff and the student are in the isolation room/area, they are to practice physical distancing to the extent possible.
 - The student will utilize a vinyl mat/desk-chair while waiting for pick up
 - The mat/desk-chair will be disinfected after each student use
 - The student will remain in the isolation room/area for no more than 1 hour or until the parent picks up the student, whichever is sooner.
 - If the student is not picked up after 1 hour, school staff will take the student home.
 - Parents or guardians will be provided with written information regarding their child's symptoms and the steps to take to return to school.

Healthy Hygiene Practices

Healthy hygiene practices include the availability of handwashing stations and hand sanitizer, and how their safe and appropriate use will be promoted and incorporated into routines for staff and students.

- Students and staff will be taught and have the following topics reinforced: washing hands (<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html>), avoiding contact with one's eyes, nose, and mouth (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention-H.pdf>), and covering coughs and sneezes (https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html).
- A schedule for handwashing/hand sanitizing will be established in all stable groups and teachers will reinforce the schedule. Students and staff will wash their hands frequently throughout the day, including upon arrival at work/school; before and after eating; after coughing or sneezing; after classes where they handle shared items; before and after using the restroom; and after any direct contact with another student or staff member.
- Students and staff should wash their hands for 20 seconds with soap, rubbing thoroughly after application. When hand-washing is not

practicable, students and staff will use hand-sanitizer. Fragrance free hand sanitizers are recommended, and children under age 9 should only use hand sanitizer with close adult supervision. Hand sanitizers must be 60% alcohol content or greater and not contain methyl alcohol.

- Staff will model and practice handwashing and the use of hand sanitizer.
- Adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, tissues, face coverings, and hand sanitizers will be available in all campuses/classrooms.

Identification and Tracing of Contacts

Actions that staff will take when there is a confirmed case include designated staff persons to support contact tracing, such as creation and submission of lists of exposed students and staff to the local health department and notification of exposed persons. Each school must designate a person for the local health department to contact about COVID-19.

Actions for Confirmed Case of COVID with a Staff Member

In accordance with MCOE's COVID-19 Prevention Program (CPP), MCOE will take all of the following steps in response to a COVID-19 case in the workplace.

- Determine the day and time the COVID-19 case was last present and, to the extent possible, the date of the positive COVID-19 test(s) and/or diagnosis, and the date the COVID-19 case first had one or more COVID-19 symptoms, if any were experienced.
- Determine who may have had a COVID-19 exposure. This requires an evaluation of the activities of the COVID-19 case and all locations at the workplace which may have been visited by the COVID-19 case during the high-risk exposure period.
- Give notice of the potential COVID-19 exposure, within one business day, in a way that does not reveal any personal identifying information of the COVID-19 case, to the following: a.) All employees at the

- workplace and their authorized representatives. b.) Independent contractors and other employers present at the workplace. If student(s) were exposed, send a notice, developed in collaboration with the Merced County Department of Public Health, to parents to inform them that a case of COVID-19 in a staff member has been reported and that the school will work with the Merced County Department of public health to notify exposed people.
- Offer COVID-19 testing during their working hours, at no cost to employees who had potential COVID-19 exposure in the workplace.
 - Provide employees with the information on the COVID-19-related benefits to which the employee may be entitled under applicable federal, state, or local laws. This may include any benefits available under workers' compensation law, Labor Code Sections 248.1 and 248.5, Labor Code Sections 3212.86 through 3212.88, local governmental requirements, the employer's own leave policies, and leave guaranteed by the collective bargaining agreements.
 - Investigate whether any workplace conditions could have contributed to the risk of COVID-19 exposure and what could be done to reduce exposure to COVID-19 hazards.
 - Keep all personally identifying information regarding COVID-19 cases or persons with COVID-19 symptoms confidential. All COVID-19 testing or related medical services provided by the employer under this Section and Sections 3205.1 through 3205.4 shall be provided in a manner that ensures the confidentiality of employees.
 - Arrange for cleaning and disinfection of the classroom and primary spaces where the case spent significant time. This does not need to be done until students and staff in the area have left for the day.
 - Contact tracing for staff is conducted by a designated Human Resources Employee, who will inform the Merced County Department of Public Health of the positive case.
 - The staff member who tested positive will be excluded from the workplace until return-to-work requirements are met.
 - Staff members who had COVID-19 exposure (as identified through contact tracing) will be excluded from the workplace for 14 days after the last known exposure to a COVID-19 case.

- Continuing and maintaining an employee's earnings, seniority, and all other employee rights and benefits when determined that the COVID-19 exposure is work related.
- Providing employees at the time of exclusion with information on available benefits.
- Refer to the Merced County Department of Public Health Covid-19 Decision Tree for Schools for further guidance
(https://drive.google.com/file/d/16YtzlqHtyfVW_tziHxTB2cwv_a07M0gC/view?usp=sharing)

Actions When There is a Confirmed Case of COVID-19 with a Student

- Follow the guidelines contained in the Merced County Department of Public Health Covid-19 Decision Tree for Schools
(https://drive.google.com/file/d/16YtzlqHtyfVW_tziHxTB2cwv_a07M0gC/view?usp=sharing) and the California Department of Public Health Guidelines
(https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Consolidated_Schools_Guidance.pdf) regarding contact tracing, testing, and return to school.
- Contact tracing for students will be conducted by Principals/Coordinators at the school level and Adult ROP level and Coordinators for the Special Education Program.
- Send a notice, developed in collaboration with the Merced County Department of Public Health, to parents and staff to inform them that a case of COVID-19 in a student or staff member has been reported and that the school will work with the Merced County Department of public health to notify exposed people.
- Arrange for cleaning and disinfection of the classroom and primary spaces where the case spent significant time. This does not need to be done until students and staff in the area have left for the day.
- Implement online/distance learning for student cases if they are well enough to participate.

Should multiple cases or a major outbreak of COVID-19 occur at an MCOE workplace or school site, MCOE will follow the specific guidelines contained within its COVID-19 Prevention Program (CPP).

To further support contact tracing, MCOE will:

- Maintain confidential staff self-assessment documents for one (1) year.
- Require all essential visitors to school campuses to sign in for contact tracing purposes.

Physical Distancing

Space and routines will be arranged to allow for physical distancing of students and staff.

The planned maximum and minimum distance between students in classrooms.

Maximum: 6 feet

Minimum: 3 feet

Maximize space between seating and desks. Distance teacher and other staff desks at least 6 feet from student and other staff desks. Maintain a minimum of 3 feet between student chairs with required face masks. Maintain 6 feet of distancing as much as possible during times when students or staff are not masked (e.g. due to eating or drinking).

Guidelines for Distancing

- Short-term exposures of less than 6 feet between students and staff are permitted (e.g., a teacher assisting a student one-on-one), but the duration will be minimized and face masks will be worn.
- Independent Study will maintain 6' distance for in-person instruction with plexiglass barrier
- Use and maximization of outdoor space for activities will be prioritized where possible.
- Minimize contact at school between students, staff, families and the community at the beginning and end of the school day.
- Prioritize minimizing contact between adults at all times
- Stagger arrival and drop off-times and locations as consistently as practicable to minimize scheduling challenges for families.
- Place student tables in rows, facing the front, to allow for adequate physical distancing
- Designate space in front of the classroom for staff to allow six (6) feet

distance from the first row of student desks.

- Permit group projects only when physical distancing can be maintained at all times.
- Do not allow students to share materials or equipment as much as possible. If shared, items must be disinfected between use.
- Design lessons to minimize student interaction
- Maximize entry and exit points and utilize signage and floor markers to decrease congestion and reinforce proper distancing.
- Serve meals outdoors or in classrooms instead of cafeterias when possible. Where cafeterias or group dining rooms must be used, keep students together in their stable groups, ensure physical distancing, hand hygiene before and after eating, and consider assigned seating.

Distancing on School Transportation Vehicles

- Maximize space between students and between students and the driver on school transportation vehicles and open windows to the greatest extent practicable. Two windows on a vehicle should be opened fully at a minimum
- Face covering policies apply on school buses and any vehicle used to transport students, staff, or teachers to and/or from a school site.
- School transportation will be equipped with extra unused face coverings for students who may have inadvertently failed to bring one.
- Ventilation considerations are also important on school transportation vehicles; use open windows as much as possible to improve airflow.
- Clean frequently-touched surfaces on school transportation vehicles daily.
- School transportation vehicles will be thoroughly cleaned daily and after transporting any individual who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. Drivers will be provided cleaning materials, including but not limited to wipes and disposable gloves, to support cleaning of frequently touched surfaces during the day.
- Students refusing to wear face coverings will not be allowed on school transportation vehicles.

Staff Training and Family Education

Staff will be trained and families will be educated on the application and enforcement of the plan. MCOE will provide effective training and instruction that includes:

- COVID-19 policies and procedures to protect employees and students from COVID-19 hazards.
- Facts about how COVID-19 is spread and how to minimize spread.
- Methods of physical distancing of at least six feet and the importance of combining physical distancing with the wearing of face masks.
- The fact that particles containing the virus can travel more than six feet, especially indoors, so physical distance must be combined with other controls, including face masks and hand hygiene, to be effective.
- The importance of frequent hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, using hand sanitizer when staff/students do not have immediate access to a sink or hand washing facility, and that hand sanitizer does not work if the hands are soiled.
- Proper use of face masks and the fact that face masks are not respiratory protective equipment - face masks are intended to primarily protect other individuals from the wearer of the face mask.
- COVID-19 symptoms, when to seek medical attention, the importance of obtaining a COVID-19 test, and not coming to work/school if the staff member/student has COVID-19 symptoms.
- The plan and procedures to follow when staff or students become sick at school.

Training for students will take place in the classroom or virtually. Training for staff, parents, and other members of the school community will be virtual. Regular messages will be sent home about safety precautions and teachers will model and reinforce healthy habits and social skills with students. Teachers will also create lessons using social stories to educate

the students and families on these topics. As the understanding of COVID-19 develops and public health guidelines evolve, changes will be communicated to staff, students, and parents in a timely manner.

Schools will continue to provide regular communications to the school community regarding COVID-19 vaccinations and available vaccination clinics in the community. When feasible, schools will coordinate with the local department of public health to schedule vaccination clinics for students and staff on campus.

Testing of Staff and Students

School officials will ensure that students and staff who have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 will be rapidly tested and provided instructions while waiting for test results including planned periodic asymptomatic staff testing cadence.

Staff Testing

MCOE will follow the State's Color Tier testing guidelines/cadence and any Merced County Department of Public Health testing guidelines for testing of asymptomatic staff. Staff may be referred to free testing sites throughout the community, to testing sites operated at MCOE locations, or provided with free at-home testing kits.

For staff with symptoms, they will be referred to appropriate testing sites in the community. They will be instructed to quarantine in accordance with state and local guidelines while awaiting their test results, and to follow the return- to-work guidelines spelled out in MCOE's COVID-19 Prevention Program

(<https://www.mcoe.org/deptprog/super/Documents/MCOEC19pp01212021.pdf>)

Student Testing

MCOE's student testing plan will meet or exceed the requirements described in the COVID-19 Reopening Guidance:

(https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Consolidated_Schools_Guidance.pdf).

Students with symptoms will be referred to local healthcare delivery systems or appropriate testing sites in the community. Students will be instructed to quarantine in accordance with state and local guidelines while awaiting test results, and to follow the return-to-school guidelines spelled out in the CDPH Guidance (<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Guidance-on-Returning-to-Work-or-School-Following-COVID-19-Diagnosis.aspx>) and the Merced County Department of Public Health's COVID-19 Decision Tree for Schools (https://drive.google.com/file/d/16YtzlqHtyfVW_tziHxTB2cwv_a07M0qC/view?usp=sharing).

Identification and Reporting of Cases

Reporting of confirmed positive and suspected cases in students, staff, and employees will be consistent with reporting requirements. MCOE will adhere with all federal, state, and local guidelines for identification and reporting of cases, including those of the California Department of Public Health (<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Schools-Case-Reporting-Directive.aspx>).

Current guidance calls for MCOE to notify the Merced County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) of any positive cases, and to collaborate with the department to conduct contact tracing and to notify persons who may have been exposed. Each school and program has a designated staff member who is responsible for notifying and collaborating with MCDPH.

Communication Plan

The Superintendent and MCOE Administrative team will interface with school sites, staff, students, families, and the appropriate public health agencies to communicate about cases and exposures in a way that is consistent with FERPA, HIPAA, and all other guidelines. Reports will not reveal any personal identifying information of the COVID-19 case, and MCOE staff have been trained in how to follow these regulations when communicating with the school community about COVID-19.

Assurances

LEA Name: **Merced County Office of Education (MCOE)**

Option for ensuring safe in-person instruction and continuity of services:

- has developed a plan will amend its plan

1. Please choose one:

- The LEA has a plan, as of March 11, 2021, that is already compliant with the ARP statute and will review and, as appropriate, revise it every six months to take into consideration the additional requirements of the IFR: or

NOTE: If your LEA already has a compliant plan as of March 11, 2021, and has assured such by checking the box above, then you may skip questions 2-4 and complete the Assurance and Contact sections.

- The LEA has amended/created a plan compliant with the IFR using this template and has posted/will post it within 30 days of completing the ESSER III Assurances.

NOTE: If checking the box above that you are using this template to meet the 30 day plan requirements, you must respond to each question in the template.

MCOE has amended the COVID-19 Safety Plan compliant with the IFR and has posted it on our website at www.mcoe.org

2. The LEA will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and LEA staff, and the extent to which it has adopted policies, and a description of any such policies, on each of the CDC's safety recommendations, including: universal and correct wearing of masks; modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing; 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 Tribal health departments; diagnostic and screening testing; efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities; appropriate accommodations for children with

disabilities with respect to health and safety policies; and coordination with State and local health officials.

MCOE continues to maintain health and safety policies and procedures for students, educators, and other school and LEA staff. These procedures are included in the COVID-19 Safety Plan and [COVID-19 Prevention Program](#) elements.

3. The LEA will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health and other needs, which may include student health and foodservices.

Describe how the LEA will ensure continuity of services in case isolation, quarantine, or future school closures are required, including how the LEA will meet the needs of students with disabilities and English learners.

MCOE will ensure continuity of services through the provision of instruction via independent study virtual learning. Teachers will provide scheduled virtual instruction and support to students, utilizing a variety of instructional materials aligned to California standards, including school textbooks, online educational resources, and supplemental materials.

Students will be provided with a technology device, mobile hotspot and other necessary equipment to access instruction and services remotely from home. Students will continue to have access to their school provided email accounts to communicate with teachers, counselors and staff.

If a student or parent requests, a hard copy or paper option will be provided that will be a comparable and equitable educational alternative.

MCOE will continue to provide an equitable and appropriate education for our students with disabilities. Special education teachers will work collaboratively with core content teachers to accommodate and/or adapt lessons to meet the needs of students' IEP. Special education teachers will provide continuity of learning through a variety of virtual learning resources as appropriate so that special education students have access to learning opportunities as other students. Related service providers (Speech Therapist, Modified PE, etc.), will prepare virtual learning activities that can be completed at home as

appropriate. Digital options to meet and collaborate on a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) shall be implemented when necessary.

Virtual support services will continue to be accessible to students in case of isolation, quarantine or future school closures.

- **Instructional Assistants and CALSOAP tutors will have virtual support hours to provide instructional support and assistance to students.**
- **The school counselor will continue to provide counseling services and support to students in a virtual format.**
- **The school psychologist will continue to provide counseling services and support to students in a virtual format.**
- **Student Advocates from the Valley Crisis Center will continue to provide virtual counseling and support to students and families.**
- **School meals will be provided and may be picked up from the school site.**

4. The LEA sought public comments in the development of its plan and took those comments into account in the development of its plan.

Describe the LEA's policy or practice that provided the public with an opportunity to provide comments and feedback and the collection process. Describe how any feedback was incorporated into the development of the plan.

MCOE has sought public comments in the development and revision of the plan through regularly scheduled site feedback and Board Meetings beginning on June 21, 2021. All public comments are taken into account in the development and amendment of this plan to ensure the health and safety of all students, educators, and other school and LEA staff.

In addition, the LEA provides the following assurances:

- The LEA has made (in the case of statutorily compliant plans) or will make (in the case of new plans) its plan publicly available no later than 30 days after receiving its ARP ESSER allocation.

Please insert link to the plan: www.mcoe.org

- The LEA sought public comment in the development of its plan and took those public comments into account in the development of its plan.

- ☒ The LEA will periodically review and, as appropriate revise its plan, at least every six months.
- ☒ The LEA will seek public comment in determining whether to revise its plan and, if it determines revisions are necessary, on the revisions it makes to the plan.
- ☒ If the LEA revises its plan, it will ensure its revised plan addresses each of the aspects of safety currently recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), or if the CDC has revised its guidance, the updated safety recommendations at the time the LEA is revising its plan.
- ☒ The LEA has created its plan in an understandable and uniform format.
- ☒ The LEA's plan is, to the extent practicable, written in a language that parents can understand, or if not practicable, orally translated.
- ☒ The LEA will, upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability, provide the plan in an alternative format accessible to that parent.
- ☒ The following person or persons is/are the appropriate contact person for any questions or concerns about the aforementioned plan.

Please list name(s), title(s), address, county, and contact information for the person or persons responsible for developing, submitting, and amending the LEA plan.

May Moua, Director of Student Programs

Merced County Office of Education
 632 West 13th Street
 Merced, CA 95341
 209-381-6648

Susan Coston, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education

Merced County Office of Education
 632 West 13th Street
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 209-381-6711

Additional Resources and Information

Consultation with Organizations

Labor Organizations

Name: Merced County Office Teachers Association

Date: January 26-29, 2021

Name: California School Employees Association Chapter 541

Date: January 26-29, 2021

Parent and Community Organizations

Name: All MCOE Parents Date: January 19-22, 2021

References and Resources

CDPH Guidance Resources for Schools

(https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Consolidated_Schools_Guidance.pdf)

Safe Schools Hub (<https://schools.covid19.ca.gov/>)