



COVID-19 Guidance for K-12 Schools

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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide Licking County school administrators with guidance to reopen schools to students and staff for the 2020-21 school year. The Licking County Health Department (LCHD) developed this document with input from school administrators and information from the American Academy of Pediatrics, Ohio Department of Health, Ohio Department of Education and CDC.

Executive Summary

LCHD is committed to working with school administrators to assist with providing guidance regarding COVID-19 and in person school settings. LCHD staff has worked with school administrators and staff to develop this document. It is important for guidance related to returning to in person education to be practical and able to be implemented by schools. This will allow schools to focus on protecting students as much as possible and with implementing policies to protect against the spread of COVID-19. The goal of this document is to assist with providing the safest environment possible in schools related to COVID-19. Reducing the intermingling of students and staff is a major theme throughout this document. Doing so will reduce potential exposures to COVID-19 and help control the spread of the disease. There are no restrictions or guidelines that can be put in place to eliminate all risks in a school environment.

However, implementing this guidance will assist with reducing the risk of COVID-19 in school buildings in Licking County.

The items contained in this document are recommendations. LCHD does not have the legal authority to require schools to implement the items listed in this document.

Confirmed Cases

Unfortunately, there is a likelihood that a confirmed case of COVID-19 will be diagnosed in a student or staff member in a school during the 2020-21 school year. If this should occur, LCHD will work with school officials and parents to isolate the individual and conduct contact tracing. For an individual to have a confirmed case of COVID-19, they must have laboratory confirmation that they have the virus.

- If a student or staff member is found to have a confirmed case of COVID-19, they will be placed into isolation by LCHD
- The isolation time period will vary and will be based on the individual
- LCHD will provide written and verbal communication to the parents of any students with a confirmed case of COVID-19 and to any staff member who is diagnosed with a confirmed case of COVID-19
- circumstances
- Students and staff will not be permitted to return to school or school activities until their isolation period has ended and official documentation is received from the Licking County Health Department
- Any individual waiting on results from a COVID-19 test should not return to school while the test results are pending

Contact Tracing

All close contacts of individuals who have a confirmed case of COVID-19 need to be identified so that they can be properly quarantined to help prevent the spread of the virus. To be classified as a close contact, an individual must be within 6' of an individual with a confirmed case of COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes. However, LCHD will consider mask usage when identifying student close contacts. If students are seated a minimum of 3' from a student with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19, and they are wearing masks at the time of exposure, LCHD will not consider the students close contacts. Schools will be asked if students were wearing masks during the contact tracing process in order to identify close contacts. All close contacts will be contacted by LCHD and provided with a quarantine notice.

- If a confirmed case of COVID-19 is identified in a student or staff member, LCHD will contact the school in order to determine close contacts of the individual with the confirmed or probable case
- All individuals who meet the definition of a close contact will be quarantined for 14 days from the date of their exposure to the individual with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19
- LCHD will provide written and verbal communication to the parents of all close contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19 and to any staff member that is identified as a close contact
- All schools should have assigned seating for students in class, during lunch, and during other activities to assist with identifying possible close contacts

- Students and staff will not be permitted to return to school or school activities until their quarantine period has ended and official documentation is received from the Licking County Health Department

Communication

LCHD is able to work with schools in order to communicate critical information regarding COVID-19 throughout the school year. Additionally, LCHD will develop messages that will be distributed to parents and staff members, and information will be posted on LCHD’s website and social media sites.

- LCHD requests that each school building designates a liaison regarding contact tracing and confirmed COVID-19 cases. LCHD will provide contact info that will be provided to the liaison in order to minimize communication barriers
- Schools are recommended to provide absenteeism data at a building level to LCHD daily and include the number of students/staff that are sent home due to exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms
- Increase communication encouraging more students to walk or bike to school
- LCHD will develop trainings for school staff members to assist with the implementation of this guidance

Cleaning and Sanitizing

Cleaning and sanitizing will play a critical role in helping to control the spread of COVID-19 in school buildings. All high touch surfaces in school buildings should be cleaned and sanitized at least once during the school day and after school ends for the day. A cleaning checklist can be found in Appendix 1 of this document.

- All school personnel should follow the manufacturer’s recommendations when using cleaning and sanitizing materials
- If the recommendations are not properly followed, the chemicals being used will not be effective
- There are a variety of products currently in use and LCHD does not endorse a specific product

Busing

Busing students to school is a necessary and a legal requirement for school districts. Without busing, many students would not be able to attend school due to a lack of transportation. Practicing social distancing on a school bus will be challenging and steps should be taken to minimize student intermingling and contact.

- Students should be screened for symptoms by their parents prior to being sent to school
- Educate parents on social distancing at the bus stop
- As many students as possible should be transported to school by parents, walk to school, ride their bike to school, etc.
- Recommend assigned seating on buses to assist with contact tracing, if another method of identifying potential close contacts does not exist
- A maximum of 2 students should sit in a seat, with one student sitting as close to the window as possible, and the other sitting as close to the aisle as possible. Students living in the same household should sit together, and any 3 students living in the same household can sit in the same seat.

- All students should wear masks on buses in accordance with the current Ohio Department of Health order unless they meet one of the exemptions provided in the order
- Bus drivers should wear masks while students are on the bus, unless they meet one of the exemptions contained in the current Ohio Department of Health order
- Students should sit in cohorts in their own classes to minimize student intermingling
- Ventilation in buses should be maximized through the use of windows (weather permitting)
- Hand sanitizer should be available on the bus for students and the driver
- Clean and sanitize bus seats and other high touch surfaces on the bus after each route is complete

Arriving at School

is important that students not congregate when arriving to school in order to reduce possible contact with other students who may be infected with COVID-19.

- Students should be screened for symptoms by their parents prior to being sent to school
- When students arrive, they should go directly to the room where their first class is held
- In rooms where a sink is available, all students should wash their hands upon arrival. If a sink is not available, hand sanitizer should be available to the students
- Students should socially distance when standing in line waiting to enter a room, physical markers should be in place to assist with students understanding where to stand
- Parents should not congregate when dropping students off or picking them up from school
- Breakfast provided by schools should be served to students in a classroom
- School personnel should monitor all areas where students may congregate and keep them from congregating

Classroom Seating

Students spend the majority of their day in class learning from their teachers. Unfortunately, the vast majority of classrooms are not designed for 6' social distancing. Without this type of design, it will be difficult to keep students from being considered a close contact should one of their classmates become infected with COVID-19. The guidance below is designed to minimize the number of students and teachers that would need to be quarantined if a confirmed case of the virus is identified in their class.

- Students should have assigned seating in classrooms, and the seating chart should not be changed during the school year
- Desks should be spaced apart to the extent possible to achieve 6' social distancing whenever possible, however students should be separated by a minimum of 3'
- All desks should be positioned so that students are not facing each other
- Students should remain in the same group as much as possible throughout the day, and steps should be taken to minimize intermingling of students during a school day. (This will vary for middle and high school)
- Teachers should "travel" to classrooms to minimize student intermingling in hallways
- Teachers should remain 6' from students whenever possible to minimize potential exposures to COVID-19
- Desks and high touch surfaces should be cleaned and sanitized at least one time during the school day, when school ends and more often as needed

- Students should not share items such as pens, pencils, crayons, markers, etc.
- All equipment and supplies used by multiple students (i.e. science lab equipment, gym equipment, computer labs, etc.) should be cleaned and sanitized after each use
- Students should not congregate in a library, and a “mobile library cart” should be used to allow students to choose books from their classroom. All books should be wiped down when they are returned
- All students should wear masks in accordance with the current Ohio Department of Health order during the school day unless they meet one of the exemptions provided in the order
- Teachers and staff will be required to wear masks in accordance with the current Ohio Department of Health order, unless they meet one of the exemptions provided in the order. A face shield can be used in place of a mask as long as it covers a staff members entire face and extends beyond their chin

Playgrounds

LCHD understands the importance of students needing to be outside and physically active during the school day. The use of playgrounds during recess will be allowed, but some restrictions will need to be put into place to assist with reducing the spread of COVID-19.

- Students should remain with their individual classes and not intermingle while on the playground
- Teachers and other school staff should maintain proper social distancing while supervising students on the playground
- Specific classes should be assigned specific locations on a playground to play
- Playground equipment and other high touch surfaces should be cleaned and sanitized at least daily
- Games and other equipment used during inside recess should be sanitized after each
- Students should socially distance in a single file line that minimizes intermingling when going to recess and after recess ends
- Students should wash their hands when returning to their classroom after recess

Cafeteria/Lunch

Lunch is also a critical part of the school day. Lunch should be served in the cafeteria to allow students the chance to leave their classrooms during the day. This will also minimize the areas in a school building where food will be consumed and cause a build up of food debris that will need to be cleaned.

- Lunch should be served to students in the cafeteria
- Students should socially distance in line and physical markers should be used to assist students with understanding where to stand in line
- Students in the same class should sit at the same table
- Students should have assigned seating, and if possible, sit next to the students they sit by in class to minimize student intermingling
- If needed, gymnasiums could be used to increase seating capacity
- Hand sanitizer should be made available to students prior to eating and after eating
- Increased staff presence to help ensure social distancing during lunch
- All lunch tables and desks where students eat lunch should be cleaned and sanitized before and after each use

- Teachers should not congregate and eat lunch together

Isolation Areas

Schools will be required to designate isolation areas for students that show symptoms of COVID-19 during the school day. This will remove students from classrooms and other places within school buildings and reduce possible exposures to COVID-19.

- The clinic should only be used for medical treatment of students and staff
- If a student exhibits COVID-19 symptoms during the school day, they should be isolated in a designated area immediately, and they should leave school as quickly as possible
- After a symptomatic student leaves school, the high touch areas of the designated isolation area should be cleaned and sanitized.
- If a staff member exhibits COVID-19 symptoms, they should notify their supervisor and leave school immediately
- Any individual who is symptomatic should contact their healthcare provider as soon as possible

Visitors/Vendors

- Schools should follow their existing security plans and take steps to reduce the number of visitors in school buildings
- All vendors, contractors, and other non-parent visitors should attest in some manner that they have self-screened for COVID-19 symptoms prior to being allowed to enter a school building
- All vendors, contractors, and other non-parent visitors should preschedule their visits to school buildings

Athletic Events

- All athletic events and practices should be conducted in accordance with guidance provided by the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio High School Athletic Association

Extra-Curricular Activities

- All extra-curricular activities should be conducted in accordance with guidance from the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Department of Health

Definitions

Close Contact – An individual that has been within 6’ of an individual with a confirmed case of COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes

Confirmed Case – An individual that has laboratory confirmation that they have been infected with COVID-19

Isolation – When a sick individual, with a contagious disease, is separated from people who are not sick

Quarantine – When people who were exposed to a contagious disease are separated and restricted to see if they become sick

References

American Academy of Pediatrics (2020). COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-Entry. <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>. Accessed on June 22, 2020.

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Ohio Department of Health (2020). COVID-19 Health and Prevention Guidance for Ohio K-12 Schools. <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/schools/K-12-Schools-Guidance.pdf>. Access on July 10, 2020.

Appendix 1 – COVID-19 Cleaning Checklist

School COVID-19 Cleaning and Sanitizing Checklist

General Items:

Item Sanitized	Date/Time Sanitized	Staff Member
Doorknobs and Handles		
Stair Rails		
Light Switches		
Shared Desktops		

Shared Keyboards and Mice		
Shared Telephones		
Locker Handles		

Classrooms:

Item Sanitized	Date/Time Sanitized	Staff Member
Student and Teacher Desks		
Student Chairs		
Whiteboard Markers		
Table/Counter Tops		
Sinks and Fixtures		
Any Shared Items		

Restrooms:

Item Sanitized	Date/Time Sanitized	Staff Member
Sinks and Fixtures		
Stall Doors and Locks		
Handrails in Stalls		
Soap Dispensers		
Paper Towel Dispensers		

Cafeteria:

Item Sanitized	Date/Time Sanitized	Staff Member
Lunch Tables		
Serving Line Equipment		
Cash Registers		
Lunch Tray Return Area		
Milk Cooler Handles & Surfaces		

LCHD recommends that all items that are not smooth and easily cleanable (upholstered furniture, non-permanent carpets and rugs, etc.) be removed from classrooms. All cleaning and disinfecting product manufacturer's recommendations should be followed.