

REOPENING GUIDANCE FOR PUBLIC AND NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The State of Louisiana is following the guidance of public health experts when making decisions regarding the resumption of instruction in public and non-public school facilities.

Louisiana’s plan for reopening statewide outlines phases that are initiated once certain public health criteria are met. Throughout these phases, restrictions will be gradually relaxed as the public health situation improves, allowing greater flexibility, including the potential of resuming school building-based instruction.

In Phases 1, 2, and 3, school facilities may open to students for in-person instruction with certain restrictions in place. These restrictions are mandated by the Louisiana Department of Health.

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), in consultation with the Louisiana Department of Health, offers the following supportive guidance in order to assist schools in planning as it relates to public health guidelines, as well as limiting the spread of COVID-19.

NOTE: Guidance may change in accordance with updates from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Louisiana’s Office of Public Health. Guidance is based on current medical knowledge of how COVID-19 is transmitted, primarily through close physical contact, vocal and musical activities during which aerosol particles might be emitted, and touching shared surfaces or objects.

For information regarding coronavirus 2019/COVID 19, please visit the LDH website and CDC website: <https://www.ldh.la.gov/coronavirus> and <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.htm>, and follow the below general guidelines.

Protecting Yourself and Others in Louisiana		
<i>Practice Social Distancing</i>	<i>Wash Your Hands, Cover Your Cough</i>	<i>Take Caution with Louisianans Who Are at Risk</i>
Even if you feel well, stay at home as much as possible. In public, keep at least six feet distance from others. Avoid unnecessary appointments.	Cover your cough and sneezes. Use your elbow or a tissue. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.	Take special caution to avoid exposing the elderly and people with underlying health conditions. Avoid visiting those most at risk, and call instead. Offer to help with groceries and other needs.

Table of Contents

The following sections contain both Department of Health guidelines and supportive guidance for keeping children and staff healthy and safe at school and in extracurricular activities.

Category	Action Item
Group Size, Spacing Requirements, and Physical Standards	Implement social and physical distancing strategies
	Change student drop-off and pick-up processes to limit contact
	Ensure that extracurricular and athletic activities follow established safety and hygiene protocols
Symptom Monitoring	Develop and communicate wellness policy for students and staff
	Screen students for sickness upon arrival
	Implement isolation measures if a student becomes sick, and follow with a cleaning and disinfecting processes
	Address vulnerable individuals
Environmental Cleaning and Personal Hygiene	Ensure healthy personal hygiene
	Intensify cleaning and disinfecting efforts
Additional Operating Considerations	Ensure safety and hygiene protocols are in place in shared communal areas
	Ensure healthy food preparation and meal service
	Ensure transportation staff are following safety and hygiene protocols

Group Size, Spacing Requirements, and Physical Standards

IMPLEMENT SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Maximum group size	10, including adults	25, including adults	50, including adults
Younger students	Maintain static groups, understanding that individuals may come into close contact and may not be wearing masks		
Older students	If students are able to maintain physical distance, the group's composition may change. Students maintain physical distance of six feet in classroom / indoor settings to the maximum extent possible.		
Physical standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Groups convene indoors in rooms enclosed by walls or partitions - High-touch surfaces (e.g., desks, doorknobs) are cleaned before and after each group's use - Groups are separated outdoors but do not require a physical barrier - Limit crowding at entry and exit points: maintain maximum group sizes and physical distance recommendations to the maximum extent possible 		

School Facility Use Considerations

- Remove unused desks and furniture in classrooms to maximize physical distance and minimize objects that must be cleaned.
- Establish distance between the teacher's desk/board and students' desks.
- Identify and utilize large spaces (e.g., gymnasiums, auditoriums, outside spaces) to enable physical distancing in Phases 2 and 3.

School Transition Considerations

- Provide additional time for transitions.

- Designate areas of the hallway (i.e., lanes) as flow paths to keep students separated to minimize congregation of students.
- Plan staggered class changes (e.g., by hall, odd/even room numbers, grade/ discipline) to decrease number of students in hallways at one time.

CHANGE STUDENT DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP PROCESSES TO LIMIT CONTACT

- Ask students to enter and exit in single-file lines to enable physical distance.
- Establish one or two entry and egress points that enable the flow of students to move in a single direction.
- Do not allow parents in the school building except under extenuating circumstances; adults entering the building should wash or sanitize hands prior to entering.
- Establish [hand hygiene](#) stations at the entrance to the facility so that students can clean their hands before they enter. If a sink with soap and water is not available, provide hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol and supervise its use.

LARGE GATHERINGS AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- Assemblies are limited to maximum group sizes and with appropriate physical distancing in place. For younger students unable to maintain physical distance, maintain static groups.
- All attendees should wear a face covering.
- Students and teachers wash hands before and after events.
- Discontinue off-site field trips.
- After-school programs may continue but must adhere to maximum group sizes and physical distance protocols. For younger students unable to maintain physical distance, maintain static groups.

ATHLETICS, BAND, AND VOCAL MUSIC

- Athletic activities are allowed to resume with the recommendations put forth in the [Louisiana High School Athletic Association's Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities](#).
- Band and vocal music may resume in Phase 3, with physical distance recommendations in effect.

Symptom Monitoring

DEVELOP AND COMMUNICATE WELLNESS POLICY FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF

School systems should develop and communicate a wellness policy for both students and staff that requires sick students and staff to stay home.

Individuals who have a fever of 100.4°F or above, or other signs of illness, should not be admitted to the facility.

- Communicate to parents the importance of keeping children home when they are sick, the steps being taken to ensure the health and safety of their children, and other important information related to limiting COVID-19 exposure.
 - See this [sample letter](#) to families. The letter to families should outline all health and safety precautions taken by your facility.

- o Another sample can be found from [Child Care Aware of America](#).

SCREEN CHILDREN FOR ILLNESS UPON ARRIVAL

Whenever possible, schools should ensure that a school nurse or health care professional is available to support screening and isolation procedures.

Individuals who have a fever of 100.4°F or above or other signs of illness must not be admitted to the facility.

- Ask the student or parent/guardian to confirm that the student has not taken fever reducing medication in the last 24 hours and does not have shortness of breath, sore throat, or a cough.
- Make a visual inspection of the child for signs of illness, particularly shortness of breath or cough.
- If a student registers a temperature of 100.4 or higher, temperature should be taken a second time 5 to 10 minutes later.

[Examples of how to conduct temperature screenings are found here.](#)

IMPLEMENT ISOLATION MEASURES IF A STUDENT BECOMES SICK, FOLLOW WITH CLEANING AND DISINFECTING PROCESSES, AND CONSULT PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS

It is important to establish a space to isolate students who become sick, and to be prepared with a cleaning and disinfecting process.

- Create an area that can be used to isolate a sick student. Ensure proper adult supervision of an isolated child as needed and based on age.
- If a sick child has been isolated in the facility, [clean and disinfect surfaces](#) in the isolation room or area after the sick child has gone home.
- In the event that a student, staff member, or visitor to the school is or is presumed to be positive for COVID-19, contact regional or local public health officials to determine any additional steps related to communication, quarantining practices, enhanced cleaning or disinfection processes, or school facility closure. State of Louisiana contact tracers will conduct contact tracing activities, including school-based contacts.

ADDRESS VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS

A key concern is whether [vulnerable individuals](#) may be at increased risk of infection and severe disease by attending school in person. There is no validated data on how much risk these individuals incur by attending school in person and individuals will need to make the decision to attend in close consultation with their health care provider.

Furthermore, OSHA statutes on employer responsibilities during a pandemic remain unclear.

School workers are defined as being at “medium risk” of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 and while schools are required to provide reasonable accommodation for a workplace safe from health threats, the definition of that accommodation in this setting has not yet been adjudicated. Schools and employees should continue to work closely with legal counsel to determine rights and responsibilities as this area becomes clearer in the months ahead.

In the event that a significant proportion of staff members are unable to return to the school facility, consider developing an [innovative staffing plan](#).

Environmental Cleaning and Personal Hygiene

ENSURE HEALTHY PERSONAL HYGIENE

- Adults and secondary students (5th grade / 10 years old), as able, should wear cloth masks to the maximum extent possible, most importantly at entry and exit, and during transitions within the school building. Individuals with severe breathing difficulties should not wear masks. Facial coverings may be homemade or disposable level one (basic) grade surgical masks. N95 respirators are not necessary.
- Students and teachers should have scheduled hand washing with soap and water or hand sanitizer every two hours as well as at the following times as found in [CDC guidance](#) including at arrival, before and after eating, before and after using outdoor play equipment, and at exit.
- Students should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer after changing any classroom; teachers in the classroom should wash their hands or use sanitizer every time a new group of students enters their room.
- Gloves are not necessary except for custodial staff or teachers cleaning their classrooms.
- Display COVID-19 [informational signs in highly visible locations](#) (e.g., school entrances, restrooms) that promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs, such as by properly washing hands and properly wearing a cloth face covering.

INTENSIFY CLEANING AND DISINFECTING EFFORTS

Evaluate school facilities to determine what kinds of surfaces and materials comprise each area. Consult the CDC for guidance on establishing cleaning and disinfecting protocol for [various surface types and materials](#). Considerations include [outdoor areas and areas unoccupied for more than 7 days](#).

Ventilation

Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example, by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms) to children using the facility.

Water Systems

To minimize the risk of Legionnaires' disease and other diseases associated with water, take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., sink faucets, drinking fountains, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown. Drinking fountains should be cleaned and sanitized. Encourage staff and students to bring their own water to minimize use and touching of water fountains or consider closing shared water fountains.

Routine Cleaning Schedule

- Frequently touched surfaces should undergo cleaning with a commercially available cleaning solution, including [EPA-approved disinfectants](#) or a dilute bleach solution, multiple times throughout the day. This includes:
 - Light switches, doors, benches, bannisters, and bathroom fixtures
 - Surfaces and objects in libraries, computer labs, and other settings where “hands-on” materials and equipment are used

- Student desks, which should be cleaned before and after each student's use
- Minimize sharing of materials between students.
- Playground equipment and athletic equipment should be cleaned daily or as necessary, depending on frequency of use.
- To protect their skin, cleaning staff should wear gloves when performing cleaning activities.

Additional Operating Considerations

ENSURE SAFETY AND HYGIENE PROTOCOLS ARE ESTABLISHED FOR SHARED COMMUNAL SPACES

- Limit use of indoor shared spaces, such as cafeterias and gymnasiums, to maximum group sizes, ensure physical distance and mask use, and [clean](#) between each group's use.
- Close shared water fountains.
- Install protective barriers in shared areas, such as front office, reception areas, libraries.

ENSURE HEALTHY FOOD PREPARATION AND MEAL SERVICE

- Students, teachers, and cafeteria staff wash hands before and after every meal.
- If possible, classrooms should be utilized for eating in place.
- Students may bring food from home.
- School-supplied meals should be delivered to classrooms with disposable utensils.
- If cafeterias must be used, stagger meal times for each group, adhere to maximum group size, and ensure six feet of distance between students to the maximum extent possible. Disposable utensils should be used.
- Mark spaced lines to enter the cafeteria and serving lines; designate entrances and exit flow paths; ensure single-file lines for food lines and disposal.
- Utilize outdoor seating as practical and appropriate.

Food and Nutrition staff should:

- [Clean](#) frequently touched surfaces such as kitchen countertops, cafeteria and service tables, door handles, carts, and trays, throughout the day. Follow the directions on the cleaning product's label and clean hands afterwards.
- Practice proper [hand hygiene](#). This is an important infection control measure. With appropriate hand hygiene, gloves are not necessary for workers who are not involved in food preparation. Wash hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. An alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60 percent alcohol can be used, but not as a substitute for cleaning hands with soap and water.

ENSURE TRANSPORTATION STAFF FOLLOW SAFETY AND HYGIENE PROTOCOLS

The risks associated with student transportation in buses have not been studied to date. As a result, these recommendations are derived from school operating procedures and the best “reasonable standard” given feasibility constraints.

Seating and Social Distancing

Buses should operate at 25 percent of their normal capacity in Phase 1, 50 percent of their normal capacity during Phase 2, and 75 percent of their normal capacity during Phase 3, with spacing between passengers according to capacity.

- Members of the same household may sit in the same seat or adjacent seats with one empty seat between household groups

Symptom Monitoring and Personal Hygiene

- All passengers should engage in [hand hygiene](#) upon entering the bus. Hand sanitizer should not exceed 80 percent alcohol concentration and containers should be securely closed, secured against shifting, and protected from damage.
- Facial coverings should be worn by all staff and students at all times.
- For bus stops, consider developing a communication plan to encourage parents and students to maintain social distance at bus stops and to avoid congregating in groups while waiting for the bus.

Operational Standards

- Windows should be open at all times to facilitate air flow.
- Stagger unloading of buses at school to minimize student group size as they enter school and to allow six feet of distance while entering.
- Clean high-touch surfaces, including seats and handrails, after each group’s use. The bus should be cleaned at least once per day. Additional cleaning and disinfection guidance is available [here](#).

Transportation Standards for Students with Special Needs

If a school system provides transportation for medically fragile children, consider reserving specific seats for these children. These seats would not be used for other student during the day, with special precautions for disinfecting. Alternately, arrange for separate transportation for that student.