



THE COUNTY OF CHESTER



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Dear Chester County and Delaware County Superintendents,

The Chester County Health Department recognizes and supports the urgent need to reopen schools as in-person learning is vital for our children in all grade levels. Because of the layered mitigation measures you have successfully implemented, we support schools increasing more in-person learning through reduced physical distancing. Specifically, **when certain Community Transmission Levels are met and layered mitigation strategies are continued**, schools are encouraged to **reduce physical distancing as out lined below**.

This change is further supported and closely aligns with the CDC's recently released "Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation". Please note, CDC's strategy clearly states that access to vaccination should not be considered a condition for reopening schools for in-person instruction.

Healthy and Safety Plan

School districts are encouraged to update their Health and Safety Plan to align with the Health Department's updated guidance. The Health Department would be pleased to review updated Health and Safety Plans, although this is not a requirement.

Instructional Models

School Superintendents and their governing body are the responsible parties for determining the instructional model that best fits the needs of their community. The Health Department guidance should be used to help guide school districts in how to safely return students and teachers to in-person learning. The Health Department will not determine how schools should be providing education. Instead, the Health Department will provide suggestions on what mitigation measures will keep schools open. Schools are encouraged to continue to engage families to ensure changes in instructional models do not negatively impact families. Schools are also strongly encouraged to be as creative as possible in ensuring the individual educational needs of students are being met leading to the best possible educational outcomes.

Community Transmission and Physical Distancing

The risk of COVID-19 transmission will continue to be defined by the 7-day incidence rate per 100,000 and 7-day percent positivity. The transmission levels will be as follows and incorporates the physical distancing guidance:

"Protecting You and Your Environment"

County Community Transmission Level	7-Day Incidence Rate per 100,000	7-Day Percent Positivity	Physical Distancing*
Low	<10	<5.0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 feet to the greatest extent possible is recommended for students; at no time is less than 3 feet permitted
Moderate	10 - 49	5.0% - 7.9%	
High	50 - 99	8.0% - 9.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 feet is required for staff (staff-to-staff and staff-to-student interactions)
Very High	≥100	≥10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 feet is strongly recommended for students 6 feet is required for staff (staff-to-staff and staff-to-student interactions)

*Physical distancing assumes school district is implementing COVID screening testing. Transient interactions of less than 3 feet, such as passing in the hallway, handing in papers to the teacher, etc. are unavoidable.

If the County’s Community Transmission Level changes to a lower or higher level for three (3) consecutive weeks, schools are encouraged to reassess their instructional model and adjust if necessary.

Layered Mitigation Measures

All existing layered mitigation measures remain in effect. The following mitigation measures will be added:

- engage with families to ensure such a change does not negatively impact families (i.e., more families choose to remain remote with less than six feet),
- implement a COVID screening testing plan that has been reviewed by the Health Department; educate and promote participation in the screening testing,
- educate and promote vaccination as an extra layer of safety for individuals and the school community overall, and
- ensure learning options remain in place for families who choose not to return to in-person learning with less than 6 feet physical distancing.

The Health Department’s [Pre-K – 12 Grade Health and Safety Plan Guidance](#) will be updated the week of February 22, 2020. This memo outlines the changes that will be made to the Guidance. School Districts may adopt these updates based on this memo and do not need to wait for the formal release of the Guidance document.

The Health Department will continue to monitor data, to include in-school transmission, to assess if the alternative physical distance negatively affects the health and safety of staff and students. Additionally, the Health Department will remain abreast of the evolving COVID-19 variants to assess any needs for revisions to the guidance. If school guidance requires further modification, Superintendents will be notified.

I continue to appreciate and value the opportunity to work closely with each of you. Thank you for all you and your staff, particularly your school nurses and pandemic team members, continue to do as we push through this pandemic together.

Stay healthy,

Jeanne E. Franklin

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Public Health Director