

# **Safe Return**

## **TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION AND CONTINUITY OF SERVICES PLAN**



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# Introduction

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plans (ARP) Act was signed into law. In it, the U.S. Department of Education is providing an additional \$121.9 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER III Fund). This legislation will award grants to state educational agencies (SEAs) for providing local educational agencies (LEAs) with emergency relief funds to address the impact that COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools across the nation.

South Carolina will receive \$2,112,051,487 in ESSER III funds from the Act, with 90 percent being awarded to school districts with amounts determined in proportion to the amount of Title I, Part A funds they received in summer 2020 from funds under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The remaining funds will be used for state-level activities to address issues caused by COVID-19. Charleston County School District's ESSER III allocation is \$163,114,048 for the three-year period through September 2024.

This plan describes how Charleston County School District will provide the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services for all schools, including those that have already returned to in person instruction. This report template complies with all reporting requirements of the ARP Act (Public Law 117-2), the ESSER III grant terms, conditions, and assurances (CFDA Number 84.425U), and the interim final rule established by the United States Department of Education, 86 FR 21195.

## Maintaining Health and Safety

### Description of maintaining health and safety

Charleston County School District will provide in-person instruction in all schools, five days a week, for all students. Charleston County School District places health and safety as a top priority following recommendations of state and local health experts. We will remain flexible, and as health and medical conditions or state or federal mandates change, CCSD will adjust accordingly.

The plan is grounded in two basic principles:

- 1) Students' academic, social, and emotional needs can best be met if students are in school.
- 2) Students' and staff's health and safety must be a top priority.

The District established an extensive list of practices and safety protocols for in-person instruction during the 2021-22 school year, and the following will be continued in the 2022-23 school year. Those practices/protocols include:

- Classroom spacing for student workspaces
- Enhanced campus and classroom sanitization
- Posters encouraging hand-washing, distancing and proper sanitization
- Upgraded air filtration equipment
- Water bottle filling stations
- Hand sanitizer dispensers throughout schools

- Consistent communication with state health experts (DHEC) and local health experts (MUSC)
- School visitors may be limited, and movement about the building may be restricted depending on current health conditions.

## **Policies or Practices Regarding CDC Recommendations**

### **Wearing of masks**

Effective with the date of this publication, the CCSD Board of Trustees does not require face masks in CCSD except for situations related to COVID-positive cases which are covered in other sections of this document. By policy, the District and Board monitor COVID metrics for recent disease activity and may make changes to the face mask policy based on the latest data. The face mask policy will be widely publicized for students, staff, and parents in advance of any changes which would require masks. The Board may also make changes to policies which would update protocols in response to epidemic or pandemic conditions.

The Board and District will review community COVID data as reported by SCDHEC and the Centers for Disease Control. Both organizations make recommendations based on the community level of COVID spread (Low, Medium, or High), with the recommendation to wear masks when the community level is High.

### **Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing**

Classrooms will be designed to allow spacing of student workspaces to the extent possible.

### **Handwashing and respiratory etiquette**

Wall-mounted, free-standing, or bottles hand sanitizer dispensers have been installed or are available in locations throughout all CCSD schools. A bulk supply of hand sanitizer for distribution will be available in all schools for refilling classroom handheld containers. Schools will encourage personal hygiene practices including proper hand-washing among students.

### **Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation**

CCSD has upgraded air handling equipment aligned with industry standards to include: grooming HVAC equipment and controls to ensure increased fresh air supply, upgraded air filtration systems, and extended run times to increase fresh air supply. All school nurses' clinics have HEPA/UV air scrubbers.

CCSD will take extra steps to ensure that all school facilities are providing safe and healthy learning environments, with protocols and actions that include:

- Disinfecting bathrooms and high-touch common surfaces (light switches, door knobs, push bars, and vending machines).
- All restroom supplies will be checked and restocked multiple times each day.

- Fogging classroom areas with disinfectant equipment when a positive case has been identified.
- Custodians manning both the school-day and evening shifts have been trained and will follow specific, printed protocols for cleaning and sanitizing.
- All classrooms have been provided spray bottles of approved cleaner/sanitizer and paper towels so that they may do additional sanitizing of surfaces if they wish to do so.

## **COVID Positive cases**

### **Positive Case Protocol**

- Positive cases will continue to isolate at home for 5 days from onset of symptoms or 5 days from test if asymptomatic.
- Positive cases must wear a mask on days 6-10 to return to school.
- Positive cases may choose to re-test on day 6 and again on day 8- if both tests are negative then they no longer need to wear the mask on days 8-10 and may return to school.
- Principals will continue to send classroom notification letters by email to parents for each individual positive case.
- CCSD will provide each school's weekly totals and year-to-date totals.

### **Outbreak Protocol**

CCSD will follow CDC Guidelines and DHEC "School and Childcare Exclusion List" guidance for COVID-19:

- Principals will send the outbreak notification letter (by email) when a class or group has 20% positive cases in a 72 hr period.
- Parents will then have the option to continue to send their child to school or to keep them home the 5 days of quarantine.
- If staying home they will notify the teacher for assignments.
- Close contacts that remain asymptomatic will not be required to wear a mask through day 10.
- Masks will be readily available for anyone that wants to wear one.
- Facilities will be notified to fog affected areas that night.
- Nursing Services will notify DHEC per DHEC Exclusion List requirements.

### **Student absences related to COVID**

Each day, teachers will continue to record attendance. A student could be recorded as present if the student is participating in instruction in a classroom or at home that day. If not physically at a school building, students who submit assignments or participate in assigned learning experiences by the deadline established by classroom policy should be considered present.

The district will make appropriate accommodations for students who may be required to quarantine or self-isolate as a result of COVID by offering at home instruction. As long as isolated/quarantined students are able to participate in instruction as described above, they will be counted as present.

### **Employee absences related to COVID**

Employee absences related to COVID reported and validated by CCSD Nursing Services and Human Resources.

### **Symptoms**

People with COVID have had a wide range of reported symptoms – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to SARS-CoV-2. Individuals may initially test negative for covid when symptoms are just beginning. If symptoms persist, isolate and retest the next day. Symptoms can include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea

Additional possible symptoms of COVID-19 include persistent or worsening sore throat, muscle or body aches, fatigue, new onset of severe headache, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea. Although not requiring COVID-19 exclusion, recommending testing in children or staff may be indicated for those presenting with these symptoms. This list does not include all possible symptoms. Individuals may experience any, all, or none of these symptoms.

### **Guidance when symptoms are seen**

Automatic exclusion and evaluation for COVID:

- Students and staff should be excluded from school if they have:
- Any of the following with or without fever:
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing -or -
- Loss of taste or smell -or –
- New or worsening cough
- If these symptoms are explainable by an underlying condition (such as shortness of breath for an individual with asthma) exclusion may not be necessary.

Isolate students or staff with symptoms of COVID identified during the school day:

- Students and staff should be moved safely and respectfully to the isolation room for evaluation. The individual should be provided a mask if they are able to use one, and students should be supervised by a school nurse using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

### **Criteria for return to school or work**

The following was taken from the most recent DHEC Exclusion List and can be updated to reflect the changes in the guidance and information from DHEC.

#### **Criteria for return to school or work after COVID positive:**

After testing positive for COVID, the criteria for return is:

- At least 5 days since symptom(s) started AND
- 24 hours since the last fever without fever-reducing medication AND
- Symptoms are significantly improving AND

- A mask must be worn days 6-10. If a mask is not worn, at 10-day isolation must be observed.
- If either test on day six or eight is positive, the mask must be worn through day 10 and no further testing is recommended.
- If a mask is not worn as instructed above, a 10-day isolation must be observed.

## **Diagnostic and screening testing**

Parents and staff are encouraged to pick up Covid iHealth At Home Test kits at their child's schools. The At Home Test Kit should be used prior to coming to school if the student or staff member becomes symptomatic. Parents will be required to complete a form notifying the school of the result of the home test. The iHealth test kit expiration date has been extended by the FDA until January 29, 2024. CCSD also offers COVID-19 testing at school for symptomatic students and staff. Binax Now Rapid Antigen Testing (nasal swab with results in 15 minutes) is offered with no out-of-pocket expense. The DHEC third party vendor testing sites will not be available until September 2023.

Testing is no longer required prior to overnight field trips.

## **Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students**

In Spring 2021, CCSD offered two rounds of Pfizer vaccines to all employees in collaboration with MUSC. Additionally, several schools worked with Fetter Health Services and other providers for COVID-19 vaccinations. Each of the District's high schools offered COVID-19 vaccinations on site for eligible students (and staff) with parental permission. In May and June, vaccination clinics for students 12 and up were offered in middle schools across the district. Students ages 5-11 were offered vaccinations from November 2021 through January 2022 at after hours locations with parents/guardians present. August 2023 Booster shots will be available for eligible staff members from local pharmacies.

CCSD will continue to work with medical partners during the 2022-23 school year to offer vaccinations to students and staff as conditions require. Children should see their pediatrician for vaccinations and well check ups.

People are considered fully vaccinated for COVID when at least two (2) weeks have passed after they have received the second dose in a two-dose series (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna), or at least two weeks after they have received a single-dose vaccine (Johnson&Johnson)

Fully vaccinated people can refrain from quarantine and testing following a known exposure if they are asymptomatic.

Fully vaccinated people should continue to:

- Take precautions in public like wearing a well-fitted mask and physical distancing
- Wear masks, practice physical distancing, and adhere to other prevention measures when visiting with unvaccinated people who are at increased risk for severe COVID disease or who have an unvaccinated household member who is at increased risk for severe COVID disease
- Wear masks, maintain physical distance, and practice other prevention measures when visiting with unvaccinated people from multiple households
- Avoid medium- and large-sized in-person gatherings
- Get tested if experiencing COVID symptoms
- Follow guidance issued by the district contact tracers

## **Notification protocol for positive COVID cases at school**

CCSD maintains a positive COVID case dashboard on the district's website showing the cases by weekly total and a year-to-date total.

Dependent on the findings, we will implement the following types of notification:

- **Classroom Notification for Early Childhood, Primary, and Elementary Grade Classrooms:** For students in schools with elementary grades (including early childhood and primary), schools will notify parents/guardians by email if a positive COVID-19 case has been reported in their child's classroom. The notification will be done immediately following the identification of a COVID-positive case and close contacts. The notification will be done by email only. Teachers will be notified when there is a positive case in their classroom, but names will not be used.
- **Classroom Notification for Middle and High School Grade Classrooms:** For students in schools with middle school grades, schools will notify parents/guardians by email if a positive COVID case is reported in one of their classes or on one of their teams. The message will not identify the name of the class. The notification will be done immediately following the identification of a COVID-positive case and close contacts. The notification will be done by email only. Teachers will be notified when there is a positive case in their classroom, but names will not be used.
- **School-Level and Broad Notification:** When it is determined, in consultation with DHEC and/or health agency officials, that a school, group, team, etc. requires a special notification beyond the direct notification for close contact, the district and/or school will utilize phone calls, emails, or written notification to parents as appropriate and necessary.
- **School and District Dashboard:** CCSD will provide data showing the rolling number of COVID-19 positive cases (students and adults) on a school-by-school basis. This dashboard will be housed on the CCSD website and will provide the CCSD community a transparent view of the condition of each school relative to COVID.

## **Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies and practices**

Teachers and service providers will continue to provide specially designed instruction and/or related services outlined in a student's current IEP or 504 Accommodations Plan. If adjustments need to be made given the instructional model in place for the student, IEP teams and 504 committees will convene to consider any amendments to special education goals, services, and accommodations to best meet the needs of the student considering any health and safety procedures and the instructional setting.

## **Coordination with state and local health officials**

CCSD has a close working relationship with our local health care providers, especially with the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC,) whose staff members have advised the District staff on all facets of the return to in-person instruction. Additionally, CCSD works in tandem with SC DHEC staff to ensure that our health protocols are consistent with directives and best practices. CCSD will be guided by the latest health and safety conditions in all facets of the Safe Return. Working closely with state health agencies and local health experts, CCSD will exhaust our efforts to provide safe and healthy learning environments



for students and staff. Flexibility and adaptability are keys to the success, and we will make changes in the operating modes and protocols as needed in consultation with health experts.

## **Continuity of Services**

### **Academics**

CCSD is a 1:1 device district in elementary, middle, and high grades. The district has a streamlined access delivery point for student learning in order to easily transition between learning models--in-class, at home, virtual, and/or blended. Offering a safe, secure, online learning environment through its dedicated learning management system (LMS), Canvas, the district is able to better meet the identified needs of stakeholders and maintain learning continuity, in the event of any weather disruption or other unforeseen circumstance that would warrant temporary or long term school closure.

The district has an IT department dedicated to infrastructure needs and technical/hardware support as well as a Canvas administrator dedicated to digital learning support. Moreover, the district has assembled a cross sectional team (IT, Operations, Assessment and Evaluation, Student Information, Instructional Programs, and Pupil Accounting) to improve digital ecosystem processes for smoother implementation as well as high priority troubleshooting related to access of digital learning resources for teachers and students.

The district's move to a common LMS has been positive in several ways, including a consistent access point to learning for students and families, sharing resources across the district and supporting teachers with professional development and instructional resources. Additionally, the more frequent use of virtual conferencing tools (like Zoom, Google Meet, WebEx) has made collaboration across a large district more conducive and consistent, allowing for better communication and more aligned expectations and outcomes in teaching and learning.

Over the last year, the district assembled a centralized taskforce to monitor student engagement in learning and implemented surveys to collect information, input, and feedback that have been sent out through our district call-out and student information management system. The district has a Safe Restart landing page that provides updates and sends out important information through schools as well as district call out and email systems.

### **Virtual Learning**

Beginning in the 2021-2022 school year, CCSD partnered with Low Country Virtual to offer a full-time online learning environment for K-8 students. Low Country Virtual provides a South Carolina standards-aligned instructional program in which students take courses in English language arts, math, science, and social studies as well as electives via a high quality curriculum taught by certified teachers. Students remain enrolled in their zoned school and are eligible for participation in extracurricular activities and events. Families interested in a full-time, online program apply in March.

### **CCSD Online Program**

CCSD Online program offers eligible 8-12<sup>th</sup> grade students with a variety of rigorous courses for high school and college credit through a virtual environment. In addition to their regularly scheduled courses, students may enroll in online courses if it is a course of interest, their school does not offer the course, they have scheduling conflicts, or if a 9-12 students who needs full-time virtual learning. High school counselors work with students to enroll them in appropriate virtual courses.

## **Professional Development and Staff Resources**

CCSD has made a concerted effort to enhance cultural competency through professional development and training for all staff. Training in trauma-informed best practices is an area of focus for our schools to ensure awareness and skills for managing stress-induced behaviors. Listening circles, calming rooms, and an Employee Assistance Service (MYgroup) are facilitated throughout the district in order to provide all staff with forums for sharing and healing, as well as resources for coping with stress and trauma.

## **Social, Emotional, Mental Health**

Access to mental health services for students has increased in CCSD with additional personnel allocations, community partnerships and grant awards. Every student is taught healthy social emotional habits and strategies through one or more of the following: Second Step, Restorative Circles, or Advisory lessons. The district and each school proactively identify and provide tiered supports for students struggling socially, emotionally, or academically through its implementation of a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS).

## **Tutoring**

CCSD provides high dosage tutoring opportunities in both face-to-face and virtual modalities. Additional resources have been allocated to schools to support additional tutoring options both inside and outside of the regular school day.

## **Summer Enrichment Options**

The district continues to provide summer enrichment programs (for academic and engagement support) and credit recovery options for over 3000 students to assist in alleviating learning lag resulting from the impact of the pandemic.

## **Student and Family Resources**

Some of the student and family resources that have been developed to support virtual learning as well as in-person learning using technology enhanced instruction can be found below:

[Canvas Student and Parent Support](#)

[Getting Started as a Student](#)

[Canvas Overview for Students \[video\]](#)

[Family \(Parent and Student\) Remote Learning Support bit.ly/canvas4families](https://bit.ly/canvas4families)

The consistent use of the LMS provides a platform for educators in our district to collaborate in professional learning communities (PLCs), deliver and participate in professional development and give and receive support for teaching and learning. The Canvas platform provides access and delivery to a wide range of common resources—including digital instructional content, a global library of lessons, modules, courses, and activities—all accessible with one login. Use of adaptive digital content resources is now streamlined and specific to content areas and grade levels to allow for more valid progress monitoring across the system. Teachers are able to log in to adaptive digital content platforms and monitor both usage and progress.

Teachers can select professional development sessions focused on cultural competency, curriculum, MTSS, and other district priorities through Frontline. Additionally, Learning Services provides digital/eLearning resources for teachers such as through the main Seek Assistance site, Digital/eLearning Teacher PD resources webpage, and district teacher/employee device & account troubleshooting help.

CCSD is working on system process improvements, including providing even more consistent and accessible district-wide communications; improved curricula aligned to state standards; increased and uninterrupted Internet access; developing school leaders to maximize the professional learning (PLC) for continuous improvement; partnering with community-based organizations for student and family supports; and streamlining assessments and reporting tools to focus on continuous improvement. The district is also working with the SCDE on phasing in the learning object repository (Safari Montage), so that teachers have access to a repository of organized, differentiated, and vetted standards-based lessons, resources, and tools.

## **Multilingual Learners**

CCSD continues to enhance awareness and access for its multilingual learners and their families to academic and social emotional learning services and resources. The district has implemented its CCSD Language Access Portal to assist schools and departments in obtaining interpretation (oral or American Sign Language) and/or translation (written) services as well as to track translation and/or interpretation services that the school is able to process without requiring additional assistance. Moreover, bilingual support staff have been allocated to schools and to the district's parent engagement team in order to assist in reducing culture and language barriers and improving outreach efforts for engaging families and the community in the school.

Additionally, the district plans to launch a Newcomer's Program to support high school students in learning English quickly; provide financial support and opportunities for teachers to earn their ESOL endorsement; and create a welcoming center to support families transitioning into the community.

## **IEP and 504 Services**

In anticipation of possible modified school operations during a school year, the Department of Exceptional Children (DEC), in collaboration with the Office of Special Education Services within the South Carolina Department of Education, developed guidance intended to ensure that CCSD schools are prepared to serve students with disabilities during the school year if in-person instruction is not possible. CCSD supports students with disabilities (student has an IEP or 504 Plan) with appropriate instructional delivery methods to meet the student's needs. Determinations of accommodations and/or modifications (as applicable) are based on a student's annual IEP or 504 meeting, including how accommodations will

be addressed. Such meetings also facilitate the development of Contingency Learning Plans (CLPs) to ensure continuity of services for students when transitions in learning modes may be necessary.

## **Nutrition Services**

CCSD school cafeteria staff follow DHEC standards. As a standard operating procedure, gloves will be worn with no bare hand contact with food. Hand washing protocol, as always, will be strictly enforced. All surfaces will be cleaned and sanitized with appropriate chemicals according to instructions on a regular and on-going schedule. Meals will be provided as usual, but schools may use the “grab and go” model to avoid large gatherings in the school cafeteria, depending on conditions.

Free and Reduced applications must be submitted for students in order to qualify for free or reduced price meals, using the application at [ccsdschoolmeals.com](https://ccsdschoolmeals.com). Applications can be submitted for the 2022-23 school year beginning July 1, 2022. Pricing for students who do not qualify for Free or Reduced meals can be found at [ccsdschoolmeals.com](https://ccsdschoolmeals.com). Schools designated as Community Eligibility Provision schools, where all students qualify for free meals, are listed at [ccsdschoolmeals.com](https://ccsdschoolmeals.com).

## **Periodic Review**

CCSD will conduct reviews of the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan at least every six months through September 2023, ensuring the opportunity for public input into decision making about plan revisions.

## **Public Input**

The District engaged stakeholders in developing the plan for the 2022-23 school year through survey feedback. The “Safe Return” plan is publicly available on the CCSD website and will be reviewed every six months through September 2023.

The CCSD plan is posted online at [www.ccsdschools.com](https://www.ccsdschools.com). The plan is available in multiple languages through the translation feature on the District website. Parents and employees were made aware of the plan by email and phone call through the District messaging system, and a Google form was designed to allow for parent and employee comments. Similar feedback loops will be established for upcoming review cycles of the Safe Return plan.