

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. Fewer than 5% of students enrolled in CCSD's virtual school offering for the 2021-22 school year. Charleston County School District is committed to the safe return of students and staff to school this fall, and we place 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 2020-21 school year, and the following will be continued in the 2021-22 school year. Those practices/protocols include:

- Classroom spacing for student workspaces
- Enhanced campus and classroom sanitization
- Limitations on visitors to schools and facilities
- Posters throughout the buildings to encourage hand-washing, distancing and proper sanitization
- Upgraded air filtration equipment

- Water bottle filling stations
- Hand sanitizer dispensers throughout schools
- Consistent close contact with state health experts (DHEC) and local health experts (MUSC)
- Visitors to schools will be limited, and movement about the building may be restricted depending on current health conditions.

Policies or Practices Regarding CDC Recommendations

Universal and correct wearing of masks

The CCSD Board of Trustees’ decision regarding face masks is consistent with CCSD Policy ADD (Face Coverings) which states that face masks can be required when DHEC’s two-week COVID metrics are rated “Medium” or “High” based on recent disease activity in the county and in schools. Ratings are monitored weekly, and the Board’s mask requirement and enforcement can be reinstated based on COVID transmission rates in the county or in schools. Masks continue to be required on all school buses, consistent with the CDC Federal Order under the Public Health Service Act.

Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing

Classrooms will be designed to allow spacing of student workspaces that are 3 feet apart or greater to the extent possible. Plexiglass dividers, used extensively during the 2020-21 school year, are available for spaces where that distancing is not 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) twice each day.
- All restroom supplies will be checked and restocked multiple times each day.

- Fogging the entire building with disinfectant equipment at least one time a week (or 20% of the building each week night).
- Disinfecting playground equipment high touch surfaces and room horizontal surfaces once per day.
- 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

Protocols are in-place for notification and prompt contact tracing of COVID positive cases to determine necessary quarantining and facility cleaning.

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 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 will be charged to their available accrued sick leave, according to policy GCC/GCD. District administration will provide further information by August 31.

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. 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

This list does not include all possible symptoms and children and youth with SARS-CoV-2 infection 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).

Return to school for students and staff

The following was taken from DHEC guidance published on December 31, 2021.

Criteria for return to school or work after COVID positive:

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

- Quarantine for at least 5 days since symptoms started
- Masks must be worn days 5-10 days
- Asymptomatic students or staff with a positive viral test are required to be excluded from school until 5 days after specimen collection.
- Documentation for Return: at least 5 days after the start of symptoms and parent's note that symptoms have improved and there has been no fever in the past 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication

Criteria for return to school or work after being identified as a Close Contact:

There are three options for the quarantine period that schools may choose to apply as long as all conditions listed below are met.

1. Quarantine can end after Day 10 without testing and if no symptoms were reported during daily symptom monitoring.
2. Quarantine can end after Day 7 if a viral test is negative AND if no symptoms were reported during daily symptom monitoring.
 - a. The viral test must be collected no sooner than Day 5, but quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than completion of Day 7.
 - b. Viral tests include those collected by a swab of the nose or throat (PCR or antigen tests). Blood tests for antibodies may not be used to shorten quarantine.
 - c. A mask must be worn through day 10.
3. Quarantine can end after Day 5 if a viral test is negative AND if no symptoms were reported during daily symptom monitoring.

- a. The viral test must be collected no sooner than Day 4, and quarantine cannot be discontinued earlier than completion of Day 5.
- b. A mask must be worn through day 10.

If a close contact has received all of the vaccine doses they're eligible for (completed initial vaccination series and booster for those eligible by age and time since initial series- see CDC [website](#) for most up-to-date information on booster eligibility) or are verified (positive PCR or antigen test, not antibody test) to have been infected with COVID-19 in the previous 90 days, they do not have to quarantine for any length of time. DHEC recommends they get tested on Day 5 even if they do not have symptoms, and they must wear a mask for 10 days.

Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine

CCSD Nursing Services is responsible for contact tracing associated with positive COVID-19 cases. Protocols are in place for prompt notification of individuals and parents after determination of close contacts. Symptomatic persons may be tested with parental consent at the school and are isolated in a dedicated space until they can leave school. The follow-up isolation and quarantine periods are enforced consistently in alignment with DHEC recommendations. Persons who are fully vaccinated are not required to quarantine if they remain asymptomatic and provide proof of COVID vaccination. In addition to the prompt notification of close contacts, parents of other students in the room are also notified that a positive case was identified in their child's classroom (without information that would identify the positive person). The entire classroom will be quarantined if there are three or more positive cases within a 14-day period.

Close Contact Guidance:

Close contact is defined as having direct contact with a confirmed positive case within 3 feet or less for 15 minutes or more for students K-12, and within 6 feet or less for 15 minutes or more for adults over a 24 hour period.

The following will apply to close contact and quarantine determinations:

- A close contact student must be wearing a mask within 3-6 feet of a positive student to avoid quarantine.
- If both of the involved students were not wearing a mask then they must be at least 6 feet apart to avoid quarantine
- Adults (teachers and staff) must be at least 6 feet apart to avoid quarantine (mask or no mask)
- If the teacher is positive then all distances must be 6 feet or more to avoid quarantine (mask or no mask).
- A positive antibody test does not release a close contact from quarantine per DHEC.

Diagnostic and screening testing

CCSD 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. CCSD also offers both rapid and PCR testing for staff and students through a DHEC third party vendor. Testing details including dates, times and locations can be found at: <https://www.ccsdschools.com/domain/4116>

PCR testing for students and chaperones is required for 72 hours in advance of all overnight school trips. Those fully vaccinated with proof and those who have been COVID-19 positive within 90 days are exempt. Positive antibody tests are not accepted for field trip clearance.

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. Currently, students ages 5-11 are eligible for vaccinations, and the District began offering regional clinics for first shots on November 15 to run through the second shots in early 2022.

CCSD will continue to work with medical partners during the 2021-22 school year to offer vaccinations to students and staff as eligibility changes and conditions require.

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, updated each school day during the school year, showing the running daily cases weekly total, two-week total, and a year-to-date total.

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

- **Direct Notification for "Close Contact"**: Anyone who has been in "close contact" with the COVID positive individual during the time he/she was contagious must be excluded from school for 14 days after last contact. The parents of any student who is determined to have had "close contact" with a COVID positive individual will be notified directly (same day) by school personnel through a phone call and an email from the school.

- **“Not Close Contact”:** Individuals in the school who are determined to NOT have been in close contact with a COVID positive person will NOT be notified individually unless it is determined to be necessary in consultation with DHEC.
- **Additional 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.
- **Additional 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 updated daily 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

A well-established digital learning environment systemically exists within CCSD, consisting of the following:

- a common Learning Management System (LMS) used with fidelity
- adequate technical and instructional support for teachers and students
- 1:1 hardware distribution
- adequate infrastructure to support current and near future device and software and systems requirements.

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 an Innovation and Digital Learning department dedicated to digital learning support. Moreover, the district has assembled a cross sectional team (IT, Operations, Assessment and Evaluation, Student Information, Instruction and Digital Learning, 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.

Professional Development

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 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 focused. These services continue whether in-person or virtual instruction is taking place. 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 is planning additional access for identified students to high dosage tutoring opportunities in both face-to-face and virtual modalities. Additional resources have been allocated to support these initiatives occurring both inside and outside of the regular school day. The district held its largest summer enrichment program (for academic and engagement support) with over 3000 identified and confirmed students attending in order 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. 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.

The district is continuing to improve services to students, families, teachers, and its building leaders. As such, CCSD is in the process of phasing in a data analytics platform for data management and analysis, to streamline consistent progress monitoring of various data sources. Moreover, the district utilizes a connective in-house data warehouse and reporting system, Data Central, managed through the Assessment and Evaluation Office to provide common resources, access to student engagement and academic data, as well as other data sources. CCSD is working on system process improvements, including providing even more consistent and accessible district-wide communications, increased and uninterrupted Internet access (mifis, additional towers, improved services through district and service

provider partnerships, etc...), strengthening outreach to the communities, and delivering ongoing and job-embedded professional development for teachers and leaders in best practices in instruction for online and blended learning environments as well as ways to maximize use of instructional, assessment, and reporting tools for continuous improvement in teaching and learning. 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. Its implementation will assist the district in determining ways to better serve the needs of students and their families. 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.

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 regardless of instructional model (in-person, alternating schedule, emergency remote instruction, temporary remote instruction, or virtual academy). 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 will follow DHEC standards and COVID19 protocol. 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. Masks are strongly encouraged. 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. All schools will provide free meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks) to all students during the 2021-22 school year.

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 2021-22 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. 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.