Public Health Considerations for Reopening Schools

Dr. David Stegall, Deputy Superintendent of Innovation, NCDPI
Dr. Beverly Emory, Deputy Superintendent of District Support, NCDPI
Susan Gale Perry, Chief Deputy Secretary, NCDHHS
May 14, 2020
SCHOOLS REOPENING FRAMEWORK

SCHOOLS REOPENING TASK FORCE

Governor’s Office
North Carolina General Assembly
North Carolina State Board of Education

DHHS
Governor’s Education & Nutrition Work Group

NCDPI
Work Group Leads

Stakeholder Feedback Loop

Remediation
Support & Summer Jump Start

Instructional Planning & Scheduling

Operations: Facilities, School Nutrition & Transportation

Policy, Legislation & Funding

Student Health, Safety & Emotional Needs

Employee Health & Safety

COMMUNICATIONS

Draft for Discussion Purposes - Preliminary and Pre-decisional
Background

• Many states have set up school reopening task forces, but few have developed clear guidance at this time

• DHHS vetting preliminary health guidance options with education leaders for school reopening – areas under review:
  o Social distancing
  o Cleaning/hygiene
  o Monitoring health of students and staff
  o Protecting high-risk populations
  o Educating students and staff

• Developing options for how to logistically achieve health guidance and determining potential resource needs
Approach 1: Increase social distancing

**Example Strategies:**

- **Structural/physical space modifications**
  - Waiting areas have 6’ space markings
  - Reconfigure desks so children are seated 6’ apart
- **Density limiting actions**
  - Stagger school hours or alternate days/weeks when students are in school
  - Reduce class size
- **Minimize opportunities for sustained exposure**
  - Limit group activities
  - Take meals back from cafeteria to classroom
  - Stagger recess
  - Arrival/dismissal directly to bus/car
Approach 2: Implement hygiene protocols

Example Strategies:

• Disinfect surfaces and common spaces
  • Frequent cleaning for high-touch areas
  • Minimize use of shared supplies
  • Ensure ventilation systems work properly
  • Ensure water systems are safe to use after extended closure

• Implement systematic hygiene routines
  • Provide hand sanitizer at every entrance, exit, classroom
  • Ensure frequent refilling of hand sanitizer, soap, paper towels
  • Incorporate bathroom breaks and handwashing breaks

• Cloth face covering recommendations for staff and students, as appropriate
Approach 3: Monitor Staff and Student Health

**Example Strategies:**

- Establish/enforce sick policy to support disease suppression
  - Instruct staff/students to stay home if sick
  - Have a plan for immediate removal of sick individual
- Implement systematic symptom screening
  - Daily symptom screening for everyone at school entrance
  - School nurses/health personnel providing direct care should wear appropriate PPE
- Provide resilience and support services
  - Ensure access to mental/behavioral health resources
  - Ensure access to school nurse services
- Protect high-risk populations
  - Accommodations for high-risk staff for COVID-19
  - Update care plans for children with special health care needs
Approach 4: Provide Education

**Example Strategies:**

- Proactive information dissemination and combating misinformation
  - Communicate to families about COVID-19 symptoms in preparation for school reopening (e.g., stay home if sick)
  - Post signage and messaging to remind students/staff about physical distancing
  - Provide education and training on COVID-19 strategies for school staff