

Public Health Considerations for Reopening Schools

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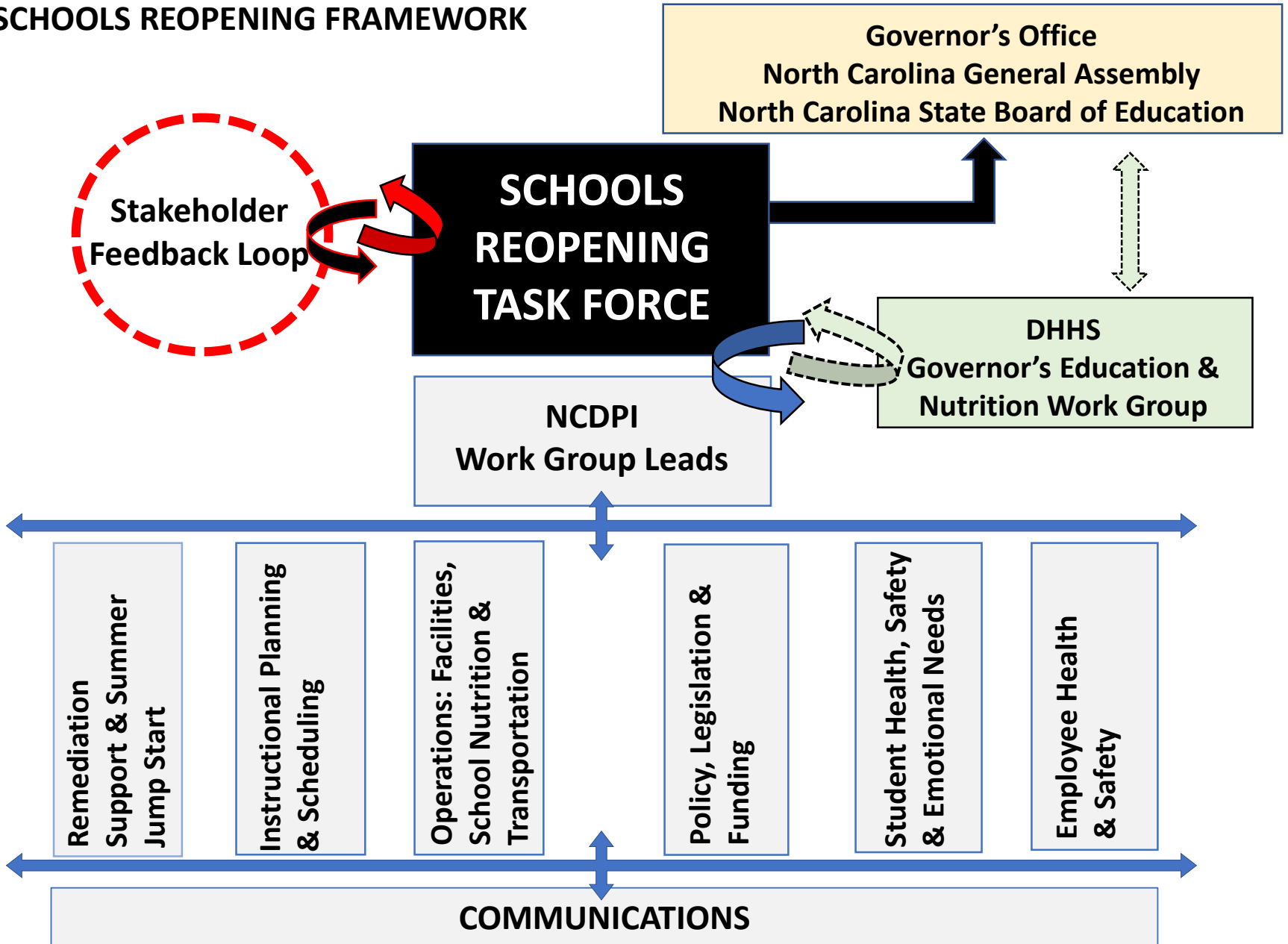
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SCHOOLS REOPENING FRAMEWORK



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:
 - Social distancing
 - Cleaning/hygiene
 - Monitoring health of students and staff
 - Protecting high-risk populations
 - 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