

BEXAR County Health Authority
Amended Health Directive Related to School Systems

Dated Dec. 8, 2020

Recognizing that open and safe schools are vital to community health, and that COVID-19 presents an ongoing public health threat, the Local Health Authority for Bexar County and the City of San Antonio issues this Directive, previously amended September 3, 2020, making the following recommendations for public and private schools (“School Systems”) offering instruction to students in any grades from pre-kindergarten through higher education, effective immediately:

Recommendations Based on Health Indicators. School systems should tie their pandemic operational level to public health department metrics for community infection. Bexar County’s weekly metric for school re-opening is [here](#) and uses Red, Yellow and Green Zones. Occupancy recommendations have been updated based on evolving scientific knowledge, including Metro Health data.

- **At risk levels in the Red Zone.** In-person learning is not recommended. If offered, it should be highly restricted and contingent on COVID testing at least 25% of on-campus staff once a week. Close contacts must be quarantined for 14 days. Priority groups for in-person learning are special education students, the most severely at-risk students, and students who lack access to resources. Small fixed pods of up to 6 students are recommended if any in-person learning is conducted in the Red Zone.
 - Other than drive-through events, no school-sponsored events including, but not limited to, fairs, exhibitions, academic and/or athletic competitions should take place in person, on or off campus. Athletes may engage in skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with household members, under Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) guidance for youth sports [here](#).
 - Lunches should be monitored to maintain 6-foot distancing between students. Adults should maintain at least a 10-foot distance from others when eating indoors.
 - Staff and students should use a fresh mask each day. Additionally, staff should wear eye protection when working indoors and within 6 feet of students who are unable to wear masks.
 - In the event of Stay Home, Work Safe or similar orders, in-person learning will cease for the duration of the orders.
 - Colleges and universities should operate virtually.

At risk levels in the Yellow Zone. In-person instruction prioritizes pre-kindergarten through elementary school students, special needs students, a larger number of at-risk students, and students who lack access to resources. Building and room occupancy should not exceed 50% and should be contingent on adequate ventilation and ability to create 6-foot distancing. While 14-day quarantine remains the safest option, alternate quarantine periods of 10 days are permissible if recommended by a healthcare provider. Small, fixed

Pods of up to 12 students are recommended in the Yellow zone. Availability of regular staff testing or a widely adopted COVID vaccine can mitigate risk and allow higher occupancy levels.

- Schools are encouraged to cultivate peer “champions” among students and staff, who reinforce COVID prevention measures and serve on a 7-person COVID-19 panel.
 - Extracurricular and team activities should take place only if COVID precautions can be enforced not only during main activities but also during breaks, meals, practices, in locker rooms and training rooms, and during bus rides. Considerations for youth sports can be found [here](#).
 - Lunches should be monitored to maintain 6-foot distancing between students. Adults should maintain at least a 10-foot distance from others during indoor meals.
 - Staff and students should use a fresh mask each day. Additionally, staff should wear eye protection when working indoors and within 6 feet of students who are unable to wear masks.
 - Colleges and universities should operate in-person only if COVID precautions can be enforced not only during classes and in public spaces, but also in shared housing, with support services and monitoring of students in quarantine or isolation.
- **At risk levels in the Green Zone.** In-person instruction should take place under CDC guidance for minimal to moderate community transmission. Physical distancing by older children and adults, frequent hand hygiene, and face coverings during high-contact activities are recommended in the Green zone. Additional guidance is [here](#). Alternate quarantine periods of 10 days are permissible, although 14 days remains the safest option.

CDC indicators and thresholds for schools:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/indicators.html#thresholds>

At all risk levels. Staff and students should stay home when sick, and sick individuals should face no negative consequences for staying home. Symptomatic people should be referred for testing, including at free testing sites listed at covid19.sanantonio.gov.

Reasonable accommodation must be made for qualified staff as required by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

School systems that reduce risk by the all methods below are better candidates for in-person activities in the Yellow Zone. School systems that are unable to employ all of these methods should consider extending virtual learning or using smaller cohorts even in the Green Zone:

- Maximal use of outdoor spaces and open windows, even in winter
- Adhering to American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) [guidance](#) for school ventilation
- Monitoring physical distancing, especially in break and lunch areas

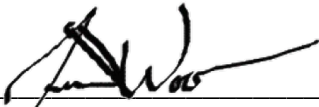
- Providing one 1 fresh mask per person per day, and enforcing usage as is done with dress codes
- Prohibiting shared food or utensils among people from different households
- Promoting frequent hand hygiene and ensuring adequate access to hand sanitizer, soap and sinks
- Working with families to create transportation options that reduce risk. Masks should be worn at all times on buses, and all windows opened to the extent that it is safe.
- Performing timely contact tracing in collaboration with Metro Health

District/System Panel. Each district or School System should be advised by a 7-person COVID-19 panel that at a minimum includes: 1 student, 1 teacher, 1 parent, 1 non-instructional staffer (i.e., maintenance, custodial, food service), 1 school nurse, pediatrician or adolescent healthcare provider, and 1 human resources representative. The panel will provide guidance to superintendents, principals and school boards on operating procedures. The school nurse or pediatric/adolescent healthcare provider should serve as a liaison to Metro Health, including for notification of positive cases.

Reporting Requirements. In addition to weekly aggregate reporting to the Texas Education Agency, Districts and School Systems shall report COVID-19 positive staff and students to Metro Health within 24 hours by calling 210-207-8876.

Our knowledge base about COVID-19 transmission in schools continues to evolve, and recommendations are likely to change as new data become available. I believe this directive includes appropriate control measures based on current knowledge, including the risk for rapid spread of COVID-19 in congregate settings such as schools, and potential effects on adult school staff and their households.

This directive is issued under my authority as the Local Health Authority for Bexar County and the City of San Antonio on this the 8th day of December 2020.



C. Jinda Woo, MD, MPH
Bexar County Health Authority