




THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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To: District Superintendents
Superintendents
Principals
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From: Betty A. Rosa, Commissioner 

Re: Forthcoming Back to School Health and Safety Guidance

Date: August 10, 2021

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) is in the process of developing a summary guidance document to aid schools and districts as they prepare for the 2021-2022 school year. This document will be based on Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines and guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics. This is necessary in light of the continued absence of health-related school opening direction and assistance from the Governor's Office and the State Department of Health.

With the extent of COVID-19 and its variants remaining dynamic, and some areas of the state experiencing increases in transmission rates, many questions persist when it comes to health-related preparations for September. Although the Education Department does not have direct jurisdiction over matters of public health, the Department does possess oversight authority for schools, and continues its attempts to engage with the appropriate state and federal agencies on this matter. NYSED is also consulting with a diverse group of state and local stakeholders to gain insight on the issues that are most relevant at this time.

We anticipate the forthcoming guidance will address questions around the wearing of masks, social distancing, remote learning, transportation, community transmission tracking and potential funding sources available to schools and districts that may help with preparing for the upcoming school year and beyond.

As questions arise in the interim, the Department's Office of Student Support Services recommends the use of the CDC's [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#) and the [American Academy of Pediatrics' COVID-19 Guidance for Safe Schools](#) as resources.

Again, the overall goal for the 2021-2022 school year is to maximize in-person teaching and learning, be responsive to student needs, and keep students and staff healthy and safe. The Department is committed to advocating for all the resources necessary to make this happen and mobilizing technical assistance to school districts as they address these issues locally, consistent with CDC guidelines.