

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.



This plan describes how the LEA or 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 U.S. Department of Education, [86 FR 21195](#).

Maintaining Health and Safety

Overview

A district's plan must include how it will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and LEA staff, and the extent to which it has adopted policies or practices and a description of any such policies or practices, on each of the CDC's safety recommendations including: universal and correct wearing of masks; modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding); hand washing and respiratory etiquette; cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation; contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the state, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments; diagnostic and screening testing; efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible; appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies or practices; and coordination with state and local health officials.

Description of maintaining health and safety

Thermal temperature imaging devices will be used for daily screenings at each entrance for students and staff members, and specific personnel will be assigned to those areas. Each school has designated representatives trained on the set-up and use of the thermal imaging devices. When entering the building, any student (unless opt out form) or staff member is required to wear a facial covering. Any student exhibiting elevated temperatures will have their temperature rechecked with a touchless thermometer. The temperature threshold is at or above 100.4. If the temperature still reads as elevated, the student will be escorted to an isolated location until a parent comes to pick them up. When parents pick up a student exhibiting signs of illness, specific protocols will be followed, and a staff member will escort the child to the car and have the parent sign them out there until the buildings are opened back up to visitors. Any staff members exhibiting an elevated temperature will not enter the building. Administrators will have their specific guidelines for this protocol within their schools.

There will be a designated isolation room at each school where any student or staff member exhibiting signs of COVID-19 will go for medical attention. Parents will be contacted immediately. Strict guidelines and safety measures are in place for the isolation room. These guidelines have been reviewed by medical personnel and follow DHEC recommendations. All BSD45 schools have a full-time nurse.

Students that do not display symptoms of COVID-19 will continue to be seen and treated according to standard school protocols in the nurse's room/clinic. However, students or staff that are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 will not be treated in the same space used for all other non-COVID medical conditions. As a result, schools have developed a separate, isolation room where students or staff that are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 can be evaluated and/or wait for pick-up. These rooms adhere to following guidelines:

- A. All individuals in the room should wear, at minimum, a cloth face covering;
- B. Equipment for the room should include (at minimum) touch-free thermometers, hand sanitizer, hand soap, and tissues;
- C. PPE should be available for staff that are engaged in the evaluation and care of individuals displaying symptoms of COVID-19;
- D. Access to the room should be restricted to only those staff essential for response to an individual displaying symptoms of COVID-19;
- E. Strict social distancing guidelines will be maintained;

- F. Records should be maintained of all person who entered the clinical space for COVID-19;
- G. This clinical space should be disinfected several times daily;
- H. At the earliest time that is safe, staff displaying symptoms of COVID-19 should go home and students should be walked out to their parents for pick-up; and
- I. Anyone displaying symptoms of COVID-19 are encouraged to seek medical attention and evaluation.

Designated COVID-19 Points of Contact are established at each school. Each principal has designated a staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns (e.g., school nurse). All school staff and families will know who this person is and how to contact them.

Additional supplies and materials are ordered for each school isolation room. These include the following:

- Gowns
- Kn95 masks
- Safety goggles
- Disposable gloves
- Disposable masks - adults
- Disposable masks - children
- Disinfectant wipes
- Disinfectant spray

Additional measures in place include:

- Front offices will have new protocols in place regarding signing in/out, dismissing students early, etc. These are shared with staff by each school administrative team.
- Screens have been installed in any areas without adequate protection.
- Visitors into the school will be very limited.
 - Parents and non-staff members will not be allowed to classrooms, unless there is an emergency reason approved by an administrator.
 - No vendors or unessential personnel will be onsite while students are present.
 - Updates to the student and staff handbooks are being completed so parents and staff are aware of all visitation guidelines.

Administrators will monitor absenteeism of students and employees, cross-train staff, and create a roster of trained back-up staff. When substitutes are not available, the administrator should have a list of staff members that can serve in that capacity and ensure these staff members understand ahead of time that they may be needed in this capacity.

As part of the beginning of the year training, administrators will train all staff on all safety protocols. Whenever possible, the administration will conduct training virtually. If it is not feasible to do it virtually, administration will ensure that social distancing is maintained during training.

Policies or Practices Regarding CDC Recommendations

Universal and correct wearing of masks

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

At the current time, students are encouraged to wear masks. This adjustment is due to the approval Proviso 1.108 which was adopted by the General Assembly in the 2021-22 Appropriations Bill and reads as follows: 1.108. (SDE: Mask Mandate Prohibition): No school district, or any of its schools, may use any funds appropriated or authorized pursuant to this act to require that its students and/or employees wear a facemask at any of its education facilities. This prohibition extends to the announcement or enforcement of any such policy.

All staff are encouraged to wear masks as well.

Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding)

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

Upon arrival at school and following the temperature screening, students will report one at a time directly to their homeroom or first block class. Staff will monitor the students as they arrive. Until recommendations change, no one will be allowed to congregate in any common areas.

Each school administrative team has various classroom furniture arrangements. When possible and practical, seats are arranged three feet apart on all sides to ensure social distancing. All students and staff members will practice social distancing within the classroom to the greatest extent possible.

Students will utilize their own supplies or equipment to as much an extent as possible. This includes student-issued technology equipment, as each student will use his or her own personal district-issued device. All student supplies, except for bookbags, will be provided in the classroom for all PreK through 8th grade students. The high school will continue sharing their supply lists for families.

Belongings will be kept in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas. Should any supplies or materials, such as related arts, special education, etc., need to be used by another group of students, those materials will be sanitized between uses.

Safety signs are used throughout each school and remind students and staff members to social distance, use good hygiene practices, and wash hands properly, as well as reminders before entering the building. Banners in entry ways and vinyl signs for doors remind parents/visitors of the rules being followed. The district continues to review all emergency drill procedures and makes modifications to encompass social distancing and other health guidance.

Horseshoes designating social distancing requirements and signs reminding students and staff of social distancing are placed around the school in areas where students stand in line, may have to wait for entry, etc.

Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

Hand hygiene and respiratory practices are a routine part of our instructional program. The following expectations are in place:

- Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and increase monitoring to ensure adherence among students and staff.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60%

alcohol can be used (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).

- Encourage staff and students to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Administrators will support healthy hygiene behaviors by providing adequate supplies, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, cloth face coverings for students, and no-touch trash cans.

The district supplies each school with an allocation to purchase the following items:

- disposable masks
- hand sanitizer for each classroom
- wipes for each classroom
- disinfectant spray for each classroom
- gloves
- isolation room supplies
- additional hand sanitizing stations

Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

The district has developed cleaning protocols based on the latest DHEC, CDC, and OSHA guidance. These protocols include increased cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects that are frequently touched following recommended practices. This includes doorknobs, light switches, sink handles, countertops, etc.

Permanently mounted hand sanitizer stations have been installed at all schools. Each school has an additional 50 sanitation devices installed at various places around the school. Additionally, some classrooms focused on providing specialized services also have hand sanitation device installed inside the classroom.

Handheld disinfectant sprayers and backpack sprayers have been purchased and are onsite at all schools to allow for more extensive and more efficient cleaning of surfaces. They are also in use in the school cafeterias and buses.

The administrator at each school works with the custodial staff and maintenance supervisors to schedule routine cleaning of restrooms throughout the day. Cleaning products are not used near children, and staff ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using any products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes.

Each school has developed a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection. At the conclusion of each school day, custodial staff utilizes handheld disinfectant sprayers and electrostatic sprayers to clean all classrooms and restrooms. There is a completion process to ensure it is logged when this has been completed. There are also notes in each restroom detailing each cleaning that takes place throughout the day.

The principals have created schedules for custodians to clean the areas being utilized by afterschool programs prior to its start each day and following its conclusion each day.

Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

If someone within the school, such as a student, teacher, staff, etc., tests positive for COVID-19, the school will notify employees and parents directly impacted by the positive test and communicate the positive test to the public if necessary. Included in all communications is a reinforcing statement of the district's commitment and priority to the health and safety of employees and students. Our district also communicates we are following the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control's guidance for schools: Management of Suspect and Confirmed COVID-19 Cases.

Details surrounding the positive test are confidential but the schools may share what category within the school the person is in, i.e. student, classroom teacher, staff members etc. In any instance of exposure, the district works with the schools to act immediately and communicate they are following the established protocols including:

- Assigning the person(s) to isolate.
- Identifying those within the school who have been in close contact with the person and asking that they follow protocols established by DHEC.
- Communicating additional cleaning protocols specific to the incident.
- Detailing the enhanced cleaning protocols they are doing on an ongoing basis.

The HHS Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has provided Bulletins, Notifications of Enforcement Discretion, Guidance, and Resources that help explain how patient health information may be used and disclosed in response to the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency. Please refer to the following link for more information and guidance regarding OCR HIPAA Announcements Related to COVID-19:

<https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/special-topics/hipaa-covid19/index.html>

If a school determines that a student or staff member was contagious with COVID-19 while on campus or attending an official campus event, DHEC requests that these individuals be reported to the appropriate regional DHEC office by phone within 24 hours. DHEC also notifies schools of any reported cases that may have been contagious while on campus. All close contacts at the school are identified. This includes all students the ill individual would have been within three (3) feet of for a cumulative fifteen (15) minutes or more within a 24 hour period, except in the case where appropriate precautions were used. Staff close contacts are defined as those individuals within six (6) feet for a cumulative fifteen minutes with and ill individual.

A student close contact is defined as being within 3-feet of a COVID-positive individual for more than 15 minutes (with or without a mask). A staff close contact is defined as being within 6-feet of a COVID-positive individual for more than 15 minutes (with or without a mask). Close contacts are also those identified living in the same house with a COVID-positive individual, caring for someone who is recovering from COVID-19, or being in direct contact with respiratory droplets from someone who is COVID-19 positive. Parents of students determined to be close contacts are notified.

Diagnostic and screening testing

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

Thermal temperature imaging devices will be used for daily screenings at each entrance for students and staff members, and specific personnel will be assigned to those areas. Each school has designated representatives trained on the set-up and use of the thermal imaging devices. When entering the building, any student or staff member is required to wear a facial covering. Any student exhibiting elevated temperatures will have their temperature rechecked with a touchless thermometer. The temperature threshold is at or above 100.4. If the temperature still reads as elevated, the student will be escorted to an isolated location until a parent comes to pick them up. When parents pick up a student exhibiting signs of illness, specific protocols will be followed, and a staff member will escort the child to the car and have the parent sign them out there until the buildings are opened back up to visitors. Any staff members exhibiting an elevated temperature will not enter the building. Administrators will have

their specific guidelines for this protocol within their schools.

Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

The district coordinated with DHEC to offer an onsite vaccination clinic for all employees as well as community members. As the need arises, these efforts will be repeated in future months. The district coordinated with MUSC to offer an onsite clinic for students 12 years of age and older.

Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies and practices

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

Our district is committed to ensure the safety and health of all students with disabilities. Appropriate accommodations are implemented to make certain individual student needs are met in a safe and healthy environment. School-wide policies and protocols are in place to address, prevent, and respond to individual student needs. The school system guarantees that all students with disabilities receive instruction and related services and have access to devices that meet their unique needs regardless of modified operations.

Coordination with state and local health officials

Description of Policies or Practices, if applicable

The district continues to work closely with DHEC and local health agencies. Additionally, the district continues to follow guidance from the South Carolina Department of Education and the Center for Disease Control.

Continuity of Services

Overview

Districts must describe how the LEA will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health and other needs, which may include student health and food services.

District response on continuity of services

The district has been reviewing all emergency drill procedures and making modifications to encompass social distancing and other health guidance. Information and addendums to the current Barnwell School District 45 Comprehensive Safety Plan will continue to be shared prior to the start of school.

Each school will provide information to staff and families about when they/their child(ren) should stay home and when they can return to school. The following focuses will continue:

- Actively encourage employees and students who are sick or who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 to stay home. During this time, schools will not have perfect attendance awards or be rewarding students or staff members for low absenteeism.
- Staff and students should stay home if they have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 symptoms.
- Staff and students who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 should also stay home and monitor their health.

Efforts to support staff will include the following:

- Encourage employees and students to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.
- Promote employees and students eating healthy, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind.
- Encourage employees and students to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling.
- Consider posting signages for the national distress hotline: 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746

Barnwell School District 45 is continuing their partnership with Aiken Barnwell Mental Health. The district has designated funding to expand the mental health counselors in the schools by an additional 1.5 counselors and will be working with them to expand that partnership this school year. These counselors will assist with supporting our students.

Our maintenance and custodial supervisors continue to work to ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by adjusting our current classroom systems. This is done by opening windows and doors when possible. We have also sought advice from our local experts regarding ways we can improve ventilation. Our classroom units and rooftop units have been adjusted to allow more outside air into the classrooms to be circulated. Repair and installing HVAC units is a focus area of our ESSER II plans as well.

The district has updated sick leave practices based on the COVID-19 pandemic. This practice continued even after the December 31, 2021 Federal expiration.

DIG afterschool programs have continued at BPS, BES, and GBMS. As DIG prepares for the start of the

2021-2022 school year, more information will be shared.

Barnwell School District 45 Transportation Office has been working diligently to ensure all safety measures are in place for adequately cleaning and disinfecting buses any time students have been onboard. The number of students on each bus has been limited based on distancing requirements, and guidelines provided by the South Carolina Department of Education will be followed while planning bus routes and bus capacity. Face coverings are required for students and drivers on the bus at all times. Students are expected to practice social distancing at all bus stops, during loading, while in transport, and during unloading. Students will load the bus in the morning from back to front. If students are from the same household, they may be allowed to sit together. When unloading, students will unload from front to back one at a time. This will eliminate students passing each other while entering and exiting the bus. Each bus seat is disinfected and cleaned using a handheld electrostatic sprayer following all bus routes, both morning and afternoon. This includes any routes being utilized during the school day, such as the Barnwell County Career Center route.

As a district, we already utilize the breakfast in the classroom program. Currently, lunch is also delivered to the classroom. The following guidelines during meals apply:

- Teachers will ensure students wash hands or use hand sanitizer prior to eating breakfast or lunch.
- Students may bring their own lunches and water bottles.
- Offerings will be individually packaged for students.
- Utensils, straw, and napkin will be included.
- Hot meals will be served by cafeteria staff when possible.

At this time, rosters are used to ensure student meals are counted accurately. This will be done, instead of the regular scanning of student lunch cards. Counts are submitted each morning by the classroom teacher to determine the number of lunches needed.

Water fountain and drink machines are currently closed. Students may bring their own bottled water to school. Touchless water filling stations are installed in areas around the school.

Periodic Review

Overview

Districts are required to review and, as appropriate, revise their Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan at least every six months through September 30, 2023, including seeking public input and taking such input into account in determining whether to revise the plan and, if revisions are determined necessary, on the revisions it makes to its plan.

If a district developed a plan prior to enactment of the ARP Act that was made publicly available and was developed with public comment, but does not address each of the required aspects of safety established in the ARP Act, the district must, as part of the required periodic review, revise its plan consistent with the ARP Act requirements no later than six months after it last reviewed its plan.

District response on ensuring periodic updates to its plan

The district will review and revise the plan as necessary and at least every six months. The plan was last revised August 23, 2021, following updated DHEC guidance.

Public Input

Overview

The ARP Act requires that school districts make their Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan available to the public online and that the plans be in an understandable and uniform format; to the extent practicable, are written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable, orally translated; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability, provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent.

Before making its plan publicly available, school districts must seek public comment on the plan and develop the plan after taking into account public comment.

District response on public input in development of its plan

The plan is available to the public online in a written, understandable, and uniform format. Before publishing the plan, the district held a stakeholder meeting to seek public input. Additionally, public comments are welcomed and directions for making those comments are found on the district's website along with information regarding Federal funds and projects. The input received was used to finalize the district plan. The plan is available at [barnwell45.org](https://sites.google.com/bsd45.net/federalprograms/esser). ESSER materials are available at <https://sites.google.com/bsd45.net/federalprograms/esser>.