



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**LEA Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service
Pursuant to the Federal American Rescue Plan Act, Section 2001(i)**

Introduction and Background

As announced in the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE)'s [April 28, 2021 broadcast](#), in March 2021 President Biden signed the Federal [American Rescue Plan \(ARP\) Act](#), Public Law 117-2, into law. The ARP Act provides an additional \$122 billion in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) to States and school districts to help safely reopen, sustain the safe operation of schools, and address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the nation's students. As with the previous ESSER funds available under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), the purpose of the additional funding is to support local educational agencies (LEAs) in preparing for and responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on educators, students, and families. Additional information on ARP ESSER may be found in the NJDOE's [funding comparison fact sheet](#).

Section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP Act requires each LEA that receives ARP ESSER funds to develop and make publicly available on the LEA's website, no later than 30 days after receiving ARP ESSER funds, a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services for all schools (Safe Return Plan) A Safe Return Plan is required of all fund recipients, including those that have already returned to in-person instruction. Section 2001(i)(2) of the ARP Act further requires that the LEA seek public comment on the Safe Return Plan and take those comments into account in finalization of the Safe Return Plan. Under the interim final requirements published in [Volume 86, No. 76 of the Federal Register](#) by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), an LEA must periodically, but no less frequently than every six months through September 30, 2023, review and, as appropriate, revise its Safe Return Plan.

Pursuant to those requirements, **LEAs must submit to the NJDOE and post on their website their Safe Return Plans by June 24, 2021.** The NJDOE intends to make LEA ARP ESSER Fund applications available in EWEG on May 24, 2021 and LEAs will submit their Safe Return Plans to the NJDOE via EWEG. To assist LEAs with the development of their Safe Return Plans, the NJDOE is providing the following template.

This template incorporates the federally-required components of the Safe Return Plan. The questions in the template below will be included in the LEA ARP ESSER Fund application in EWEG. LEAs will submit responses to the questions within the LEA ARP ESSER Fund application in EWEG by June 24, 2021. The NJDOE hopes that this template will allow LEAs to effectively plan for that submission and to easily post the information to their websites as required by the ARP Act.

Note that on May 17, 2021, Governor Murphy [announced](#) that upon the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year, portions of Executive Order 175 allowing remote learning will be rescinded, meaning that schools will be required to provide full-day, in-person instruction, as they were prior to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The NJDOE and New Jersey Department of Health will share additional information regarding State requirements or guidance for health and safety protocols for the 2021-2022 school year as it becomes available.

For each mitigation strategy listed below (A–H), please describe how the LEA will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff and the extent to which it has adopted policies, and a description of any such policies, on each of the following safety recommendations established by the CDC.

CAPE MAY COUNTY SPECIAL SERVICES SCHOOL DISTRICT
Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

Date Created: June 4, 2021

Date Revised: December 8, 2022

1. Maintaining Health and Safety

A. Universal and correct wearing of masks

Mask Mandate: In accordance with the State of New Jersey, Department of Health, Governor Murphy announced that the Universal School Mask Mandate was lifted **Effective March 7, 2022**. The Cape May County Special School District staff, students, and parents/guardians currently make their own choices about whether, and under what circumstances, to wear face masks. This would not apply to individuals who are experiencing COVID symptoms, who have tested positive, or who are identified as “close contacts” to lab-confirmed positive COVID cases. Face masks will still be mandatory parts of protocols for those situations under certain circumstances.

Cape May County Special Services School District (CMCSSD) has implemented mask wearing in our schools since March 2020. Students and staff are taught proper mask wearing and are provided masks, as needed. During periods of high transmission, school personnel and visitors are recommended to wear masks in our buildings per the most recent guidance from the New Jersey Department of Health and CDC Guidelines. Students are provided coaching and support regarding the proper wearing of masks. Social Stories, videos, and visual guides have been created to assist students with wearing masks. Due to the specialized nature of our students, many students are not able to tolerate masks. Our staff work with our occupational and speech therapists, as well as the school nurses to find alternative solutions such as visors and maintaining 3-6 feet, where possible.

B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)

Due to the specialized nature of our student population, maintaining 6 feet is often not possible. Physical distancing signage is posted throughout the district on doors, floors, walls, offices and classrooms. Markings in hallways, cafeterias, and therapy suites are posted to support maintaining 6 feet of distance, when possible. Physical distancing plans have been created in classrooms, gyms, cafeterias and conference rooms to support 3-6 feet of physical distancing. Staff have been trained on how to maintain physical distancing in classrooms, therapy suites, hallways, gyms, cafeterias, bathrooms, and various spaces throughout the district and to avoid being within 6 feet of other staff or students for more than 15 minutes in a 24 hour period, especially during periods of high community transmission. These strategies are in place to avoid, where possible, the need for staff or student quarantines due to close contact guidance/exposure.

Student schedules can be modified to support limiting mixing of cohorts, if necessary. Classrooms and office spaces can be modified by removing furniture and adding barriers to support physical distancing. Students and staff, to the best extent possible, will practice social distancing while at CMCSSD. CMCSSD can reconfigure classrooms to support social distancing if necessary. Classroom desks will be facing the same direction, and there will be predetermined entry and exit paths to be utilized throughout the district. In addition, pre-designated drop off points for parents and

buses are available for both Ocean Academy (OA) and Cape May County High School (CMCHS). Markings will be visible for buses and passengers to promote social distancing. In addition, we have reconfigured cafeterias, media center, and gyms to support social distancing and determined distance and flow paths within the building and marked floorings to support.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

CMCSSSD has implemented additional hand washing protocols in our schools since March 2020. Students and staff are taught proper hand washing techniques and provided hand sanitizer, as needed for classrooms, offices, therapy suites, etc. Protocols have been established for the nursing offices as it relates to nebulizer treatments and proper PPE while administering these treatments. Outside areas and separate spaces have been created in the district for well/sick bay offices for students and staff. All school personnel and visitors are encouraged to follow hand washing protocols in our buildings per the most recent guidance from the New Jersey Department of Health and CDC Guidelines. Students are provided coaching and support regarding handwashing protocols. Social stories, videos, schedules of when to wash hands, and visual guides have been created to assist students with washing hands.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

CMCSSSD has implemented additional cleaning and disinfecting protocols in our schools since March 2020. Staff have been trained using new products as well as new spraying equipment for buses, classrooms, desks, and office spaces. The district has implemented new cleaning schedules of classroom spaces, gyms, playgrounds, cafeterias, and various high touch areas. Health and Safety protocols have been established for all visitors, staff, and students entering our buildings. The district has developed clear cleaning protocols, including student/staff hand washing, and has reviewed all areas that need daily deep cleaning (bathrooms, classrooms, therapy rooms, hallways, doors, desks, “hot spots”, furniture, classroom materials, communication devices, buses etc.) The district continues to re-order/stock cleaning supplies and disinfectants for district use. District-wide water filling stations have been added and students have been provided with individual water bottles. CMCSSSD will adhere to all existing required facilities cleaning practices and procedures and any new specific requirements of the local health department.

E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments

To the greatest extent possible the CMCSSSD will continue to follow best practices and guidelines by the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine. Currently contract tracing is not mandated and is not being implemented in the district. If contract tracing is once again mandated, the following will be implemented:

- CMCSSSD School Nurses will work with CMCDOH and develop contact tracing procedures- as needed during high transmission/positivity rates
- Administration and Nursing will provide PD to staff about the role of contact tracing in schools – Vector Training, K-12 Edition
- CMCSSSD will work with CMC Department of Health (CMC DOH) regarding contact tracing procedures including notification requirements (NJ DOH and Families, Staff, and Public)

- Professional Development will be provided to staff through Vector Training, K-12 Edition and by the district Administration and Nursing Department regarding the role of all staff with regard to contact tracing in schools

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

At this time, we are following guidance as directed in the [New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools](#), and the Cape May County Department of Health. To the greatest extent possible, we will still follow best practices and guidelines by the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for contract tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine.

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

At this time, we continue to follow guidance as directed in the [New Jersey Department of Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools](#). The district will follow the CDC, NJDOE, New Jersey Executive Orders, and NJ Department of Health guidance for diagnostic and screening testing. The district still requires families and students to self-screen for symptoms and fever prior to entering school. Students showing signs of illness will be sent to the nurse's office. Parents/Guardians/Emergency contacts of these students will be notified to pick up their child immediately. The parent/guardian will be required to sign out the student as per the school's sign out protocol. Prior to the 2022-2023 school year CMCSSSD staff, families, and students over 12 were provided with opportunities to get the vaccine here at CMCSSSD (vaccine clinic) and within our local community. Flyers, supporting documentation, emails, and social media were used to support and encourage vaccines with all stakeholders. In addition, the District partnered with Walmart to provide vaccinations to eligible students most recently in June 2022 through a vaccination booster clinic hosted at CMCSSSD. Similar procedures can be implemented if recommended or required.

H. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies

CMCSSSD has implemented our Reopening Plan, allowing us to safely reopen our schools to in-person instruction for students in OA and CMCHS. This Plan follows CDC and NJDOH guidelines. Programming includes appropriate special education instruction and related services for students with disabilities and the provision of school nutrition benefits and services. CMCSSSD serves 240 special education students ages 3-21 in grades Pre K-12. Over 50 percent of our students are eligible for Free and Reduced meals. In addition, 100% of our students receive special education and related services, 2% of our students are homeless, and 5% are in foster care.

Our school physician, school nurses, and safety team have worked together to support the safe reopening of our schools. Health and safety protocols have been established and modified, as needed, to support our very specialized school population. CMCSSSD has worked with families and sending districts to determine in-person vs remote instruction with families and sending districts with regard to our most medically fragile populations. Programming remains flexible and allows for various scenarios based on student medical needs.

2. Ensuring Continuity of Services

- A. Describe how the LEA will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff's social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services. (1000 character limit)**

Students will receive full day in-person programming unless we are required to pivot to remote learning at which time we will follow our Emergency Virtual and Remote Plan. Meals will continue to be provided and areas of focus will be prevention through vaccinations, social distancing, mask use, handwashing, cleaning/disinfecting, and monitoring the health/wellness of our staff and students. CMCSSSD will continue to provide professional development to staff on protocol for identifying, supporting, and referring students who may be expressing Social Emotional, Behavioral, and Mental Health challenges such as Depression, Anxiety, Mood Instability, Behavior, Loss/Grief, Bullying, Bias, Prejudice, Fear/Anxiety, Domestic Violence, etc. In addition, case managers will address trauma and social emotional wellbeing of students and families and provide school based counseling as needed. Community based resources and referrals to community mental health providers will be utilized as needed.

3. Public Comment

- A. Describe how the LEA sought public comment on its plan, and how it took those public comments into account in the development of its plan. Note, the ARP requires that LEAs seek public comment for each 60-day revision to the plan. (1000 character limit)**

CMCSSSD presented the Safe Reopening Plan to the BOE and our Reopening Steering Committee who helped develop our 2020 Fall Reopening Plan. CMCSSSD also sought public comment through the district's messaging system and provided an email address to forward questions, concerns or comments. The plan is updated in accordance with the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP-ESSER III) guidelines. The plan will continue to be revised as needed and we will take into account required 6 month updates. Revisions will be presented to the Board of Education, posted on our website, and shared with stakeholders.

- B. Describe how the LEA ensured that the plan is in an understandable and uniform format; is to the extent practicable written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable to provide written translations to a parent with limited English proficiency, will be orally translated for such a parent; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA, will be provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent. (1000 character limit)**

CMCSSSD continues to follow communication guidelines outlined in our 2020 Fall Reopening Plan. District staff will communicate updates about procedures and expectations with parents, guardians, and stakeholders via Google Meet, email, letters and "All Calls" as needed. Communication is available in both English and Spanish and our families work with our case managers, administration, and various other district staff to ensure comprehension of materials and procedures. Stakeholders that have a disability that prevents them from giving feedback, will be given the opportunity for a phone conference or in-person meeting to review questions/concerns.