



## Reopening Schools: What States and Communities Should Ask of All Schools

**Before the pandemic:** There were 55M children in our nation's nearly 130,000 public and private schools, including over 6M children in special education. Schools are more densely occupied than offices or nursing homes yet are not required to have infection control plans or nurses. Another 10+M children are in out-of-home child-care and early education facilities. Studies over the last 30 years have shown that the poorest communities have the schools in the worst condition:

NO FRESH AIR, POOR SANITATION,  
OVERCROWDING, and BROKEN SINKS and TOILETS.

**About the virus:** The contagious SARS-CoV-2 virus can be transmitted through touching contaminated surface or through the air. Both children and adults can carry the virus, shed it, have no symptoms, yet infect others. More research is needed on children and school-acquired infections.

Without clear and consistent guidance, a piecemeal approach to reopening schools is likely to deepen disparities, sow confusion, and hasten the spread of the pandemic. It also will make research more difficult. **Ask for a plan that covers these key health & safety questions:**

- 1- Indoor air quality (IAQ).** Do you have a written plan for improving ventilation/fresh air flow that includes assessing the mechanical systems, upgrading air filters, and flushing the system before occupancy? If there is no ventilating system, how are you providing fresh air in every classroom?
- 2- Drinking water.** Did you consult with public health on reopening the drinking water system? Was it flushed out and tested for contaminants? Or are you providing bottled water to all occupants?
- 3- Cleaning and disinfecting.** Do you have a written plan for cleaning surfaces and for disinfecting high-touch surfaces on a daily or other regular basis?
- 4- Social distancing/distance learning.** Do you have a written plan for returning the youngest and highest-risk learners to school, and an extended plan to include all students in educational programs?
- 5- Illnesses.** Do you have a school nurse on-site? Is the nurse's office ventilated to the outside? Do you have a written plan for managing new illnesses at school and reporting illnesses to public health?
- 6- Masks/face coverings.** Do you have a written plan for masks and face coverings that addresses how sensitive and or special needs occupants can be accommodated or exempted?
- 7- High-risk children and staff.** Do you have a written plan on how to accommodate children and staff with special needs or a plan for children whose families/guardians/households do not have the capacity for distance learning?
- 8- Supplies and staffing.** Do you have sufficient stockpiles of masks and PPE, filters, and cleaning and disinfecting products for one semester, and sufficient staff to clean and maintain the building?

**States, advised by stakeholders, should develop and disseminate authoritative guidelines for schools on how to prepare and adopt, then post, written infection prevention and control plans.**