

BEST PRACTICES FROM A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

As a supplement to the other recommendations included in the materials provided by MUSIC, below are some “best practices” from a legal perspective as you and your team develop strategies for re-opening your buildings and preparing for the upcoming academic year. Thinking through these steps now to help your school officials make informed decisions based on the realities of your individual district and community.

Buildings & Operations

- Document cleaning routines and safety procedures (including how and when they are revised over time as you receive new recommendations from local health officials).
- Train teachers and staff regarding new safety procedures and social distancing requirements, and maintain documentation showing dates and attendance.
- Cross-train for necessary tasks across multiple positions to ensure alternative coverage should an employee be out on extended leave during the school year.
- Designate an administrator to be the point of contact with local health officials for COVID-19 updates and future testing/contact tracing.
- Designate an administrator to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns and take steps to ensure staff and parents know who this person is and how to contact them.
- Determine what level of absenteeism will disrupt continuity of teaching and operations.

Staff, Students, & Community

- Develop a plan for how to enforce social distancing policies (differentiating between enforcement for staff, students, parents, or other visitors and maintaining consistency within each group).
- Establish procedures for how and when your District will allow or limit visitors.

- Document actions taken to address the social and emotional wellness of your students related to COVID-19 concerns.
- Create internal strategy for consistently applying leave policies, including Sick leave, FMLA, ADA, Emergency FMLA, and Emergency Paid Sick Leave.
- Compile a list of tasks by position that an employee may be able to complete remotely, if the individual need arises during the school year.
- Speak out against negative behaviors, including negative statements or social media about possible positive test results within your community and other potential stigmas.
- Include reminders of safety and prevention procedures in regular announcements to staff, students, and families.

Contingency Planning

- Develop protocols for when staff, student, or visitor becomes sick (including notification to local health officials, other staff, and student families).
- Train staff on how to respond to presence of an individual showing symptoms of COVID-19.
- Create a communication system for staff and families for self-reporting of symptoms and notification of exposures and closures.
- Explain to staff, students, and families how the District expects to communicate about COVID-19 issues during the school year.
- Inform staff, students, and families of what conditions may result in a school or building closure.
- Prepare draft communications to parents and staff now, over the summer, about possible situations that might develop on short notice during the school year (e.g., contact with an individual with a positive COVID-19 test, potential closures of activities or buildings, remote learning).