

RUSH COUNTY SCHOOLS

OPENING PLAN

August 2021

Updated December 2021

***This is subject to change**

In cooperation with the Rush County Health Department, Rush County Schools has created a plan to open up schools in August with the goal of providing a safe and healthy educational environment.

Our plan is to open school according to our adopted scheduled. However, we will continually observe the number of students and employees that may become ill along with the community reports. It may be necessary at times to alter our programming or close school and operate virtually (eLearning) until a time deemed appropriate to return. Each building will have specific measures appropriate for their needs.

Health Protocol

Per IC 20-34-3-9 RCS reserves the right to exclude students and employees from attending school if they test positive for COVID-19 or exhibit one or more of the following symptoms.

- A fever of 100.4 or higher
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

Return to School After Exclusion

Individuals who are excluded from attending school may return once they meet the following CDC recommendations:

- No fever for at least 72 hours (three full days of no fever without the use of medicine that reduces fevers); and
- Other symptoms have improved (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath have improved);**and**
- At least 10 calendar days have passed since your symptoms first appeared.

Tested Positive-Symptomatic

Individuals who experienced symptoms and have been tested for COVID-19 may return to school if the following conditions are met:

- The individual no longer has a fever (without the use of medicine that reduces fevers);and

- Other symptoms have improved (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath have improved);**and**
- At least 10 calendar days have passed since symptoms first appeared; **or**
- The individual has received two negative tests at least 24 hours apart

Tested Positive-Asymptomatic

Persons who have not had symptoms but test positive for COVID-19 may return when they have gone ten calendar days without symptoms and have been released by a healthcare provider.

Tested Positive-Impact on School Operations

In the event that an infected person has been in a school building, the local health department will be contacted immediately. Factors such as the likelihood of exposure to employees and students in the building, the number of cases in the community, and other factors will be examined. A course of action will be developed and communicated to our school community.

Screening

Symptoms of COVID-19 will be communicated to families, employees, and visitors and they will be required to self-screen before coming to school. Students, employees, and visitors who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 are prohibited from coming to school, and if they do come to school, they should be sent home immediately.

Medical Inquiries

Federal law typically limits the type of medical inquiries that can be made, but given the nature of the pandemic more leeway has been given to districts/schools in this circumstance to make additional medical inquiries of staff and students than would otherwise be allowed.

- If a parent tells the district/school that a student is ill, the district/school may ask the parent whether the student is exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19.
- If an employee calls in sick or appears ill, the district/school can inquire as to whether the employee is experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms.
- If a person is obviously ill, the district/school may make additional inquiries and may exclude the person from school property.

Even without symptoms, if a student or employee has recently had contact with a person with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, has someone in their home being tested for COVID-19, or has recently traveled from somewhere considered to be a “hot spot” by the CDC, the

district/school may exclude the student or employee from the school building and recommend that they self-quarantine for 14 calendar days. Attendance incentives are suspended.

Clinical Space COVID -19 Symptomatic

Each school have a room or space separate from the nurse's clinic where students or employees who are feeling ill are evaluated or wait for pick up. All waiting staff and students should wear a cloth face covering. Only essential staff assigned to the room may enter. A record will be kept of all persons who entered the room and the room will be disinfected several times throughout the day. Strict social distancing is required and staff must wear appropriate PPE. Students who are ill will be walked out of the building to their parents. Additionally, all staff and students with fevers or symptoms associated with COVID-19 are encouraged to seek medical attention for further evaluation and instructions. Students and staff may return before the 72 hour window has elapsed if they are approved to do so in writing by their healthcare provider.

Clinic Space Non-COVID-19 Related

Students who do not display symptoms of COVID-19 can be seen and treated in the nurse's clinic. These would include students who are injured during the school day or students with special health care needs such as those with chronic health conditions (i.e. - diabetes or seizures), those requiring medical treatments (i.e. - suctioning, tube feeding, or nebulizers), and those with individual health plans.

Confirmed Case of COVID-19 on School Property

When there is confirmation that a person infected with COVID-19 was on school property, the district/school will contact the local health department immediately. Unless extenuating circumstances exist, the district/school will work with the local health department to assess factors such as the likelihood of exposure to employees and students in the building, the number of cases in the community, and other factors that will determine if a building closure is necessary.

It is the responsibility of the state health department contact tracers to contact the person confirmed with COVID-19, inform direct contacts of their possible exposure, and give instructions to those involved with the confirmed case, including siblings and other household members regarding self-quarantine and exclusions. The individual who tested positive will not be identified in communications to the school community at large but may need to be selectively identified for contact tracing by the local health department.

If a closure is determined necessary, schools should consult with their local health department to determine the status of school activities including extracurricular activities, co-curricular activities, and before and after-school programs.

As soon as the district/school becomes aware of a student or employee who has been exposed to or has been diagnosed with COVID-19, the custodial staff will be informed, so that impacted building or bus areas, furnishings, and equipment are thoroughly disinfected. If possible, based upon student and staff presence, the custodial staff will wait 24 hours or as long as possible prior to disinfecting. However, if that is not possible or school is in session, the cleaning will occur immediately.

Immunizations

Immunization requirements should remain. Assistance through local health departments and health systems will be provided.

Preventative Measures

The priority for preventing the spread of disease in the school setting is to insist that sick employees and students stay home. Additionally, students and employees should remain home if someone in the household has COVID-19 symptoms or is being tested for COVID-19. Ill persons must stay home for a minimum of 72 hours before returning to school is the first and most important step.

Some people can be infected with COVID-19, but show no signs of illness even though they are contagious and can spread the disease to others. It is also unknown how contagious people are the day or two before they begin to exhibit illness symptoms. Thus, these employees or students may be present at school, will show no signs of illness, but be capable of transmitting the disease to others. In these situations, the three most important mitigation strategies are social distancing, frequent handwashing, and appropriate PPE.

Handwashing and avoiding touching your face, eyes, nose, or mouth are important steps a person can take to avoid becoming sick or spreading germs to others. Employees and students should wash their hands often and if soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol. Times are incorporated into the school day when all persons should wash their hands. These key times should be done in a staggered class pattern to maintain social distancing between students and include:

- Start of the school day (when entering the building)
- Before eating
- After using the restroom
- After blowing nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After using shared equipment

Water fountains- will be on and cleaned more frequently. Each school has water refilling stations that can be utilized.

Social Distancing

The following steps will be utilized while face-to-face instruction is taking place:

- Every classroom will be evaluated and students will be kept as far apart as possible.
- Close gatherings will be limited.
- Students will remain in assigned seats and face the same direction.
- Students traveling to different buildings will be minimized.
- Classroom visitors will be limited.
- Sharing of student materials will be minimized.
- Recess time will be allowed, students will wash hands and sanitize before and after. Equipment will be cleaned a minimum of twice each day.
- Buildings will take additional appropriate steps as needed.

Food Service Program

Meals will continue to be served as normal with the following practices:

- Students and Staff should utilize proper hand washing.
- Some schools may add additional lunch times to limit the number of students in the lunchroom at the same time and to ensure social distancing.
- No visitors will be allowed during lunches.
- Food Service Staff will be provided with PPE.
- No self-serve items.
- Buildings will take additional appropriate steps as needed.

Transportation

The following protocols will be in place for our transportation program:

- Buses will be cleaned and disinfected as needed.
- Students will be given assigned seats.
- **Students are required to wear masks per federal mandate**
- Students shall be limited to the same routes each morning and the same route each afternoon.
- Family members will sit with family members.
- Students will be spread out as much as possible.
- The first two seats behind the driver shall remain unoccupied when possible.
- Routes will be evaluated and adjusted as needed.
- **Field trips will be on a case by case basis with administrative approval.**

Mitigation

Rush County Schools is working with our local health departments to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 among students, staff and teachers. We will continue to communicate as needed to keep each other updated on our school and community. Our cleaning methods and products have been enhanced. Student desks should be cleaned after each use.

Although evidence shows that most children infected with COVID-19 have mild symptoms, some children will develop serious illness, especially those children at risk because of underlying health issues. Discussion should occur with the child's health care provider to determine whether and alternative learning plan is appropriate until adequate immunization can occur.

All teachers, administrators, staff and students (parents/guardians) are required to report any documented positive cases of COVID-19 in their school.

If an individual in one's home has COVID-19 or is isolated of COVID-19, those in the household should also stay home for a minimum of two weeks. This could be longer if the student become symptomatic.

In the event of a documented positive case, short-term closure may be an option. Schools and local health departments are encouraged to keep school open as much as possible. We will work with our local health department to obtain a plan for further testing, cleaning, etc...; however, this health/medical review may be done on the same day as a positive case to reduce school closure time.

Recommendations about prolonged closure will depend on the level of cohorting the school has been adhering to, the community level of disease and the current burden of infection impacting our hospital systems.