

# School Recovery & Guidance



**FALL 2021**



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2021-2022**

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# MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

As we head into another school year, it is incredible to look back to this time last year and realize how far we have come. Our resilience is reflected in the response our administrators, educators, school personnel, students, and family have shown even as the pandemic continues to create challenges. We are all working together to determine the best path forward for our school communities because we all understand the importance of having our children in the classroom in-person and engaged with our teachers.

The role of these caring adults has never been more imperative as many issues facing our students continue to be exacerbated by the pandemic. The *U.S. National Center for Health Statistics* recently released provisional data on drug overdose deaths indicating that from 2019 to 2020 West Virginia had a 49.3% increase in deaths related to an overdose. The data shown on the next page detail the increased number of homeless students, the rate of infants born with neonatal abstinence syndrome and the number of children in foster care. Additionally, our state's *poverty rate is 3.7 percentage points higher than the national average*, making it the sixth highest rate among the 50 states. While West Virginia's median household income increased in 2019, adjusting for inflation, West Virginia still had the *second lowest median household income among the 50 states*.

Perhaps the most poignant and telling indicator is the *growing national suicide rate for those ages 10 to 24*, which has increased nearly 60% in the last 10 years according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). We must never forget it is often a child that is tied to each of these data points. We must be cognizant of how these issues can impact our children, and as education leaders, we must put safeguards in place to protect the basic, academic, and social-emotional needs of our students.

We know more about COVID-19 than we did a year ago, and we continue to learn more each day. Last year, schools were the safest places for children to be outside of their homes, and when mitigations and protocols were followed, our educational facilities did not contribute significantly to the spread of the disease.

Additionally, monitoring absences and outbreaks, and conducting contact tracing prevents further spread of the virus. The most effective means of protecting our staff and students are the vaccines that are readily available.

This document aims to provide school recovery guidance based on the data and lessons learned. **We have provided counties with this guidance so they may work with their local health departments and develop plans that best meet the needs of their communities.** Paramount to these efforts is the importance of communicating these plans to your staff, students, and families. We must continue to work together to support a compassionate environment that fosters learning, recovery, and growth for our school community.



W. Clayton Burch  
State Superintendent of Schools

# SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

West Virginia's socioeconomic profile provides a deeper look into the challenges our families face each school year. School communities must continue to work together to protect the social-emotional well-being of our students, while continuing to combat the ever-evolving issues posed by the pandemic.

	2010	2020	2021
Education spending as a percentage of total state appropriations	46.19%		
State population*	1.853 million	1.776 million	1.765 million
Workforce Participation	55.7%	52.8%	55.3%
Number of Children in Foster Care	4,097	6,970	6,838
Drug Related Mortality Rate (per 100,000 deaths)**	30.6	50.0	N/A
Rate of Infants Born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (per 1,000 live births)	21.2	45.9	N/A
Poverty Rate	18.1%	17.8%	17.61%
Number of Homeless Students	9,320	10,417	N/A
Median Household Income	\$42,777	\$44,921	\$46,711
Student Enrollment by School Year	281,828	261,633	252,357
Number of Teachers	19,866	18,697	18,494

\* The American Community Survey by the U.S. Census released in September 2019

\*\* WV Health Statistics Center, Vital Statistics System

# THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

The WVDE recognizes educating a child goes beyond instruction. During these particularly challenging times, we work closely with national and state health officials to provide guidance to address the child's entire well-being. Research confirms students perform better when they are in school, and their social-emotional and mental health wellness is appropriately addressed.

## **Maintain a school environment where students feel safe, welcome, and connected.**

- » All students are connected to at least ONE CARING ADULT in the school.
- » School culture focuses on assets as opposed to deficits.
- » School procedures utilize a trauma-informed approach.
  - › Discipline – Supportive vs. Punitive  
Ensure discipline practices are trauma-informed. Understanding a lack of demonstration of social skills does not always indicate willful disobedience or purposeful insubordination.
  - › Attendance – Supportive vs. Punitive  
Ensure attendance efforts address root causes of absences rather than focusing on a behavior to be punished.
- » Communication supports the well-being of staff, students, and families to help with minimizing worries and concerns.

## **Utilize data to make informed decisions to support social-emotional and mental health wellness.**

- » Needs Assessment
- » Zoom WV and WVEIS (Attendance/Discipline/Academics)
- » Surveys
- » Child Welfare Services (CPS) Referrals

## **Provide social-emotional learning and supports for all students.**

- » Assess, identify, and prioritize social-emotional needs.
- » Establish an intentional focus on social-emotional skill building, mental and behavioral health, and self-regulatory capacity, which may have regressed due to a lack of social interactions.
- » Identify instructional programs/resources to teach social-emotional competencies explicitly.
- » Ensure curriculum and resources promote social justice and equity for all students.
- » Provide an integrated delivery of social-emotional standards (*West Virginia College and Career Readiness Dispositions and Standards for Student Success*).
- » Coordinate ongoing education with families, educators, and community partners (after-school/summer programs) regarding the benefits of social-emotional learning and development in school and at home.

## **Ensure mental health and well-being supports are in place to address needs for students, staff, and families.**

- » Evaluate current resources such as *professional student support personnel* (school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, social workers, Communities In Schools Coordinators, etc.) and current community partners (Expanded School Mental Health (*ESMH*) providers, Greater Recovery and Community Empowerment (*GRaCE*), other community partners, etc.) to determine the need for additional support.

- » Establish partnerships for additional wellness supports and mental health services so the school is able to offer a continuum of school and community supports.
- » Communicate the referral system for individuals who need targeted support or access to school-employed or community mental health and wellness professionals.
- » Ensure school staff, students, families, and community members have access to resources and information related to trauma, substance misuse prevention, suicide prevention, child abuse/neglect, social-emotional health, and mental health.
- » Establish and maintain an organized system for outreach to connect with at-risk students (those with previously identified mental health issues and/or those most impacted by COVID-19).
- » Ensure all school staff is provided training on mandatory reporting and understand the required procedures for filing a report with West Virginia Child Protective Services (CPS) should the need arise.
- » Provide support and resources for staff for self-care to address compassion fatigue.

# KEY MITIGATIONS FOR SCHOOLS *(including extracurricular activities)*

Whether in the classroom or participating in extracurricular activities, local administrators and leaders should follow the mitigations below relevant to the latest Governor’s Executive Orders and CDC guidance. Additionally, they should work closely with their local health departments to develop the necessary measures for their schools to operate safely without interruption.

These practices are important to not only guard against COVID-19, but also the spread of other infections such as the flu, and the common cold.

***The most effective mitigation strategy is the vaccination for those eligible to receive it.***



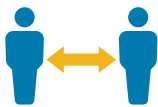
**Cleaning and disinfecting**



**Hand hygiene and coughing/ sneezing etiquette**



**Evaluate large gatherings outside of classroom/core groups**



**Social distancing according to county board guidance**



**Face coverings at county board discretion**



**Contact tracing in collaboration with local health departments**

## Mitigation Strategies



### ***Cleaning and Disinfecting***

- » Audit necessary materials and supply chain for cleaning, sanitizing, disinfecting, and preventing spread of disease.
- » Assign duties and responsibilities regarding cleaning and disinfecting to ensure consistency.
- » Provide adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (e.g., paper towels, tissues, soap, and hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol) for safe use by staff and older children.
- » Ensure proper cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces on a regular basis by establishing a schedule for routine environmental cleaning and disinfecting.

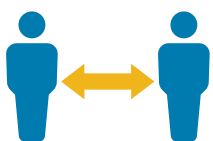
- » Disinfect all shared objects on a regular basis.
- » Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfecting products.
- » Limit sharing of personal items and classroom materials or provide adequate supplies for individual student use.



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### **Hand Hygiene and Coughing/Sneezing Etiquette**

- » Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or the safe use of hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
  - › Before
    - *Eating or preparing food*
    - *Touching your face*
  - › After
    - *Using the restroom*
    - *Coughing, sneezing, or blowing nose*
    - *Changing a diaper*
    - *Caring for someone sick*
    - *Touching animals*
  - › Encourage staff and students to cough and sneeze into their elbows, or to cover with a tissue.
  - › Ensure that used tissues are thrown in the trash and hands are washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or cleaned with hand sanitizer.



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### **Evaluate Large Gatherings Outside of Classrooms/Core Groups**

- » Develop plans in consultation with local public health officials regarding school-based or community events.



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### **Social Distancing**

- » Review current practices throughout the school day according to county board of education guidance.
- » Best practice to prevent transmission is to maintain at least three feet of distance.



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### **Face Coverings**

- » Any mask requirements are at the discretion of county boards of education working in collaboration with their local health departments.





## Contact Tracing with Local Health Department

- » For cases requiring quarantine, review class, bus, and cafeteria seating charts, and only quarantine students who were within three feet of an infected person without masks, as opposed to quarantining an entire class and sending students home unnecessarily. Closing single classrooms may be acceptable in instances where there is observed transmission in younger classrooms when close contacts are difficult to define or if rapid transmission occurs in a classroom.

*In the classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within three to six feet of an infected student where both students are wearing masks.*

- » Consider hiring someone (service employee, part-time, or contract with health department or other agency) at the school to collaborate/coordinate with the local health department and the central office to conduct school level contact tracing. This could free up the principal to focus on other important responsibilities. Funding has been made available through a DHHR grant to assist in the hiring of these positions.

**County school systems should monitor areas of higher transmission rates. At the discretion of individual counties, additional CDC-recommended protocols may be implemented. To view CDC COVID guidance, visit [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html).**

# QUARANTINE GUIDANCE

Students who have been vaccinated do NOT have to quarantine.

## **Option 1**

Quarantine period can end after Day 10 without testing and if no symptoms have been identified during daily self-monitoring.

- » Day 0\*-10 quarantine for close contacts can end if no symptoms develop during daily self-monitoring without testing.
- » If an individual develops symptoms within the quarantine period, immediately isolate and contact the local health department to report change in clinical status.

## **Option 2**

Quarantine period can end after Day 7 if someone tests negative (PCR or antigen test) and if no symptoms have been identified during daily self-monitoring. Post-quarantine transmission risk: 5%-12

- » Day 0\*-7 quarantine for close contact can end if COVID-19 test is negative and if no symptoms develop during daily self-monitoring.
- » Specimen may be collected and tested within 48 hours before the time of planned quarantine discontinuation.
- » Self-monitoring and mask wearing should be continuous.
- » If an individual develops symptoms within the quarantine period, immediately isolate and contact public health to report change in clinical status.

*\*Duration of quarantine applies from the last date of exposure*

## **Monitoring and Handling of Presumptive, Suspected, and Confirmed Cases**

Schools and counties are required to:

- » Educate staff, students, and their families about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, flu, and other communicable diseases. This includes guidance on when they should stay home, and when they can return to school.
- » Establish a dedicated space for symptomatic individuals that will not be used for other purposes.
  - › Immediately isolate symptomatic individuals to the designated area at the school and send them home to isolate.
  - › Ensure symptomatic students are isolated for a short period of time, in a non-threatening manner and under the visual supervision of a staff member who is socially distanced to the greatest extent possible while wearing appropriate PPE.

# SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE GUIDANCE

Per the March 2021 statewide guidance for safely opening restaurants, under the current State of Emergency declaration, per the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health, the following protocols are established for school food service. Current cafeteria capacity is up to 100% capacity provided that the occupancy of persons must be limited to the extent necessary to allow for proper social distance between common groups\* at such facility up to 100% of such facility's seating capacity to the extent that square footage and the number of seats and tables and spacing seats and tables permits. This threshold is subject to change if the State of Emergency is lifted related to the COVID-19 pandemic or otherwise directed by the Governor's Office.

The CDC recommends maximizing physical distance as much as possible when moving through the food service line and while eating (especially indoors). Using additional spaces outside of the cafeteria for mealtime seating can help facilitate distancing.

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## **Operations and Employee Protocol:**

Employees are encouraged to follow the screening protocols of their county board of education that would identify COVID-19 symptoms.

- » **Training:** Train all employees on the importance and expectation of increased frequency of handwashing and the use of hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol; provide clear instruction to avoid touching hands to face.
- » **Sick employees:** Direct any employee who exhibits COVID-19 symptoms to leave the premises immediately and seek medical care and/or COVID-19 testing. Local health departments should be informed of any such positive tests and for tracing purposes.
- » **Preparation:** Thoroughly detail, clean, and sanitize the entire facility prior to resuming dine-in services and continue to do so regularly, focusing such cleaning and sanitation on high-contact areas that would be touched by employees and students.
- » **Cleaning solutions:** Cleaning products and protocols shall include EPA-approved disinfectants that meet CDC requirements for use and effectiveness against viruses, bacteria, and other airborne and blood borne pathogens.
- » **Sanitizing between school meal services:** Between meal service periods, clean and sanitize areas such as table, seats, and other commonly touched areas. Discard any single-use items left by previous student.
- » **Kitchen:** Implement procedures to increase cleaning and sanitizing frequency of surfaces in the kitchen. Avoid all food contact surfaces when using disinfectants.
- » **Install barriers:** Where practicable, physical barriers such as partitions or plexiglass should be used in meal service and/or point-of-service areas.

*\*Common groups mean groups of individuals that live together or otherwise arrive together to such restaurant bar, or other facility and which groups may sit together while at the facility.*

- » **Face coverings:** Board of education staff should follow the requirements that are issued by the local board of education or as required by state guidelines.

*In such circumstances where face coverings are required, reasonable accommodations can be made for employees who cannot wear a mask (for example) due to a specialized health condition. Medical support documentation may be required by the employer to better understand what is appropriate. Local health departments can also be resources in exploring acceptable solutions.*

- » **Ensure food preparation and distribution models are in place that adhere to social distancing guidelines.**

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### **Food Safety:**

- » **Disposable plates, trays, and utensils:** If disposable products are used, these items must be handled properly to prevent contamination prior to distribution to students. The dishwasher and/or other method of washing and sanitizing plates, trays, and utensils must be monitored and recorded at each meal period for proper sanitizing temperature or chemical concentration. The use of disposable containers and utensils are encouraged but not required. If reusable plates, trays, and utensils are used, the plates, trays, and utensils shall be handled in a manner to prevent contamination prior to distribution to students.
- » **Trash bins:** Designated trash bins should be placed where students can dispose of their items at the end of the meal service. Trash bins should be placed in areas that do not create lines for students to practice proper social distancing.
- » Salad bars, condiment and utensil stations are all permitted.
- » Share tables are allowable this school year as well. To the extent practicable, a school may appoint a dedicated employee to collect eligible share table items in a safe and sanitized manner for redistribution.
- » **Student handwashing:** Students should be afforded the opportunity to wash their hands prior to and after the meal service. Additional handwashing stations are encouraged.

# VACCINATION INFORMATION

Health officials are administering the Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines in West Virginia to help protect against COVID-19. Vaccines are important to:

- » Protect population against virus spread and additional variants;
- » Reduce deaths and hospitalizations; and
- » Maintain critical services and acute care.

Designated as a high priority by Governor Jim Justice, school employees received the vaccine ahead of most of the general population to assist in the return of in-person instruction. This led to West Virginia being among the first states to consider educators and school personnel among essential employees.

Both Moderna and Pfizer require two rounds of vaccinations while the Johnson & Johnson is a single dose.

## Vaccine Second Dose Administration:



It is not possible to get COVID-19 from the vaccine because it does not contain a live virus. Instead, it causes the body to produce antibodies against the virus. Upon receiving the second dose, immunity usually occurs after 10 to 14 days. It is possible for an individual to be infected until full immunity occurs. Outbreak cases have occurred among those fully vaccinated, however, with mostly mild symptoms.

For complete vaccine information provided by the DHHR, visit <https://dhhr.wv.gov/COVID-19/Pages/Vaccine.aspx> or contact the COVID-19 Vaccine Info Line at 1-833-734-0965 with questions. If a school or county wishes to host vaccine clinics, please contact Michele Blatt at [mlblatt@k12.wv.us](mailto:mlblatt@k12.wv.us).

## #IGOTVAXXEDWV CAMPAIGN AND COMPETITION

In response to the declining rate of individuals receiving vaccinations statewide, the West Virginia Department of Education launched its #IGotVaxxedWV campaign to encourage students 12 and older to get their COVID-19 vaccine. The campaign includes a series of videos and social media graphics with testimonials from school personnel and students who share their reasons for getting vaccinated. The campaign will continue through the 2021-2022 school year to educate students about the benefits of getting vaccinated to ensure an uninterrupted school year.



The WVDE in collaboration with the Governor's Office and the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) has launched the #IGotVaxxedWV Competition to reward schools that have supported vaccinations among students and staff. The competition will run through the first week of October 2021 and will now award \$50,000 to four elementary schools, four middle schools and four high schools with the highest percentage of eligible staff and students vaccinated. The competition includes both public and private schools. Funds can be used for student-based activities and events that may have been missed or scaled back over the past two years. Once submissions are complete, data will be verified by DHHR's Division of Immunization Services. For contest information, visit [wvde.us/igotvaxxed](http://wvde.us/igotvaxxed).

## WEST VIRGINIA VIRTUAL SCHOOLS

Based on lessons learned and available data, we know students should be engaged in in-person instruction five days a week. However, state code does require a virtual school option for grades 6-12. Virtual schools throughout the state are operated by each county board of education. **For more information about local virtual school options, please contact your local county board of education.**

## COVID-19 RESOURCES

The West Virginia Department of Education has created a website with downloadable posters, graphics and other resources for school communities to utilize.

Visit [wvde.us/covid19](http://wvde.us/covid19) to learn more.



# RESOURCES

## School Environment

- » [Relationship Mapping Strategy \(New Version!\) — Making Caring Common \(harvard.edu\)](#)
- » [Addressing Chronic Absence \(Attendance Works\)](#)
- » [West Virginia Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports](#)
- » [West Virginia Center for Children's Justice \(handlewithcarewv.org\)](#)
- » [Trauma Informed Practice Resources \(handlewithcarewv.org\)](#)
- » [TSA | Guidelines for developing a trauma-informed school \(traumaawareschools.org\)](#)
- » [Essential Elements for a Trauma-Informed School System \(nctsn.org\)](#)
- » [Examining Your School's Climate](#)
- » [The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments Resource Guide](#)
- » [Request for Training - Behavior and Mental Health TAC \(marshall.edu\)](#)

## Data Driven Decision Making to Support Social-Emotional and Mental Health Wellness

- » [COVID-19 Social-Emotional Wellness Questionnaire](#)
- » [Zoom WV-E & Early Warning Information System – Training Modules](#)
- » [WVDE School Climate Survey](#)
- » [U.S. Ed School Climate Surveys](#)
- » [National School Climate Center](#)
- » [School Health Assessment and performance Evaluation System \(SHAPE\) \(schoolmentalhealth.org\)](#)
- » [U.S. National Center for Health Statistics](#)
- » [WV Center on Policy and Budget](#)
- » [National Vital Statistics Report](#)

## Social-Emotional Learning and Supports

- » [The Importance of Social-Emotional Learning for All Students Across All Grades \(nea.org\)](#)
- » [Benefits of SEL \(casel.org\)](#)
- » [Cultural Responsiveness to Racial Trauma \(nctsn.org\)](#)
- » [TT Difficult Conversations web.pdf \(tolerance.org\)](#)
- » [Recovery Resources to address Physical, Social-Emotional, and Mental Health](#)

## Mental Health and Well-Being Supports

- » [Well-being in School Environments \(medstarwise.org\)](#)
- » [Creating a Healthier Life, A Step-By-Step Guide to Wellness \(samhsa.gov\)](#)
- » [National Center for School Mental Health \(University of Maryland School of Medicine\)](#)
- » [ReClaimWV-Resources Booklet.pdf](#)
- » [Recovery Resources to address Physical, Social-Emotional, and Mental Health \(wvde.us\)](#)

## School Food Service

- » [WV Food Code](#) › Permit holders are required to follow directives of the regulatory authority in response to public health emergencies. 8-304.11
- » [West Virginia Code §21-3A-1A \(Article 3: Safety and Welfare of Employees\)](#)
- » [CDC Update on Food Service and School Meals](#)

\* Unless specified therein, resource documents are not to be construed as binding requirements for counties.



W. Clayton Burch  
West Virginia Superintendent of Schools

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