

Cherokee County School District

Return to Learn Plan



2021-2022

RETURN TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION AND CONTINUITY OF SERVICES PLAN

(UPDATED—March 18, 2022)

Cherokee County School District is requesting stakeholder and community input on its 2021-22 Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan as part of the school district's fulfillment of requirements related to the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act. On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act was signed into law.

The U.S. Department of Education is providing an additional \$121.9 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER III Fund). This legislation is awarding grants to state educational agencies, including the S.C. Department of Education, to provide local educational agencies, including Cherokee County Schools, with emergency relief funds to address the impact of COVID-19 on elementary and secondary schools across the nation.

2021-22 RETURN TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION AND CONTINUITY OF SERVICES PLAN

Overview: A district's plan must include how it will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and LEA staff, and the extent to which it has adopted policies or practices and a description of any such policies or practices, on each of the CDC's safety recommendations including: universal and correct wearing of masks; modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding); hand washing and respiratory etiquette; cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation; contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the state, local, territorial, or health departments; diagnostic and screening testing; efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible; appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies or practices; and coordination with state and local health officials.

Description of Maintaining Health and Safety

Keeping students and staff physically and emotionally safe is the number one priority of Cherokee County School District (CCSD). The traditional 5-day, face-to-face schedule adheres to the current guidelines, DHEC, and SDE to the greatest extent possible. The current guidelines strongly recommend social distancing when possible, preventative health measures, and frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces.

Health and Safety Protocols for Staff

1. The Nursing Supervisor will ensure that all school nurses remain abreast of the symptoms that could indicate COVID-19 as the CDC and DHEC update these symptoms.
2. All employees should screen for any COVID-related symptoms prior to leaving for work each day. If employees exhibit symptoms that are related to COVID-19, they should not report to work and should notify their supervisor as soon as possible.
3. All employees must practice social distancing as recommended by DHEC.
4. All faculty/staff are required to wear a face covering on the school bus.
5. Employees should assist with wiping down community use items and tools and disinfect personal workspaces after use with provided disinfectant.
6. Employees should assist with wiping down commonly touched items used throughout the workday, including but not limited to telephones, copiers, pens/pencils, etc.
7. Office staff should continuously sanitize their area using protocols established by the district.
8. Employees should avoid touching their faces and wash their hands thoroughly and often with soap and water for 20 seconds. In the absence of water, sanitize regularly.

9. Before and after eating, employees should wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water.
10. Schools should continue to promote common disease prevention strategies.
11. Custodians will implement enhanced health and safety protocols for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces in shared areas.

Universal and Correct Wearing of Masks

After considering Governor McMaster's Executive Order to lift the mask mandate in South Carolina's public schools and State Superintendent Spearman's rescission of her mask policy, CCSD has determined that masks will be optional for faculty, staff, and students in our school buildings. The CDC continues to recommend mask use in school buildings regardless of vaccination status. Federal orders continue to require that students and drivers on school buses wear masks.

Modifying Facilities to Allow for Physical Distancing (e.g., use of cohort/podding)

Social distancing protocols will be implemented to the best extent possible. When possible classroom desks will face the same direction and will be spaced the maximum possible distance apart. Students should be encouraged to avoid sharing their writing utensils, supplies, and tools. All classrooms will have hand sanitizer and disinfectant available for staff to sanitize desks daily. Classroom doors will remain closed and locked during instructional periods. Teachers will be responsible for opening and closing doors when students enter or leave class. Restrooms will be monitored during class change to ensure established guidelines are being followed. To limit student travel, teachers should not use students to collect items from outside the classroom. Communal areas will be marked for social distancing. Student lockers will not be assigned; however, will be available if requested. Water fountains will remain closed for use. Students will be encouraged to bring a water bottle to school; bottle fillers have been installed in each location. Schools will have protocols in place for students to refill water bottles and for students who do not bring bottles to have access to water.

Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette

It is recommended that students and employees wash their hands routinely and thoroughly throughout the day, particularly before eating, after using the restroom, and after hands are soiled or dirtied. There is no specific recommendation on the frequency or intervals of hand washing. Proper hand hygiene consists of washing hands thoroughly and often with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds. When hand washing is unavailable, students and staff should use hand sanitizer. Hand sanitizing stations will be available in classrooms and hallways. All persons are encouraged, regardless of presumed cause, to cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing. Staff and students should also use tissues to contain respiratory secretions and dispose of these tissues in the nearest trash can after use. All persons should wash their hands immediately after contact with possible respiratory secretions and contaminated objects/materials.

Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities, Including Improving Ventilation

Custodians will be required to disinfect high touch surfaces in schools throughout the day. Student desks will be disinfected once per day by custodians with a clean cotton towel and disinfectant. Classrooms with tile floors must be swept and spot-mopped daily and completely mopped twice weekly. Classrooms with carpet floors must be vacuumed and spot cleaned for spills daily. Teachers will also continue to be supplied with disinfectant for daily disinfection of their workspaces. Custodians with disinfectant will disinfect student desktops prior to the end of each day.

CCSD has incorporated the guidelines from the SC State Department of Transportation (SCDOT) and DHEC to ensure the health and safety of our students during bus transportation to and from school. Each bus will be cleaned and disinfected using approved disinfectant daily. Cleaning protocols require drivers to wipe down frequently touched surfaces with disinfectant, including those in the entrance touched by passengers, such as handrails and seat tops as well as those surfaces contacted by the driver.

Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine

CCSD follows the recommendations of SC DHEC in accordance with the published Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Schools: Management of Known and Possible COVID-19 Cases. School nurses are updated by the nursing supervisor when the guidance document changes. Isolation: School nurses and administrators exclude students and staff who test positive for COVID-19. Contact Tracing: *(Per new DHEC Guidelines as of February 2022: The following section only applies if the school is shown to have a positivity rate within students and staff of 10% or more).*

Each school has an established contact tracing team, which consists of a school administrator, school nurse, and others as designated by the location principal. Each member of the CCSD staff is required to complete the following courses as a part of Safe Schools training:

- Coronavirus Awareness: Full Course
- Using PPE
- What you Need to Know about Handwashing

Additionally, CCSD has established a positive case procedure for the contact tracing teams to implement when a case is reported. First, information is collected using the CCSD Positive Case Worksheet to determine the onset and whether the individual was present at school, school bus transportation, and/or school-related events during the infectious period. The school nurse or nursing supervisor verifies positive cases by reviewing documentation of lab results. If no documentation is provided, the nursing supervisor consults with the DHEC team to confirm the case. After the case is confirmed, the school contact tracing team identifies students who may have been in close contact with the positive case during their infectious period, as defined by SC DHEC, utilizing bus and classroom seating charts and teacher/coach interviews. All identifying

health information is held in strict confidence and shared only with those who need to know in order to thoroughly complete a contact tracing investigation. Positive cases are reported through the school's weekly reporting to DHEC and the SCDOE. Cluster cases are reported directly to DHEC by the nursing supervisor.

Student absences related to quarantine are shared with the principal, attendance office, and teacher so that absences are properly coded and instruction can be provided while the student is excluded. Staff members identified as close contacts (workplace and non-workplace) are required to report the exposure to the school nurse. The reported information is reviewed and the team determines whether the exposed employee meets the criteria to be eligible to work as a critical infrastructure employee during quarantine. If they are eligible, they are required to monitor for symptoms daily and follow all mitigating safety procedures. If symptoms develop, they are immediately required to complete quarantine at home and recommended to be tested for COVID-19.

If a student or staff member develops symptoms while in quarantine or if there are repeated exposures, exclusion dates are re-evaluated and changed as appropriate. In accordance with DHEC guidelines, students and staff with a lab confirmed positive PCR or antigen test within the last 90 days or are fully vaccinated are not required to quarantine if they do not have symptoms. Documentation is required for either scenario to be exempt from quarantine. During a student's period of school exclusion, isolation or quarantine, the student will be prohibited from any school-related function or extra-curricular activity.

Diagnostic and Screening Testing

Cherokee County School District currently participates in diagnostic or screening testing in collaboration with DHEC. The testing times and locations will be posted on the school district and school's websites and posted within school buildings.

Efforts to Provide Vaccinations to Educators, Other Staff, and Students, if Eligible

CCSD provided opportunities for school district staff in the following phases in 2020-2021:

Phase 1A: Employees eligible in Phase 1A were vaccinated in partnership with Spartanburg Regional Medical Center in January.

Phase 1B: Employees eligible in Phase 1B were reported to Spartanburg Regional Medical Center in March. Vaccine clinics were held in March and April.

In 2021-2022, CCSD provides opportunities for vaccination to eligible students, staff, and community members in partnership with health care providers during the school day and at community events such as athletic events.

Appropriate Accommodations for Children with Disabilities with Respect to Health and Safety Policies and Practices

Guidance and training will be ongoing as it relates to the continued provision of health and safety regarding accommodations for children with disabilities. Guidance will be issued, and training will be extended to relevant staff based on current CDC and DHEC guidance. The Department of Special Programs will assist school teams with understanding how to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 within their classrooms and therapy areas while supporting students with disabilities. In addition, considerations to help special education teams plan for the continuity of teaching and learning services if there is a case of COVID-19 identified within their classroom or therapy area will be provided.

Each teacher, therapist, and staff member will be reminded regularly to adhere to the following health and safety protocols:

- Wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Remember to supervise students when they use hand sanitizer to prevent ingesting alcohol.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Cover cough and sneezes with a tissue and dispose of tissue immediately and wash or sanitize hands.
- Support Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette with students by doing the following:
- Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and increase monitoring to ensure adherence among students. If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer can be used.
- Encourage students to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer can be used.

The District and school teams strongly request that sick children and staff stay home through:

- Communicating to parents the importance of keeping children home when they are sick.
- Communicating to staff the importance of being vigilant for symptoms and staying in touch with school administration if or when they start to feel sick.
- Adhering to established procedures within school facilities to ensure students and staff who come to school sick or become sick while at school are sent home as soon as possible.
- Keeping sick students and staff separate from well students and staff until they can be sent home.
- Having a plan if someone is or becomes sick.

- Provide an isolated place for sick students (sick room).
- Follow school district guidelines on how to disinfect classrooms and therapy areas.
- Have readily available contact information in the event a student or staff member becomes sick or has COVID-19 symptoms or will need to be quarantined.
- Intensify cleaning and disinfection efforts:
- Develop a schedule for cleaning and disinfecting classrooms, restrooms/changing areas, equipment, supplies, etc.
- Routinely clean, sanitize, and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched, especially toys and games.
- Ensure cleaning materials are kept secure and out of reach of children.
- Ensure there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children from inhaling toxic fumes.
- Universal hygiene and safety protocols will be adhered to at all times.

Vulnerable/High Risk Groups

Based on currently available information, it appears older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. To protect those at higher risk, it is important that everyone practices healthy hygiene behaviors.

Staff who have students who have underlying health conditions should discuss care plans and specific ways to address health and safety needs of students.

Coordination with State and Local Health Officials

The nursing supervisor serves as the liaison between CCSD and the DHEC team. In the absence of the nursing supervisor, a member of the CCSD COVID team is designated to serve in this capacity. All positive cases are reported to DHEC in accordance with the established process. DHEC also notifies CCSD if positive cases or close contacts requiring quarantine associated with the school district are identified during their case investigations. The information is sent via encrypted email to the nursing supervisor and disseminated to the appropriate schools/locations for implementation. If guidance is needed during a contact tracing investigation, the nursing supervisor consults with the DHEC team for recommendations via email and/or phone.

District Response on Continuity of Services

CCSD plans to ensure continuity of quality academic instruction by providing the option of face-to-face instruction five days per week for the 2021- 2022 school year. An intensive program targeting students who need academic remediation will be provided during summer 2021 and 2022 to help close learning gaps due to the loss of instructional time due to the pandemic. Additionally, the school district has initiatives in place for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year to address gaps of learning and the social emotional deficiencies caused by Covid-19.

If students are absent due to quarantine or COVID-19 but can participate in instruction, remote assignments and instruction will be provided virtually and/or through hard copy assignments.

If a school or schools must be temporarily closed due to illness or exposure, students will participate in virtual instruction through Canvas, the District's learning management system, and Teams, the District's virtual meeting tool. If a school or schools are closed due to high cases of Covid, the school district will complete the SCDOE form for approval. Students who participate in 3K & 4K Child Development classrooms will receive instruction through hard copy packets and/or through a Teams virtual classroom.

Social, emotional, and mental health services will be provided through universal supports in those areas through SEL-focused curriculum at each level. Counseling services will be available to students as well as staff through school-based counselors and an employee assistance program. The district will continue to provide targeted supports for students who have experienced trauma or who have significant needs through school counselors, special programs, counselors, or mental health counselors.

The District will ensure availability and accessibility of breakfast and lunch meals for any student wishing to receive on normal school days and during summer programming. When/if necessary, in-school dining arrangements will be modified to ensure social distancing. In the event of food service staffing shortages at a site(s) due to illness or other factors, food service employees may be shifted from other sites to adequately staff each location. In extreme situations, other school or District staff could be mobilized to assist in non-food prep capacities. In the event of school or district closures, meals will be available to students on any scheduled, instructional day. Meals would not be provided on teacher workdays, weekends, or holidays.

District Response on Ensuring Periodic Updates to its Plan

Districts are required to review and, as appropriate, revise their Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan at least every six months through September 30, 2023, including seeking public input and taking such input into account in determining whether to revise the plan and, if revisions are determined necessary, on the revisions it makes to its plan. If a district developed a plan prior to enactment of the ARP Act that was made publicly available and was developed with public comment but does not address each of the required aspects of safety established in the ARP Act, the district must, as part of the required periodic review, revise its plan consistent with the ARP Act requirements no later than six months after it last reviewed its plan.

According to the South Carolina State Department of Education, all school districts were provided with district-specific grant funding award information on May 24, 2021. A school district must have requested and received public input and have publicly posted its Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan by no later than June 24, 2021, with scheduled, comprehensive reviews of its plan every six months.

Cherokee County School District will solicit public input during a regularly-scheduled and/or special called board meeting and post plan revisions (if needed) by the following dates:

- November 8, 2021
- May 9, 2022
- November 14, 2022
- May 6, 2023

The ARP Act requires that school districts make their Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan available to the public online and that the plans be in an understandable and uniform format; to the extent practicable, are written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable, orally translated; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability, provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent. Before making its plan publicly available, school districts must seek public comment on the plan and develop the plan after considering public comment.

Cherokee County School District will make a *DRAFT* copy of the school district's Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan available to all stakeholders and area media outlets on its website on Thursday, June 10, 2021. District stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide feedback and input on the District's plan. These avenues will include, but not be limited to, public input during the Monday, June 14 2021, regular meeting of the Cherokee County Board of Trustees and plan input emailed directly to communication@cherokee1.org. The school district will gather public input and stakeholder feedback through Monday, June 18, 2021. Input and feedback will be used to make any necessary revisions/updates to the plan. Revisions to the plan were made in October 2021. Revisions were placed on the school district website for public input as well as public input provided for the November 8th Board meeting. Revisions will be made based on public input and board approval. A survey was sent to the community in March 2022 for input on Return to Learn Plan and Academic Recovery Plan.

Upon completion, the plan will be submitted to the S.C. Department of Education and posted to the Cherokee County School District website by June 24, 2021, in accordance with State guidelines.