July 30, 2020

Northeast Colorado
Board of Health
700 Columbine Street
Sterling, CO 80751

Dear Northeast Colorado Board of Health:

On May 22, 2020, Yuma County received approval for a variance. The County submitted an additional variance on July 1, 2020. In addition, Yuma County has collaborated to develop a variance specific to the phased opening of our school districts in the county. Yuma County contains four school districts that vary in size from 65 students to 900 students. We have used the CDE toolkit to guide our decision-making for each sector of the schools.

Thank you for recognizing that Yuma County is in a unique position as compared with Colorado counties due to our lower disease rate parameters, proactive development of actionable measures, and rural location. As a County with more favorable data we submit the following plan for your consideration, and we seek your support of our plan.

Without sustained surge in the number of cases requiring hospitalization as a result of COVID-19, Yuma County believes that as long as our communities continue to make responsible choices, we can, and should, start taking steps to reopen. We believe an important part of the reopening process is opening our schools in a thoughtful, safe manner.

We look forward to continued partnership with our Northeast Colorado Health Department on this solution which promotes economic recovery while assuring appropriate public health measures and progress.

Respectfully,

[Signatures]

County Commissioner
District I

County Commissioner
District II

County Commissioner
District III

Wray Community
District Hospital

Yuma District Hospital

Northeast Colorado Health Department
YUMA COUNTY PLAN FOR SCHOOL REOPENING OF THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

PURPOSE
The Yuma County Plan for school districts seeks to minimize the impact of COVID on student education while implementing practices and restrictions that limit the spread of illness and the chance for a medical surge in excess of hospital capacity. The focus of the plan, in accordance with recommendations and considerations sent out by Colorado Department of Education (CDE), will be to encourage social distancing to the extent possible, encourage improved hand hygiene practices, improve disinfection practices, discourage cohort mixing to the extent possible, encourage families to keep ill students home, and to create an improved plan for handling students who become symptomatic while on campus. The Yuma County plan for schools crafts a balance between addressing the current significant emotional and educational impact on students while maintaining public health and infection control capabilities.

Nothing in this pending plan prohibits a local governing Board of Education from enacting more proactive standards including, but not limited to stay at home orders or additional protective measures.

DISEASE TRANSMISSION CONTROL
• The percent of positive cases per population has remained lower than the average in the State of Colorado. We are currently at a rate of 0.52% as compared to the State of Colorado Average of 0.60%.
• The number of hospitalizations among Yuma County residents has remained very low as of 07/02/2020.
• Yuma County has proven its testing capability is far above average. Currently, Yuma County has tested 11.28% of their population and the State of Colorado has tested 5.97%

SUFFICIENT HEALTH CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH CAPABILITIES
• Yuma County has two critical access hospitals working closely with the Northeast Colorado Health Department assessing the health risk of COVID-19 for our county.
• Yuma County hospitals and nursing homes have sufficient COVID-19 testing capabilities. A drive-through testing facility is operational and available Monday through Friday to test Yuma County residents with symptoms. This testing is free of charge. This enables all students and staff, regardless of ability to pay, the option to be tested and managed to prevent spread of illness in the schools.
• Northeast Colorado Health team conducts investigations on every positive case. Contact tracing is also performed with people who were in direct contact with identified positive cases. Additionally, our hospital systems have dedicated care management staff that assists with this process, we mail all results to the patient, and provide education regarding isolation or quarantine instructions.
• Yuma County hospitals will use a 25% capacity COVID-19 positive threshold to determine a breach of sustainable resources. If hospitals experience an increase of COVID-19 positive patients in excess of 25% of their capacity, the local Task Force will implement a cessation of increased public openings and may institute more restricted guidance for the schools and community businesses to prevent community spread.

OUTBREAK RISKS IN HIGH-VULNERABILITY SETTINGS ARE MINIMIZED
• Yuma County Jail infection and disease control protocols have been implemented with continuous monitoring and adjustment.
• Yuma County is working with local hospitals to make testing available to all critical government service employees with priority on testing employees of Yuma County Jail and the Yuma County Department of Human Services.
• Yuma County is working closely with the Northeast Colorado Health Department and local nursing homes to address policies and procedures in nursing homes.
• Yuma County nursing homes and hospitals have all established baseline staff testing and will continue to monitor staff and complete follow-up testing as needed.
• Yuma County is working closely with the Northeast Colorado Health Department and childcare facilities.
• Yuma County is working closely with local hospitals to make testing available to critical businesses and large local employers.
• Yuma County is working closely with the Northeast Colorado Health Department to develop guidelines for gathering places involving high-vulnerable populations.
• Yuma County is working closely with the school districts to develop plans that will minimize spread and develop appropriate triggers for considering further restrictions.

WORKPLACE PREVENTIVE MEASURES ARE ESTABLISHED
Guidelines addressing prevention have been written for distribution to schools, places of worship, restaurants, workplaces, and other essential places as outlined in this document. Healthcare providers are assisting in the development of these plans.

RISK OF IMPORTED CASES MANAGED
• A Yuma County Task Force has been established to assess the health risks of COVID-19, develop local protocol, to monitor COVID-19 disease transmission and control, and make adjustments to guidelines as necessary.
• Yuma County is involved in a weekly meeting with members representing local hospitals, local city officials, and other local representatives.
• Both hospital facilities work closely with public health and attend meetings every two weeks for regional updates and education by the Northeast Colorado Health Department.

COMMUNITIES ARE FULLY ENGAGED
• Yuma County is working with the four school districts in Yuma County, the Northeast Colorado Health Department, and local Hospitals to implement physical distancing and disinfection guidelines.
• Yuma County is working with Northeast Colorado Health Department and local businesses and places of worship to implement physical distancing guidelines.
• Yuma County is working with Northeast Colorado Health Department, local municipalities, community organizers and local residents on education and compliance related to physical distancing guidelines.
• Yuma County is working with Northeast Colorado Health Department and local municipalities and outdoor recreation facilities to implement physical distancing guidelines.

TIMELINE
• Phase I: Stay at Home—Through April 26, 2020
• Phase II: Safer at Home—begins April 27, 2020 ○ Curbside retail—begins May 1, 2020 ○ Office 50% open—begins May 4, 2020
• Phase III: Protect Our Neighbors—(This is the Yuma County waiver approved on May 22, 2020) Yuma County has also moved into a tiered Phase III model at the recommendation of the Yuma County Task Force in compliance with the Yuma County Waiver. As of June 29, 2020, Yuma County has moved to Tier 3.
Tier 3 – Three weeks following the successful implementation of Tier 2 and with the local Task Force assessing less than 25% capacity utilized in local healthcare facilities and Yuma County demonstrating a positive test result rate of less than the State of Colorado average the local Task Force will consider the following:

- Increasing utilization of eating and drinking establishments as determined by the Task Force.
- Increasing utilization of gyms and fitness facilities as determined by Task Force.
- Allowing gatherings of up to 250 people following State social distancing requirements.

PUBLIC HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL RESIDENTS OF YUMA COUNTY

- Maintain physical distancing (6 feet).
- Adults 65 years and older and high-risk populations should limit public interactions and stay at home as much as possible.
- Use cloth face coverings for interactions where physical distancing is not possible or when entering public places.
- People with symptoms should stay home and should not go to work or school.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60%

DETERMINING SUCCESS DURING ALL PHASES OF REOPENING

The determination on whether the social distancing policies are working will be based on: 1) the number of new cases and hospitalizations remain low, and 2) stable doubling time of cases, and 3) the Yuma County Task Force to serve as a warning system to swiftly detect an increase in community spread to prevent a breach of local hospital system capacity among our two local hospitals (Yuma District Hospital and Wray Community District Hospital). If respective numbers for either of these measures exceeds the stated limit, actions will be taken to improve social distancing practices in Yuma County. It may be necessary to reissue local Safer at Home or Stay at Home orders. It is vital that everyone participate in this effort.

GUIDELINES FOR ALL SECTORS:

- Perform frequent environmental cleaning and disinfection (concentrate on high touch surfaces like tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.)
  - Healthcare facilities
  - Postmortem care facilities
  - Laboratories
  - Other, non-healthcare facilities
- Employees of all business sectors are encouraged to wear a non-medical cloth face covering over the nose and mouth while working, except where doing so would inhibit the individual’s health
- Maintain at least six feet distance from each other when possible
- Monitor workforce for compatible symptoms
- Implement or maintain return to work policies
  - Healthcare facilities
  - Critical infrastructure workers after exposure
  - Businesses and Schools
SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS BY SCHOOL SECTOR

General Guidelines

- Districts will designate a District-Wide COVID Response Coordinator who is responsible for COVID related decisions, tracking and communications. Each building will have a designated COVID lead staff member that reports up to a District-wide-COVID Response Coordinator. The coordinator will work directly with the BOCES nurse, local public health, and the local health facility who will provide additional coordination, guidance and oversight. The lead positions are listed below:

- Schools will promote healthy hygiene practices such as handwashing and hand sanitizers and will provide supplies needed. Supplies will be strategically located such as in the cafeteria lines, restrooms and hallways.

- Face mask use will be at the discretion of the individual. School districts will support the decision of the staff member and or student/parent on face mask usage. If face mask use is mandated by executive order/law, the school districts will enforce the rule to the degree possible. Face shields may be used in place of face masks when the individual is not in close proximity of another individual. The mask must be added when working closely with any individual. These rules pertain only to periods when mask usage is mandated by law.

- Intensify cleaning, disinfection, and ventilation- Schools should clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces as they normally would in the event of increased rates of influenza and other respiratory infections.

- Encourage social distancing through increased spacing, small groups and limited mixture between groups as feasible.

- Train all employees on health and safety protocols. Local healthcare facilities will assist in providing education to staff and parents to ensure there is an understanding of when to keep students home, proper hand hygiene, the importance of physical distancing, and how to properly isolate ill students.

- Train students on healthy hygiene practices including handwashing, covering cough and sneeze, and proper social distancing. Healthcare facilities will assist with this process.

- Provide signage throughout the schools encouraging healthy hygiene practices

- Encourage offering distance learning opportunities for students throughout all phases who may be expected to stay home from school for 10 days or longer due to illness or quarantine. Consider allowing teachers to teach from home during quarantine with assistance of onsite employee providing guidance and discipline in the classroom.

- Extracurricular event gatherings will encourage social distancing of public. The number of people allowed to gather will be as indicated in the Phased approach as outlined at the end of the document

Communication

- Provide employees and parents clear guidance for temperature checks, home hygiene, and attendance/reporting procedures.

- Work with local health care facilities to determine clear communication regarding employee/student ability to return to school.

- Effective and ongoing communication is a critical component throughout the coming year. Consider providing guidance in advance for expectations should we have to move between the three phases of opening.
• Consider posting reminders at entryways of building and buses not to enter if you are experiencing signs of illness.

Public Gatherings
• Allow public gatherings as identified in the timeline as approved by the local Task Force or as allowed by the current State Executive order, whichever is greater.
• Maintain at least six feet distance from each other when possible.
• Signage will be used as reminders of physical distancing and encouraging hygiene practices. Signage will be posted in areas of larger events such as gyms and auditoriums to indicate risk of failure to comply with physical distancing recommendation.
• Non-school related festivals or other large gatherings over 500 people will not be permitted on school premises unless specifically approved through a waiver or such a time that vaccinations have been implemented.

Administrative Offices
Visitors for extracurricular events will not be permitted in other general areas of the buildings.
• Maintain at least six feet distance from customers and each other.
• Desks, workstations, and other work areas should be separated by at least six feet when possible. Workstations separated by walls that are six feet or higher can remain as they are.
• Implement or maintain physical barriers for high-contact settings (e.g. reception areas).
• Implement physical distance protocols in common areas (separate tables and chairs by at least six feet).
• Place markings on the floor to maintain at least six feet distance in customer lines; try to establish one-way passage as much as possible.
• Implement or maintain flexible sick leave policies and practices.
• Consider accommodations for high-risk individuals or populations.
• Employees and contracted workers whose duties include close contact with members of the public will be encouraged to wear a non-medical cloth face covering over the nose and mouth.

Bus Transit
• Bus drivers will be encouraged to wear face masks especially when they are within 6 feet of students.
• Education will be provided to parents encouraging them to perform a health check on their student prior to getting on the bus. The requirement will be that parents will keep their child home if their child has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or any other contagious virus as per school district requirements.
• Signage will be placed on the buses stating student should not board the bus with the above listed symptoms.
• Hand sanitizer will be available for students and bus drivers to use as they enter and exit the bus.
• Bus drivers should consider having students sit in the back of the bus working the way forward to maintain the most distance possible from the bus driver.
• Students will be assigned seats to minimize exposure. Students will sit one person per seat until capacity is such as shared seating is needed. Whenever possible, students will be assigned to sit with others in their household.
- Use gloves that shall be provided by the school anytime decontaminating surfaces or touching surfaces contaminated by body fluid.
- When weather and conditions allow, consider opening windows to allow for increased ventilation in the bus.
- Disinfection of buses:
  - Following morning route: At a minimum, wipe down all handrails; seat bottoms, back and top; driver's area and high touch areas.
  - At the end of day: wipe down handrails; seat bottoms, backs and top; driver's area; high touch areas; sweep and mop up areas where things have been spilled; and disinfect windows.
  - Weekly and following any known exposure: Use district disinfection process (spray/fog/light)

**Kitchen and Cafeteria**
- Sanitize cookware, plates, cups, cutlery and food preparation surface regularly and plan for distribution that minimizes handling of food.
- Limit unnecessary staff and visitors in the food service areas. Cafeterias will be closed to visitors during the 2020-2021 school year.
- Sanitize table services between eating shifts.
- For classes that cohort throughout the school day, maintain the same cohort while eating together in the cafeteria to minimize exposure between groups.
- Remove self-service, including salad bars, buffet lines, and family style service.
- Require use of individual condiment packages. Acceptable alternative would include a staff member serving the condiments or condiments offered in open, individual cups.
- Consider staggering lunch times to allow increased spacing in the cafeteria thus also minimizing large groups at recess

**Classrooms**
- Spread desks out to allow for maximized spacing within the classroom.
- Increase airflow within the classrooms when possible.
- Keep each child's belongings in separated spaces/cubbies from others.
- No sharing of lockers whenever possible. If locker sharing is required, students must sanitize hands upon entering the classroom.
- In building where desks are shared, sanitizing of desks between classes and asking students to sanitize their hands upon entering is recommended.
- Provide adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high touch materials to the extent possible.
- Provide opportunities for hygiene practices such as handwashing/hand sanitizer, mask usage, and social distancing within the classroom.
- Consider disinfecting high touch supplies between classes.
- Encourage outdoor PE activities as much as weather permits to increase ventilation.
- Libraries should stagger student's usage to encourage social distancing. Libraries will disinfect book covers prior to replacing them on the shelf.
- Performing arts (music/band): If performed in tight spaces, consider use of physical barriers between students. Encourage portions of the class to be done outside to allow for more social distancing (weather
permitting) or move to a larger location to spread out if feasible. Band instruments will not be shared between students.

**Playgrounds, recess and gyms**
- Activities should be held outside whenever possible to encourage increase ventilation
- Playground equipment may be used with a protocol that students must wash or sanitize hands upon entering the school
- Gym equipment that requires high touch such as basketballs or jump ropes should be sanitized after use.
- Consider staggering recess times to keep students within their class/cohort when possible.

**Restrooms**
- Soap and single service towels shall be available for all lavatory facilities, except that mechanical air dryers may be used in lieu of towels. Ensure adequate hygiene supplies are always available.
- Consider limiting the number of people in the restrooms at one time.
- Consider increasing the cleaning and disinfecting of high touch areas such as door handles, faucets, and paper towel dispensers. Usage of non-touch faucets, toilets and paper towel dispensers are ideal.

**Care of staff and students who become ill**
- Schools will identify an isolation room or area in which anyone who exhibits COVID-like symptoms may remain until picked up by parents. This area should be separate from the area designated for students seeking other medical needs. Examples of such students include those needing medications or who have been injured requiring first aid treatment. Symptom screening will be performed on each student sent to the office for illness. Teachers will have a low threshold for sending students to the office to be screened. See exhibit A for screening tool.
  - Staff who become ill will be asked to leave the building immediately to minimize exposure to others. Administration will identify a temporary substitute for the employees as needed.
  - Students who become ill will be taken directly to the isolation area. Once parents are notified, parents will be expected to get the student as soon as possible and will be required to have their child picked up within no more than one hour.
- Staff shall use Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions when caring for sick people. This will include supplying N-95 masks when available (facemask and face shield are acceptable options), gowns and gloves for employees who are responsible for caring for a student experiencing COVID-like symptoms.
- The symptomatic child should be provided a face mask to wear if tolerated until parent arrives. Symptomatic students will be seated at least 6 feet apart.
- The seat and high touch areas should be disinfected immediately upon the departure of the child.
- Schools will have flexible absentee policies. All students/employees who are absent will be tracked to determine illness. Re-entry to schools will be per current CDC guidelines or as directed by their medical doctor:
  - Current guidelines include: We must assume all persons with COVID related symptoms are COVID positive until proven otherwise. Students/employees who test positive or presumed positive may not return to school until they have met ALL of the following.
    - No fever for 72 hours without the use of fever reducing medications, AND
    - Symptoms are improving, AND
    - 10 days have passed since onset of symptoms
○ Students/employees who test negative may return as soon as they are fever free for 24 hours and symptoms improved.

○ Students/employees who have symptoms attributed to another cause such as strep throat or influenza should be allowed to return upon physician note/approval or according to current district policy for those illnesses.

○ Students/employees who have an ongoing symptom (such as chronic cough from asthma) will require a note from their health care provider to return to school (as they test positive on the screening tools)

Care of students and staff with Chronic Conditions

○ Ensure proper medications and resources are available to assist the child/employee in an emergency

○ Encourage mask usage, social distancing, and hand hygiene opportunities

○ Assist a student or employee in any accommodations necessary (by ADA requirements) to help protect them from disease exposure. (accommodations may include assistance in getting access to masks, face shields, barriers, or determining a way to increase social distancing for those students whenever possible)

Symptom Screening

○ Parents will be educated and expected to properly screen students for fever over 100.4 degrees and other symptoms of illness prior to bringing them to school. Home is considered the first point of screening.

○ Buses are the second point of the screening continuum. Signage will indicate that students with symptoms should not board the bus.

○ School is the final point of the screening continuum. Employees and teachers will remain attune to student’s behavior indicating potential illness. Teachers and staff will send students for full screening if they show any signs of potential illness. Full screening will include temperature and symptoms assessment. See attached screening tool.

○ If the community is moved to Safer at Home or Yellow phase of school openings, all students and employees will be screened within one hour of entering the building with a goal of quickly recognizing and isolating any student or staff member who tests positive.  Phases of Reopening

○ GREEN Phase: During this Phase, the community is in the Yuma County Protect Our Neighbor phase of reopening. This designation was received on May 22, 2020. Green phase will also apply if the County achieves the Statewide Protect Our Neighbor certification. The level of illness is low within our community. The healthcare facilities are capable of meeting the needs of the population with less than 25% of beds being occupied by COVID-19 patients. The Yuma County Task force is meeting regularly and has not communicated concerns with activities held within phase I.

  ○ All areas of the school systems will abide by the general rules set forth within this document. No additional restrictions are required at this time.

  ○ Extracurricular activities are limited to no more than 75% of the capacity of the room/gym. If an outside event is scheduled, capacity will be limited to the space available using 28 sq. feet per person as a limit. Fans will be encouraged to distance between families and additional stands/seating may be used to spread fans out over a larger space. All limitations for group sizes will be determined by the current, least restrictive approved variance.

○ YELLOW Phase: During this phase, the community has either been moved to Safer at Home Guidelines (Protect Our Neighbor has been revoked due to high levels of community illness) or the threshold of COVID positive students within the district has been met:

  ○ Threshold for YELLOW Phase:

    • Districts with < 250 students: 5 or more active COVID cases for students or staff within a 10-day period.
• Districts with >250 and < 1000 students: 10 or more active COVID cases students or staff within a 10-day period.
  ○ All areas of the school systems will abide by the general rules set forth within this document. Additional restrictions will be added.
  ○ Buses will fully disinfect at the end of each day.
  ○ Meals will be delivered to and eaten in the classrooms. Open campus will remain available per district policy to prevent crowding and encourage distancing.
  ○ Classrooms will be separated on the playgrounds to remain within their cohort to minimize exposure between classrooms.
  ○ All students and employees will be screened within the first hour of the day to identify and isolate students and staff who are displaying symptoms of COVID. Anyone who tests positive will be sent home per policy.
○ Students will have assigned seating in the classrooms whenever possible to help with contract tracing and exposure investigations.
○ All classrooms that have students who have been exposed to a positive case will be disinfected at the end of each day.
○ The YELLOW phase will be in effect for a minimum of two weeks and until the number of new cases within the school has started to decline.
○ Extracurricular activities may continue. Students will be fully screened prior to leaving for activities in another town. Activities at home events will be limited to no more than 50% room/gym capacity with a maximum group limit of 250 prioritizing immediate family members of participants.

- **RED Phase:** During this phase, the community has either moved to Stay at Home orders or the threshold of COVID positive students within the district has been met:
  ○ Thresholds for RED Phase:
    - Districts with <250 students: 15 or more active COVID cases for students or staff within a 10-day period.
    - Districts with >250 and <1000 students: 30 or more active COVID cases for students or staff within a 10-day period.
  ○ All campuses will be closed for a period lasting a minimum of two weeks.
  ○ All campuses will be fully decontaminated.
  ○ Kitchen services may remain open and supply students/families with sack lunches during the time it is closed.
  ○ Off-site learning will be provided during this time.
    - Synchronous Remote Instruction will be utilized. Teachers as essential staff may be required to work on site.
  ○ On-site learning will be made available once the number of infected students/staff members reported are at or below the threshold detailed in YELLOW phase. Resumption of on-site learning will begin at the YELLOW Phase for a period of one week and may proceed to the GREEN Phase as the illness numbers allow.
  ○ Administrative offices will be the only onsite office open during this time but may be closed temporarily for decontamination. (Teachers and staff may be required to report.) Facilities that may be open during this phase will be decontaminated first.
  ○ Extracurricular activities may be limited or discontinued during this time. All students who wish to participate in an extracurricular activity during this time will be required to have a negative test within that past 7 days and will be fully screened prior to activity. Students and other participants with known exposure to a COVID positive person within the past 5 days or those who are experiencing symptoms are not eligible to participate. Home activity events will be held to those involved in the activity (student, coaches, band director...) and parents only during this phase. All participants will be required to be fully screened prior to entry. Activities that require overnight stays are allowed as long as daily screenings are performed, and a plan is developed to isolate and assist a participant who becomes ill getting home safely.