



Office of Strategic Outreach & Community Engagement

School Reentry Guidance & Family FAQs

Updated: June 24, 2020

Summary

On Tuesday, June 23, 2020, the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) released a comprehensive School Reentry Guidance document. The guidance contains considerations and recommendations for New Mexico's schools as they craft reopening plans for the 2020-2021 school year. Topics include: an outline of the phased approach to reentry, principles and requirements for reentry, COVID-19 safe operating categories and suggestions, and information about transportation, meals, high-risk populations, and more. The complete reentry guidance can be reviewed [here](#) on the PED website. Individual schools and districts will create specific plans for continuous learning that are responsive to their community needs and circumstances.

While we address some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about school reentry in this document, this is not a comprehensive list and, therefore, we encourage families to check our website for [regularly updated guidance](#) or you can contact us at the email and telephone number listed at the end of this document. The PED will continue to update this document and we will work with partners and stakeholders to provide clarity. Additionally, we are in the process of drafting additional guidance on a variety of items related to school reentry. Please continue to check our [website](#) and follow our social media channels for updates.

FAQs

What family supports are available?

There are a number of resources available to students and families as we return to school. The PED has included a list of social emotional learning resources in the guidance document and encourages schools to recognize and attend to trauma and grief that students, families, and educators may be facing. Please reach out to your school counselor, family engagement coordinator, or community schools coordinator for additional information about local resources. Additionally, School-Based Health Centers (SBHC) are a great source for public health information and support. For more information and guidance on finding a local SBHC, please click [here](#).

How do I know what category my school or district is in?

Schools are placed in a category based on analysis of the available health data and under guidance of the Medical Advisory Team. The PED has identified three categories for school reentry: Remote, Hybrid, Full Reentry. Beginning at the start of August, all schools will begin in the Hybrid category for an initial period. The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) and the Medical Advisory Team will monitor the spread of the virus during this initial phase. Schools will move into the Full Reentry phase if there is not a significant increase in the spread of the virus during this time. Schools or regions experiencing significant spread of the virus may remain in the Hybrid model or move to the Remote model if that is determined to be necessary by state public health officials.

Furthermore, the state will assess the impact of school reentry on the rate of spread of the virus statewide and in each of the five regions. When the overall state data indicate it is safe to transition a full school schedule, the regions will be able to do so as well. Our preference is to move together as a state if the data supports general advancement toward a safe, full reentry, but if an individual region's data suggests that reentry would be unsafe for students, educators, school personnel and the community, that specific region will be monitored until numbers improve and we can ensure a safe return for all.

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Attendance

Children in Pre-K through 12th grade are expected to attend both in-person and remote programs every day and attendance will be recorded on days in which students are physically present in schools. Schools will also track participation in their remote programs. The PED will provide more detailed guidance on attendance requirements for parents, schools and districts in a future memo.

Distance Options

All districts and charter schools have been encouraged to invest federal and local funds to ensure that every student has a digital device and, if needed, a mobile hotspot or other support for internet connectivity. It is expected that during Hybrid and Remote modes of operation, districts are providing a full online program. In addition, Full Reentry programs are expected to have online options ready and available with quality assurances in the event that they need to close. The PED has provided guidance on a variety of remote and hybrid learning models. Local considerations may include logistics, daycare, prioritization of student groups, and more.

What about childcare?

The health and safety of our children, families, and educators remains a priority. We are actively working with medical experts to offer guidance that supports a continued decrease in community spread of COVID-19. We understand the burden this places on families and we are encouraging districts to work with their communities to prioritize attendance and explore childcare options. In addition, the PED guidance document includes a link to resources for workplace issues related to coronavirus. The PED is working in collaboration with the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) to address childcare and you will be able to review additional guidance and resources soon. Once published, we encourage you to review the information provided and consult with your employer and child's school district for additional considerations and local resources.

What if I don't have access to the internet or a learning device at home?

All districts and charter schools have been encouraged to invest federal and local funds to ensure that every student has a digital device and, if needed, a mobile hotspot or other support for internet connectivity. In addition, schools, and districts are encouraged to provide internet accessible areas such as school parking lots or bus stops, to download information and assignments. Furthermore, printable learning materials should be offered, when needed and appropriate.

What if I can't afford PPE like masks for my child(ren)?

Schools will implement face covering requirement similar to a uniform policy. Families are asked to provide their own, but schools should provide a face covering to those who need them or for students who forget them. The NMDOH has additional mask-wearing guidance for children [here](#). If you or your family needs a mask this summer, you can request a face covering directly from the state [here](#) or by calling 1-833-551-0518.

My child (or someone in our home) has an underlying medical condition. What can we do?

The state is working with vendors and schools to ensure that all students in the state have access to online learning options. Students with underlying medical conditions will have access to these programs. In addition, the PED will offer more specific guidance regarding support for students with underlying medical conditions in addition to students that will attend in-person programming.

What if there's a spike in cases?

The state will continuously monitor public health data. In the event of a spike, schools will need to shift into the Hybrid or Remote learning models until the spike in cases subsides.

What is a "surveillance and rapid response testing" program?

Surveillance testing means that a set of school staff will be tested for the virus each week. This allows for ongoing monitoring and fast isolation of anyone receiving a positive test. *Rapid response testing* means that when a case is

confirmed, health officials will work with schools to identify individuals who were exposed to the infected person and to test them for the virus.

If my child is engaged in distance, remote, or hybrid learning, how will they continue to receive their meals?

The PED will continue to work with schools and districts to ensure meals are made available through either a grab-and-go program or through meal delivery. Click [here](#) for meal sites and updates.

How will my child receive their special education services?

Special education services are expected to continue as stated in a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). If a school moves to a Remote or Hybrid model, schools are encouraged to allow small groups of students with disabilities to access the school building in order to receive small group or individualized in-person services. The PED will continue to provide guidance and publish additional resources soon. If you have additional questions about special education, please visit our FAQ on special education [here](#).

Will we have an in-person back to school night?

Schools must follow the Public Health Order. Many schools will have to adjust back-to-school nights and provide a virtual option or a set of small group options.

What about school sports?

The PED is in conversation with the New Mexico Athletic Association (NMAA) and will continue to follow their guidance and recommendations. The NMAA recently published an update to their "Return to Play Guidelines." You can find that document here: <https://www.nmact.org/2020/06/nmaa-guidance-for-return-to-play-phase-1-updated-to-include-use-of-weight-rooms/>.

Contact Information

If you have additional questions, please reach out to our engagement team at Family.Engagement@state.nm.us or call our hotline at 1-833-415-0567.

Social Media

Twitter: @NMPED and @NMPED_Community

Facebook: @NMPublicEducationDepartment