
SAFETY AND OPERATIONS



SCHOOL REOPENING TOOLKIT: SAFETY AND OPERATIONS

In moving toward school re-opening, considerations around school safety and operations should help inform district and school level strategies. Districts should plan on how best to ensure a safe and clean school environment, updating procedures to account for any adjustments to school models and preventative measures being implemented. This toolkit is designed to assist district leaders, SAVE Act Coordinators, and operations leads as they consider the physical safety of students from both security and school building perspectives. The toolkit includes: (1) guidance and considerations on re-opening school sites; (2) areas to update safety protocols and emergency operations plans; and (3) resources to best leverage partners in safety operations.

All information in the document is non-regulatory guidance issued for general informational purposes only. This document is not intended to constitute legal advice. Because local school board policy and unique facts make dramatic differences in analyzing any situation, the Tennessee Department of Education advises each school district to consult with the local school board attorney for specific legal advice regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school operations.

II. Checklist

School Site Re-Opening

As districts re-open sites, both those used and not used during the closure, school and district teams should analyze building-level needs, procure any needed supplies or staffing supports, and communicate with stakeholders on any updates to building procedures:

- Establish requirements in collaboration with the health department for when a school site is eligible to re-open and the procedures to follow in advance.
- Site Assessment: Determine the amount of time and resources needed to re-open each site. Consider the following:
 - Assess, identify and prioritize the order of individual schools to reopen.
 - Assess staff capacity, including substitutes: Compile data indicating which staff members plan to return to work, OR establish an Employee Hotline Phone Bank or website so employees can report their status (name; position; work location; health status; return to work date).
 - Consider the use of a health screening protocol for all employees and guidelines for when an employee who may have been ill or exposed to the coronavirus is ready to return to work and under what conditions, following CDC criteria: [Overall CDC Guidance for Schools; Guidance on Return to Work \(If they have been sick with COVID-19; If they have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19\)](#).
 - Develop a status report for each staff category by school and department (e.g., teachers, administrators, custodial staff, bus drivers, etc.) to determine overall personnel capacity and needs, including the identification of personnel who may be at greater risk and/or require accommodations in order to return.
 - Work with local law enforcement on changes to school schedule to identify appropriate hours of attendance for school resource officers (SRO).
 - Review safety and security protocols. Identify any changes which may be needed as a result of operational changes. For example, when conducting a health screening process outside of the building, utilize SRO for security of the area.

Site Preparation

- Inspect all buildings, facilities, equipment, materials, etc. and determine status and needs for operations to include fire code/safety inspections, health department inspections for cafeterias, HVAC air quality inspections, and water quality inspections for water fountains and bathrooms that have not been used recently.
- Inventory buildings for prevention opportunities considering the following questions:
 - Are there enough sinks and hand-sanitizing stations available to accommodate frequent handwashing and personal hygiene by entire classes?

- Are there an appropriate number and type (no-touch) of trash receptacles and are they are placed appropriately to minimize exposure?
- Are alternative sources of drinking water available that will allow for the disabling of drinking fountains?
- Is there a need for other protective devices for employees with repeated exposure to the public such as clear plastic barriers in school building offices?
- Are there improvements that can be made to air quality to minimize transmission?
- Are there surfaces that are not easily cleaned that should be recovered or replaced to minimize infection?
- Are hygiene products like soap, paper towels, tissues and toilet paper dispensed in a no-touch manner?
- How frequently are supplies replenished and where are they stored? Are supplies adequately secured?
- Does the storage of supplies, including hand sanitizer, meet fire code?
- Survey supply vendors to determine when supply chain and delivery system will be partially or fully operational; provide vendors with supply needs. If needed supplies cannot be obtained by normal procurement measures, submit a request to your local emergency manager, who can assist in reviewing county supply levels and file requests to the state as needed.
- Disinfect all work areas, counters, restrooms, doorknobs, and stair railings several times daily.
- HVAC system should be scheduled to be cleaned and filters changed on a regular basis. Consider use of Environmental Protection Agency Indoor Air Quality Assessment tool to identify opportunities for improving air quality. The school should be thoroughly ventilated and cleaned: open all doors and operable windows and/or run HVAC systems for a period of time adequate to replace air in building.
- Train custodial and maintenance staff on appropriate cleaning routines and protocols to follow when deep-cleaning is required.

Communicate with Stakeholders

- Inform and train staff and students on health and prevention issues.
- Inform parents of school reopening plans and procedures, including steps taken to ensure site readiness.
- Inform and train school community on any modified school procedures or best practices being implemented in response to the outbreak, leveraging health departments as partners.

Develop and Implement Ongoing Monitoring Strategy

In partnership with health departments and emergency management agencies, districts may consider ongoing monitoring strategies to check for student and staff health related to the COVID-19 outbreak. The below table provides a list of action items districts may consider for such ongoing monitoring. Any actions should be driven by local context and in collaboration with local health officials. See the *Physical Health Toolkit* for more information.

- Reconvene the District Emergency Response Team as soon as possible.
- When possible, activate the mental health resources for students and staff, in conjunction with local mental health services staff, including post-traumatic stress syndrome counseling. See the *Wellbeing and Mental Health Toolkit* for more information here.
- Monitor ongoing guidance from health authorities and adjust operations as necessary.
- Monitor and report daily reports of staff and student attendance and health screenings as applicable.
- Develop a mental health status report, based on guidelines provided by the counselors and the crisis management team, and provide to the command center each day. This report should include the mental health status of students and staff in order to determine if additional mental health services are needed. Reconvene threat assessment teams to continue supporting those with mental health needs.
- Develop daily health reporting protocol for school nurses and implement in order to provide data for the command center.
- Re-establish or create process for monitoring social media and receiving reports from students and staff regarding any safety concerns.

III. Best Practices

Update Emergency Operations Plans

Districts should conduct after action reviews of response efforts to update emergency operations plans. In collaboration with other stakeholders, including local health departments, districts should analyze successful strategies and opportunities for improvement in response work to inform more effective protocols in any future situations with similar contexts. Districts may opt to focus particularly on common topic areas such as: providing ongoing meal services, establishing a technology infrastructure to support ongoing academic progress, and the identification of local partner organizations that may provide additional capacity in emergency situations. In any updates to the emergency operations plan, districts should acknowledge where given strategies were particularly successful or fell short of intended outcomes, prompting additional analysis. To help facilitate successful strategies, the department has updated the school district and school building emergency operations planning templates.

Procuring Personal Protective Equipment and Other Mitigation Supplies

As districts plan for various approaches to school operations, procuring personal protective equipment (PPE) or other mitigation supplies will be important to do as early as possible to avoid high demand periods. In purchasing bulk supplies, including hand sanitizer, cloth face coverings, or other PPE, if districts experience difficulty in finding available vendors or supply, then the district safety lead may liaise with the local emergency management agency (EMA) to determine whether or not the needed supplies are available elsewhere in the county. If not, then the local EMA will be positioned to contact the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) to assist in securing the needed supplies. This process helps ensure districts have an escalation protocol to procure needed items to operate schools with appropriate safety precautions taken. A list of local EMA contacts is included in the *Resources* section below.

The state has also announced a path to purchase non-contact thermometers for every school at a ratio of 1 to every 40 students enrolled. District SAVE Act Coordinators should partner with the district operations teams to determine supply needed and to place orders with the local EMA. More information on the non-contact thermometers supports is available by contacting Brenna.Morse@tn.gov.

Leveraging Stafford Act Federal Reimbursements

As district leadership teams and finance directors plan for the operations of the next school year, the ability to leverage the Stafford Act for additional funding support may be essential. Along with a finance team member, SAVE Act Coordinators should review the protocols of filing for Stafford Act reimbursements and build familiarity with likely eligible expenses. This funding stream should be considered in budget planning decisions both at the beginning of the year and ongoing, with SAVE Act Coordinators assisting in helping to track and review expenses (actual and projected) tied to COVID-19 response or mitigation efforts. Available resources for learning more about the Stafford Act and key contacts at TEMA are available [here](#).

Update Procedures for Emergency Drills

Districts should consider how modified operations may impact established response procedures. Prior to students returning to school, staff may want to use drills or tabletop exercises to train and test how various situations may unfold in different school operational setups.

If modified operations include the use of social distancing, this could have an impact on procedures for the annual [required drills](#). Through any drill, one primary goal is for students and staff to develop experience and familiarity with protocols, making it important that drills are scheduled so that *all*

school community members participate. This may mean having drills more often if a school is operating a model of students being present physically only some of the time. Consider the following recommendations for implementing a social distanced emergency drill.

- **Fire Drills**: When exiting the building, remaining outdoors, and re-entering the building, have students remain six feet apart. Prior to conducting this drill, consider placing markers outside to indicate where students should stand while maintaining six feet of separation.
- **Intruder Drill**: To conduct an intruder drill without interfering with social distancing, consider setting a window of time that would allow for the teacher to move with just a few students at a time into the lockdown area, repeating until all students have conducted the drill. Be sure to maintain the same lockdown area, sufficient in size to accommodate all potential students in the classroom.
- **Tornado Drill**: Prior to conducting a tornado drill, consider placing markers in the shelter location to indicate where students should shelter, while maintaining six feet of separation.
- **Earthquake Drill**: Consider positioning desks to accommodate social distancing in daily operations, meaning no additional modifications should be needed in completing this drill.

Maintain Communications with Community Partners

As school operations resume, both school and district level staff should maintain close communications with response partners, including the local health department and the local emergency management agency, to remain informed of any future issues or best practices that can be integrated into the school setting to minimize risks. As health agencies continue to learn more about COVID-19, additional guidance may be released on monitoring data trends or assisting schools in planning, prevention, and mitigation efforts of future outbreaks. Ensuring close communications with response partners will provide open channels for this information to flow regularly and to help improve practices across school sites.

Existing agreements and plans developed with first responders may need to be reviewed or updated to reflect operational changes at the district or individual schools.

Other Considerations

Basic security and safety protocols established prior to closure should be reinstated, including:

- Controlled access to building and individual classrooms.
- Visitor screening procedures.
- Safety reporting and monitoring procedures, including tip lines and social media monitoring.
- Threat management procedures.

IV. Recommended Schedules and Procedures

Site Re-Opening Checklist

The table below provides an overview checklist of action items to consider as districts begin to consider re-opening school sites. Districts should utilize this checklist as an additional resource, to integrate with internal school opening protocols that are currently in place.

Topic & Action Item	Complete
Collaborate with the health department to identify guidelines for opening schools, and procedures for healthy operations.	
Site Assessment: Determine the amount of time and resources needed to re-open each site. Consider the following:	
Assess, identify and prioritize the order of individual schools to reopen	
Assess staff capacity, including substitutes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Compile data indicating which staff members plan to return to work, OR establish an Employee Hotline Phone Bank or website so employees can report their status (name; position; work location; health status; return to work date); ○ Consider the use of a health screening protocols and establish guidelines for return to work for employees who have been diagnosed or come in contact with COVID-19; ○ Develop a status report for each staff category by school and department (e.g., teachers, administrators, custodial staff, bus drivers, etc.) to determine overall personnel capacity and needs. ○ Collaborate with local law enforcement on any modifications to school operations. 	
Conduct inventory of necessary supplies, especially cleaning and hygiene supplies, and where necessary, fast track purchase orders for essential supplies.	
Site Preparation	
Inspect all buildings, facilities, equipment, materials, etc. and determine status and needs for operations. Maintain a status update for facilities not ready for occupancy.	
Survey supply vendors to determine when supply chain and delivery system will be partially or fully operational; provide vendors with supply needs.	
Place posters in high traffic areas that encourage good hygiene.	
Implement robust school cleaning routines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disinfect all work areas, counters, restrooms, doorknobs, and stair railings several times daily. ○ Air conditioning system filters should be cleaned and changed. 	

Topic & Action Item	Complete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The school should be thoroughly ventilated and cleaned: opening all doors and windows and/or operating the HVAC system. 	
Communicate with Stakeholders	
Inform and train staff on health and prevention issues	
Inform parents of school reopening plans and procedures, including steps taken to ensure site readiness; and	
Inform and train school community on any modified school procedures or best practices being implemented in response to the outbreak, leveraging local health departments as partners.	
Ensure Continuity of Security and Safety Protocols	
Review school emergency operations plans to ensure the continuity of security and safety protocols.	
Identify any revisions or additions to security protocols that might be needed to support COVID-19 prevention and response measures.	
Communicate any changes in security and safety protocols to all community partners (law enforcement, fire department, 911, emergency management, etc.)	

Ongoing Monitoring Strategy

In partnership with health departments and emergency management agencies, districts may consider ongoing monitoring strategies to check for student and staff health related to the COVID-19 outbreak. The below table provides a list of action items districts may consider for such ongoing monitoring. Any actions should be driven by local context and in collaboration with local health officials.

Topic & Action Item	Complete
Re-establish a district level Incident Command Center as soon as possible	
When possible, activate the mental health resources for students and staff, in conjunction with local mental health services staff, including post-traumatic stress syndrome counseling.	
Monitor ongoing guidance from health authorities and adjust operations as necessary.	
Monitor and report daily reports of staff and student attendance to your local EMA and health department.	
Develop mental health status report, based on guidelines provided by the counselors and the crisis management team, should be provided to the command center each day. This report should include the mental health status of students and staff in order to determine if additional mental health services are needed.	

Topic & Action Item	Complete
Develop daily health reporting protocol for school nurses and implement in order to provide data for the command center	

V. Resource List

[Tennessee Department of Education](#)

[Tennessee Department of Education, Coronavirus Updates](#)

[Tennessee Department of Health, Coronavirus Updates](#)

[Center for Disease Control, Coronavirus Updates](#)

Health and Emergency Management Contacts

- [East Tennessee Local Emergency Management Office Contacts](#)
- [Middle Tennessee Local Emergency Management Agency Contacts](#)
- [West Tennessee Local Emergency Management Agency Contacts](#)
- [Local Health Department Office Contacts](#)