

School Closure Toolkit: Health and Wellness



Summary

Maintaining the health and safety of our students and staff through events such as pandemics or natural disasters is important to consider.

During times of uncertainty and crisis, children just like adults may suffer from acute periods of anxiety, worry or stress. School closures can further contribute to experiences of inconsistency, which can be especially challenging for some students.

For students who receive additional supports through an IEP or 504, it will be necessary to follow special education guidance to meet applicable requirements. Please reference the special populations toolkit for information pertaining to students who receive occupational therapy, mental or behavioral health services through an IEP or 504 and review all posted guidance documents.

The purpose of this document is to help district leaders think through opportunities to support the overall wellness of students and staff during school closures in response to COVID-19.

For questions related to the health and safety of students and staff, please contact Whole.Child@tn.gov.

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CHECKLIST

For staffing decisions and related actions

2

BEST PRACTICES

For managing employees who are working on-site, including hourly

3

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sample schedules and procedures.



Checklists

For activities at the district and school levels.



Employees

Things that you can do with team members to support students.



Resources

Links to helpful resources to provide help to children in need.

Checklist

Below is a brief checklist that districts and schools should consider during periods of closure.

District

- Virtually convene special education supervisors and coordinated school health coordinators to develop systems of collaboration with school-based staff and establish consistency of support and resources (such as access to distance learning content) delivered to schools.

- Create any district-specific guidance (such as general anxiety and stress management content, or guidance which should be shared with all students and families) and/or coordinate with local community partners to assist with resource collection and determine viable service options (such as telehealth, video conferencing, phone calls, etc.) to support continuity of service.

- Identify and catalogue innovative options for continuation of student and staff support and communicate that guidance to school leaders regularly.

- Identify, catalogue and share local community resources students, staff and families may access during school closure.

- Consider establishing a “distress line”, where students or parents can call when they are in distress and can’t find help for any number of issues.

- Communicate district guidance with school leaders and school-based student support staff.

- Establish consistent and routine communication channels with staff members and district leaders, providing increased access to mental health support staff.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT: MANCHESTER CITY SCHOOLS

Understanding the importance of student and staff health and wellness - especially in times of crises or uncertainty - school social workers and Coordinated School Health leadership in Manchester City Schools are posting resources and websites for people to use. This includes resources on supporting children with the challenges of social distancing, information for mental health support, and highlighting positive stories of how staff and families are able to find connections.



School

- Incorporate all physical health related guidance provided by the CDC, Department of Health and Department of Education which is regularly updated [here](#).
- Provide a list of system-involved students (welfare, courts, foster, probation, etc) to local law enforcement and create a plan to ensure students receive well-being checks.
- Announce allowable building activity to teachers to allow for the preparation of student work that will be sent home (i.e., device check out, assigning of books, packaging school materials, etc.) Any gatherings within school facilities should comply with applicable social distancing guidance as well as health safety recommendations.
- Convene teacher teams and school-based student support staff (special education teachers, nurses, counselors, SROs, etc.) to identify students receiving mental health services and those for whom additional support might be beneficial (template below).
- Communicate with families regarding proactive management of acute and chronic health conditions, especially where medication is involved. Be sure to properly exchange medication with the parent / guardian as medication cannot be sent with students. As needed, develop a call schedule to ensure students are receiving consistent medical treatment at home.
- Establish an ongoing communication plan with families of students receiving supports to ensure alignment of at-home service strategies and techniques and develop a process to identify additional students experiencing challenges while schools are closed.
- Consider utilizing conference call lines or zoom to continue club meetings, athletic team meetings, etc. so that students stay connected to one another in a healthy way.
- Create class-based action plans during closure (template below).
- Create class and school-based action plans for all students that allows for processing their experience when schools reopen and create and review individualized re-entry plans with families of students receiving additional supports (template below).
- Develop referral procedures outlining when and how teachers should refer students to support staff (school counselors, social workers, etc.) once school reopens.
- Establish consistent and routine communication channels with staff members, providing increased access to mental health support staff.

Best Practices

CDC Guidance for Onsite Employees

If it necessary for some employees to report to their building, plans should be in place to allow for social distancing to the extent possible, in line with Centers for Disease Control and Protection (CDC) [guidelines](#). As [recommended](#) by the CDC:

- Large gatherings and close contact should be avoided so explore alternatives to meeting in groups and consider virtual convenings,
- Staff should practice hand hygiene,
- Frequently touched surfaces should be thoroughly and regularly [sanitized](#),
- [Symptoms](#) of COVID-19 should be posted around the building, and
- Staff who are feeling sick should not report to work

Note that staff who are asked to report to their building may have concerns, such as a lack of access to childcare or being a member of a population [identified](#) as especially vulnerable. These employees may need accommodations or contingency plans.

Potential Duties for On-Site Employees

For districts choosing to identify alternative work for employees, options might include the following:

- **School-based mental health staff** — review all service plans, communicate with community partners to ensure continuity of service, collaborate with teachers to determine additional student or class needs, and provide access before, during and after closure to alleviate anxiety, worry and stress, and provide required services to students.
- **Nurses** - contact parents/guardians to ensure medications/supplies are available to continue management of acute or chronic health conditions. Follow your district's policies/procedures regarding signing out medications to parents/guardians (template below). If needed, set a regular schedule to call students or families with reminders about medication administration. Ensure that medication that remains in the school building during closure has been secured and maintains temperature requirements.
- **Teachers** — collaborate and communicate with mental health professionals to ensure students receive services, accommodate or ensure all students have access to any shared content, provide opportunities for processing the pandemic in class, and establish restorative practices upon student return.
- **School and district leaders** — provide opportunities to promote both student and staff wellness before, during and after school closure.
- **School-based support staff** — assist teachers and mental health staff in ensuring the physical and mental wellbeing of students and staff by compiling best practices and identifying opportunities to provide additional support and resources.
- **Coordinated School Health Coordinator** — communicate and identify community partners that can provide additional health related services for students, staff and families. Coordinate opportunities for schools to connect individuals to services while also bringing in community partners to provide supports to the whole school.

Employee Care

If staff are at home, encourage, and provide access when possible, to mental health professionals or self-care techniques such as mindfulness. If staff are reporting to the school building, consider staff-wide practices (ensuring adequate distancing) such as yoga, group exercise, or mindful minutes.

Student Considerations

Students will return to school with questions and possible anxiety issues. These should be handled through your support services including school counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and nurses. These professionals are equipped to best handle anxiety issues that arise and should be mobilized to provide entire classroom presentations on anxiety and worry. A consistent referral process for accessing school counselors and social workers should be communicated with each teacher and staff member to lessen the confusion when students return.

TDOE Guidance for Crisis Response and Recovery

The department has developed the [Tennessee Schools: PREPARE manual](#) to assist districts and schools in advancing the response and recovery portions of their emergency management plans. This manual includes planning and postvention checklists, guidance on restoring community on the first days back to school, typical trauma responses by developmental age, typical trauma reactions, and many other resources.



Recommended Schedules and Procedures

Implementing clear protocols around communication, as well as daily and weekly expectations is vital for all employees. Below are checklists and templates to assist in communication.

Checklist

- **Before closing:**
 - Create district level policies or protocols for ensuring student health and wellness, communicating those expectations and opportunities to schools. If possible, a collection of local resources can be shared with schools.
 - Identify students who may benefit from additional health check-ins and develop a plan for service (template below).
 - Return medication to families along with information from the student's individual health care plan, promoting continuity in treatment.
 - Communicate any developed plans with students and families.

- **During closing:**
 - Provide additional supports and services to students, which could include innovative service methods and involvement from community based service providers (template below).
 - Communicate with students who may benefit from school staff checking in on them.
 - Nurses may call students who could benefit from reminders about taking medication.

- **Upon reopening:**
 - Develop plans to transition students back to school and back to class (template below).
 - More frequently meet with students who demonstrate shifts in behavior or have demonstrated signs of anxiety, worry or stress.
 - Provide opportunities for students to share and process their experience during the pandemic.
 - Be ready to provide access to additional health related resources once school reopens.

Template: Individual Student Support Plan

Student Name: [Insert]

School-based POC: [Insert]

Method for Communication (select one)

- Call
- Virtual conference (Facetime, Skype, etc.)

Weekly Schedule

Monday: [Insert duration of time] from [Insert time am / pm]

Tuesday: [Insert duration of time] from [Insert time am / pm]

Wednesday: [Insert duration of time] from [Insert time am / pm]

Thursday: [Insert duration of time] from [Insert time am / pm]

Friday: [Insert duration of time] from [Insert time am / pm]

Services

The following is a list of services provided to the student

Needs or Services	How services are provided

Resources

List of additional resources that could benefit the student:

Resource	How to acquire/access the resource

Documentation of Services

List the services that were provided

Date of Service	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided / Notes

Template: Teacher or Student Support Staff Service Plan

Teacher Name: [Insert]

Schedule

Monday:

Student	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided

Tuesday:

Student	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided

Wednesday:

Student	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided

Thursday:

Student	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided

Friday:

Student	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided

Template: Additional Student Identification

Teacher Name: [Insert]

School-based POC: [Insert]

Student	Need	Service	School Staff

Template: Medication Tracking

Class: [Insert]

Teacher Name: [Insert]

School-based POC (nurse): [Insert]

Student Name: [Insert]		Medication: [Insert]
Date Picked-Up From School: [Insert]		[Parent Signature]
Date Returned To School: [Insert]		[Parent Signature]
Prescription medication is returned in original pharmacy labeled container displaying ALL of the following information: [Yes or No]		
Child's name	Prescription number	Medication name and dosage Administration route or other directions
Date	Licensed prescriber's name	Pharmacy name, address, and phone number
Any change in medical condition or medication? If so, what? *Please update the Individual Health Care Plan [Write Response]		
Was emergency medication administered during the closure? What happened? When? What medical provider followed-up? [Write Response]		

Resource List

- [America's Promise Alliance COVID-19 Resources is a google doc capturing links to a variety of available resources collected from organizations across the country](#)
- [US Department of Education COVID-19 Information and Resources for Schools and School Personnel](#)
- [TDOE's Tennessee Schools: PREPARE is a toolkit for assisting schools in developing an emergency management plan](#)
- [The National Council for Behavioral Health: Navigating the Behavioral Health Impacts of the Coronavirus](#)
- [Mental Health America: General Resources \(included below in the appendix\)](#)
- [Mental Health America: Erase the Stigma Program \(included below in the appendix\)](#)
- [Association for Middle Level Education: Supporting Middle Level Educators through COVID-19](#)
- [Child Mind Institute: Talking to Kids About the Coronavirus](#)
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with the Coronavirus Disease](#)
- [SAMHSA: Mental Health Services Locator](#)