
WELLBEING & MENTAL HEALTH



SCHOOL REOPENING TOOLKIT: WELLBEING & MENTAL HEALTH

The purpose of the Wellbeing and Mental Health Toolkit is to assist district leaders, school administrators, and school counselors in providing opportunities to support wellness of school staff and social, emotional, and physical wellbeing of students. The guidance in this document outlines important considerations for school reentry, continuity, and sustainability of social, emotional, and mental health supports for an in-person, virtual distance learning environment, or hybrid approach at the beginning of the school year or in response to a potential school closure. The intention of this document is to provide additional considerations and resources while realizing every district and school is unique. Those most closely involved in decision making at the local level will make the most informed decisions regarding what is best for students.

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

Planning for School Reopening

District Leaders:

- Develop a family engagement communication plan that includes informing parents of updated expectations for students returning to a traditional school setting, during online class sessions, hybrid approach, and on the bus (as applicable). These district expectations may be communicated through notification letters with translation to meet the needs of families. Additionally, districts should consider posting these expectations on their social media pages with related video messages from the superintendent and other district leaders.

- To set students up for success, districts should consider sending families advance notification and guidance on the following:
 - Home Learning Environment - It is important for families to provide the space for learning online that is free of distractions such as other siblings or other electronic devices.
 - Mandated Reporting – Families should receive reminders about regulations for mandated reporting, which may include what is seen during on-line lessons.
 - Access to Academic Support – If your district is providing additional tutoring or learning supports, make parents aware of it with easy next steps to access or apply for them. This may include any partnerships with 21st CCLCs.
 - Access to Family Supports – provide a one-stop shop online resource page for families to receive free counseling services, legal aid (i.e. child custody and eviction cases), and prescription glasses for kids. Also list local resources in the community for food, rent assistance, financial support for utilities, and Worksource programs. Consider including resources for families experiencing domestic violence and homelessness. In some communities, it is best to list and identify resources specific to serving the needs of undocumented families or those impacted by the effects of a chronic illness in the home.
 - If available, a district representative may contact additional community health and wellness organizations to provide supports (telehealth service options through mental health agencies, counseling programs through universities).
 - All online communication materials should ideally have the capability of being translated and frequently updated by the district and referred to by staff.

- Assemble, identify, and review processes for students, families, and staff to access health and wellness support services (i.e. coordinated school health, social worker, school-based mental health liaison, family resource center, school nurse, McKinney-Vento liaison, and community mental and physical health agencies).
- Assess current emergency response plans with local stakeholders and district-level leaders.
- Establish plans and personnel in place to lead professional development and guidance for educators to address the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students (i.e. PREPARE Training).
- Identify policies and procedures which adhere to FERPA, HIPPA, etc., on online and virtual platforms that aid in addressing mental health and wellness supports.
- Review and update policies on bus riding behavior expectations to assure social distancing and bullying prevention. Train bus drivers on how to communicate these changes and to intervene when necessary.

School Leaders:

- Review emergency response plans and specific role(s) of each member on the crisis response team. Provide adequate crisis response training to all staff to support the wellbeing of all students.
- Create notification letter to inform parents and caregivers of district guidelines, school reopening procedures, and associated health and wellness protocols to reduce potential misinformation from unofficial sources and ensure consistent messaging. Letter should be provided in the dominant language of the recipient household.
- Create school/ district based information sheet to advise personnel of guidelines, reopening procedures, and associated health and wellness protocols to reduce potential misinformation from unofficial sources and ensure consistent messaging.
- Prepare handouts and school website updates for parents and school personnel regarding guidelines, reopening procedures, and associated health and wellness protocols to reinforce consistent messaging when reopening occurs. Provide automated phone calls and text notifications for updates, as needed.

- Consult with counselors and wellness team on staff self-care supports available and develop daily check-in platforms to communicate their wellbeing and resources available.
- Ensure all media inquiries are directed to the appropriate school or district liaison. Develop talking points and FAQs in advance of media outreach and engagement.
- If available, contact previously identified community health and wellness providers to arrange for support services for students and staff (i.e. mental and physical health professionals).
- Designate private rooms and/or offices for nurses, coordinated school health director, counselors, social workers, or other health and wellness professionals to address student and staff needs and concerns in a confidential manner to comply with all state and federal regulations (i.e. HIPPA, FERPA, student PII etc.).
- Conduct mandatory staff and faculty meeting prior to school reopening to review reopening guidelines, procedures and associated health protocols to ensure consistent messaging.
- Review process for student access to health and wellness support services. Ensure health and wellness professionals (i.e. nurse, coordinated school health, school counselor, social worker, school psychologist, community mental and physical health) are in attendance at the mandatory staff and faculty meeting to respond to questions and concerns.
- Ensure student and staff contact information and emergency contact information is current.
- Identify schedule changes, if applicable.
- Review logistics for managing increased health clinic/room traffic.
- Ensure accurate contact information exists for every student as communication through e-mail or phone may be necessary during school closures or times of distance learning.
- Create a school-wide plan that is communicated with faculty and staff regarding expectations for continued contact with students in a virtual or online format.
- Provide professional development opportunities for all educators on expectations and guidance for meeting the social and emotional needs of students that addresses all scenarios of best practices in person and in a distance learning format.

School Counselors:

- Use Tennessee Schools: PREPARE, a crisis postvention with 3 hours that can be done virtually or in person by a trainer. This professional development opportunity includes a checklist in advance of a crisis, best practices in a postvention plan, restoring community for first day back at school, skills for postvention team members, and building resilience. Additionally, it reviews with teachers and staff the typical trauma reactions to be anticipated, as well as providing suggestions of healing activities for children in the aftermath of a crisis or trauma.

- Review the Counseling Reopening Toolkit

- Present debriefing exercise, such as the one detailed below, as a tool to be utilized to encourage student sharing of feelings, thoughts, and reactions. This exercise should be practiced by teachers and staff in the mandatory before school reopening meeting.
 - Should be conducted at start of the school day
 - Duration of activity is 30-40 minutes
 - Adherence to the exercise script should be emphasized for optimal efficacy

Introduction: “We have all been through a difficult time, and we know talking about it can help. Today we will talk in a circle about what we know, how we are feeling, how we are reacting, and what feelings we may have. We will go around and give everyone a turn. If you do not wish to talk, just say “pass.” Let’s try to listen to each other without interrupting and have a safe place for everyone to talk. “

Fact and thought stage: The teacher will start by sharing the fact statement that was previously shared by the Principal to clarify misinformation. Then: “Let’s begin by going around and saying in one sentence what we know.”

Reactions: “Now we will go around the room and talk about how this is affecting you. What impact has this had on you?”

Teaching: Normalize reactions to stress, including thoughts, feelings, and body reactions. Talk about typical trauma reactions such as irritability, change in sleep patterns, increase or loss of appetite, stomachache, and headache. Next have students share what self-care they use to cope with these symptoms.

Closure: Identify support systems available for further help.

- ❑ Ensure all teachers and staff are aware of child abuse law pertaining to traditional and online learning environments and have received mandated reporter training.
 - Everyone in Tennessee is a mandated reporter under state law. Any person with reasonable cause to believe a child is being abused or neglected must, under the law, immediately report to the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services or to local law enforcement either by calling 877-237-0004 or reporting online on the [secure site](#). More information on reporting and training can be found [here](#).

- ❑ Create a communication channel through the school or district websites to share resources with families and students.

- ❑ Prepare a system to meet the needs of individual students through one-on-one or small group sessions with students during potential school closures or distance learning.

Roles of Other School Based Mental Health Providers:

While all district staff play some role in addressing the nonacademic needs of students, there are specific roles that are trained to address the mental health needs of students. These roles act in conjunction with community mental health agencies in meeting the mental health needs of all students. In recognizing the resources in your system currently, you will enhance the services from the outside agencies.

School Social Workers:

- Consult and provide homebased interventions
- Case management
- Small group counseling

School Nurses:

- Health care coordination
- Student care/health plans

School Psychologists:

- Psychological assessment/evaluations
- Interpretation of evaluation results and educational recommendations

Additional Reopening Considerations

- Welcome and greet students as they enter the building, alongside checking their temperature and encouraging them to sanitize their hands. Relationships and routines matter.
- Keep start of the day routines such as pledge of allegiance, announcements, celebrations, etc.
- Teachers should be prepared to conduct the debriefing exercise (previously practiced in the mandatory before school reopening meeting) at start of the school day.
- Ensure health and wellness professionals (i.e. nurse, coordinated school health, school counselor, social worker, school psychologist, community mental and physical health) are present and visible to provide stabilizing presence for students and staff.
- Counselors and social workers should consider checking in on those students and families previously receiving services to assess current needs and determine if additional services are appropriate either through increased sessions, referrals to community based mental health services or telehealth services.
- Conduct end of day staff meeting to review and evaluate reopening, determine areas of need and improvement, and identify students, and staff who may need additional assistance and support to adhere to COVID-19 precautions.
- Educate school community regarding nonprescription interventions such as handwashing and covering coughs and sneezes.
- Maintain supply of hand sanitizer (minimum 60% alcohol content) and sanitizing wipes for use where hand washing is not an option.
- Post symptoms of COVID-19 at primary access points.
- Avoid use of water fountains and shared play spaces such as sandboxes and ball pits.
- At least daily, sterilize student desks, doorknobs, light switches, playground and physical education equipment and other high touch and shared classroom items (i.e. pencil sharpener).

- Modify physical education activities to avoid participant contact.
- Prioritize cleanliness and discourage/prevent sharing of equipment such as band instruments.
- Discourage sharing of personal items between staff and students.
- Provide daily health education announcements to assist in preventing spread of germs and illness.
- As feasible, utilize online assignment submissions instead of paper.
- Practice social distancing by limiting meetings and events that require close contact. Consider conducting virtually when possible, including parent and staff meetings.
- Designate staff member to remain current and report on Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and local health department updates. This person can work closely with the district's Coordinated School Health coordinator.
- Designate staff member to coordinate reporting procedures regarding staff and student absenteeism or illness.
- Provide resource list to staff of community physical and mental health resources and professionals. This can be done by working closely with the district's Coordinated School Health coordinator.
- Provide resources to school community members to assist parents and caregivers in determining when to keep a child home or seek additional health and wellness support services.
- Establish procedure for ensuring students and staff who either become ill or arrive with symptoms are sent home immediately.
- Designate isolated area with minimal foot traffic to house student with presenting symptomatology until parent or caregiver can pick up. Limit all contact with others. Staff with presenting symptomatology should leave work environment immediately with minimal contact with others. Sanitize all contacted surfaces in accordance with CDC guidelines.

- Wear appropriate gloves and masks when it is reasonably anticipated there may be hand contact with droplets and when handling or touching contaminated items or surfaces. Wash hands immediately or as soon as feasible after removing gloves. Sanitize all touched surfaces.
- Wear appropriate face and eye protection when it is reasonably anticipated splashes, sprays, spatters, or droplets pose a hazard to the eye, nose, or mouth.
- Immediately dispose of used gloves. Do not reuse.
- Ensure personally identifiable student information is kept confidential in accordance with FERPA.
- Provide and reinforce consistent messaging regarding the importance of personnel and students to remain at home if they are sick or have been caring for someone sick.

III. Best Practices

Health and Wellness

Communicable and infectious disease plan:

- Review your district's and school's communicable and infectious diseases plan
- Review current plan to identify potential changes and updates in conjunction with local health department and other relevant community partners
- Implement changes to ensure plan is applicable to current COVID-19 guidance

Medical terminology:

- Review and identify potentially confusing or hard-to-understand medical terminology
- Translate medical information for staff and school community
- Collaborate with instructors whose curriculum includes health components to ensure information is understandable and grade-level appropriate

Psychological first aid:

What Is Psychological First Aid for Schools?

Psychological First Aid for Schools (PFA-S) is an evidence-informed intervention model to assist students, families, school personnel, and school partners in the immediate aftermath of an emergency. PFA-S is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by emergencies, and to foster

short- and long-term adaptive functioning and coping. The principles and techniques of PFA-S meet five basic standards. They are:

- Consistent with research evidence on risk and resilience following trauma
- Respectful of and consistent with the school administration of the academic setting, school culture, and the behavior (code of conduct) of students
- Applicable and practical in field settings
- Appropriate for developmental levels across the lifespan
- Delivered in a culturally-informed and flexible manner

PFA-S assumes that students and staff members may experience a broad range of early reactions (e.g. physical, cognitive, psychological, behavioral, spiritual) following an emergency. Some of these reactions can cause distress that interferes with adaptive coping, but support from informed, compassionate, and caring professionals can help students and staff members recover from these reactions. PFA-S has the potential to mitigate the development of severe mental health problems or long-term difficulties in recovery by identifying individuals who may need additional services and linking them to such services as needed.

Restoring a sense of safety and comfort:

Restoring a sense of safety and providing physical and emotional comfort in the immediate aftermath of a crisis can assist in reducing distress and worry for students and staff. When individuals have a sense of predictability, they tend to regain a feeling of security and control.

Recommendations:

- Address immediate needs and concerns to reduce fear and anxiety
- Answer questions in a calm, factual, and reassuring manner
- Support and model adaptive coping
- Provide consistent messaging and immediately address misinformation
- Ensure information is accurate and up to date

Coping:

Encourage and promote effective coping strategies to reduce stress and improve overall functioning through implementation of the following strategies:

- Encourage employees and students to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed
- Returning to regular schedules and routines

- Seek support through friends, staff members, counselor, or support group
- Engage in enjoyable activities with family and friends
- Self-care in terms of healthy eating, adequate sleep, and exercise
- Listening to music
- Staying informed
- Participate in sports and hobbies
- Self-reassurance regarding feelings; use of calming self-talk
- Practicing relaxation; take regular breaks
- Keeping a journal
- Identification of practical, immediate steps for situation management
- Utilization of past successful coping mechanisms

Building resilience:

Individuals who exhibit resilient characteristics after a public emergency are more likely to experience a favorable recovery and demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Optimism or a belief things will turn out as well as can be expected
- Confidence that life is predictable
- Self-efficacy or a belief they can achieve their goals
- Belief in the benevolence of others (willingness to help)
- Positive self-talk or beliefs (i.e., “I have gotten through tough situations before, and I can get through this)
- Knowledge they have the resources they need such as emotional support from others, money for essential expenses, and access to services
- Ability and willingness to assist others

For more information and resources on child trauma can be found at the [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#).

IV. Recommended Schedules and Procedures

Below are a checklist and templates to assist in communicating schedules and procedures.

Checklist for Promoting Health and Hygiene:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue. Wash hands immediately with soap and water.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. If contact occurs, wash hands immediately with soap and water.
- If soap is not available, use hand sanitizer containing 60-95% alcohol, covering all hand surfaces and rubbing together until dry.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using EPA-registered disinfectant.
- Ensure vaccines are current.
- Promote and role model non-contact greeting methods.

V. Resource List

Mobile Crisis Services

A 24/7/365 response team for those who are experiencing a mental health emergency.
Agencies providing mobile crisis services:

EAST TENNESSEE

Cherokee Health Systems

815 West Fifth North Street
Morristown, TN 37814
423-586-5074 or 800-826-6881
Counties: Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson, Union

Frontier Health

1167 Spratlin Park Drive
Gray, TN 37615
423-467-3600 or 877-928-9062
Counties: Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, Washington

Ridgeview Psychiatric Hospital & Center

240 West Tyrone Rd.
Oak Ridge, TN 37830
865-482-1076 or 800-870-5481
Counties: Anderson, Campbell, Morgan, Roane, Scott

Helen Ross McNabb

201 W. Springdale Ave
Knoxville, TN 37917
865-637-9711 or 865-539-2409
Counties: Blount, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Sevier

Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System

413 Spring Street
Chattanooga, TN 37405
800-704-2651
Counties: Bledsoe, Bradley, Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress, Grundy, Hamilton, Jackson, Macon, Marion, McMinn, Meigs, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Polk, Rhea, Rutherford, Sequatchie, Smith, Sumner, Trousdale, Van Buren, Warren, White, Williamson, Wilson

MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Centerstone
P. O. Box 40406
Nashville, TN 37204

615-463-6600 or 800-681-7444

Counties: Bedford, Cheatham, Coffee, Dickson, Franklin, Giles, Hickman, Houston, Humphreys, Lawrence, Lewis, Lincoln, Marshall, Maury, Montgomery, Moore, Perry, Robertson, Stewart, Wayne

Mental Health Cooperative

275 Cumberland Bend

Nashville, TN 37228

615-726-3340 or 615-726-0125

County: Davidson

Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System

413 Spring Street

Chattanooga, TN 37405

800-704-2651

Counties: Bledsoe, Bradley, Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress, Grundy, Hamilton, Jackson, Macon, Marion, McMinn, Meigs, Overton, Putnam, Pickett, Polk, Rhea, Rutherford, Sequatchie, Smith, Sumner, Trousdale, Van Buren, Warren, White, Williamson, Wilson

WEST TENNESSEE

Carey Counseling Center

408 Virginia Street

Paris, TN 38242

731-642-0521 or 800-353-9918

Counties: Benton, Carroll, Gibson, Henry

Pathways of Tennessee

238 Summar Drive

Jackson, TN 38301

800-587-3854 or 800-372-0693

Counties: Crockett, Dyer, Haywood, Henderson, Lake, Madison, Obion, Weakley

Professional Care Services

1997 Hwy. 51 S.

Covington, TN 38019

901-476-8967 or 800-353-9918

Counties: Fayette, Lauderdale, Tipton

Quinco Community Mental Health Center

10710 Old Highway 64 West

Bolivar, TN 38008

731-658-6113 or 800-467-2515

Counties: Chester, Decatur, Hardin, Hardeman, McNairy

Alliance Healthcare Services

951 Court Avenue
Memphis, TN 38103
901-577-9400 or 901-577-9400
County: Shelby

Tennessee Association of Mental Health Organizations (TAMHO)

Provides statewide list of behavioral health services by counties. Click on the link below and then click on counties to access services in your district.

Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Help line for securing mental health services in your area: 1-800-560-5767

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

This resource brings up a map that locates resources in your area in mental health services, substance abuse services and health care centers

Talking to Children about COVID-19

Information from the National Association of School Psychologists on helping children cope with changes resulting from COVID-19

Tennessee PREPARE: Response and Recovery

Program to assist districts and schools in advancing the response and recovery portions of their emergency management plans. This manual includes planning and guidance on restoring community on the first days back to school, typical trauma responses by developmental age, typical trauma reactions, and many other resources.

Responding to COVID-19: Brief Action Steps for School Crisis Response Teams

Information from the National Association of School Psychologists on action steps that can be taken by school crisis response teams to respond to COVID-19

Preparing for Infectious Disease Epidemics: Brief Tips for School Mental Health

Information from the National Association of School Psychologists on tips that school mental health professionals can do to prepare for responding to COVID-19 and other pandemic illnesses

Preparing for a Pandemic Illness: Guidelines for School Administrators and School Crisis Response Teams

Information from the National Association of School Psychologists for school administrators and school crisis response teams to prepare for pandemic illnesses outbreaks

Countering Coronavirus Stigma and Racism: Tips for Teachers and Other Educators

Information from the National Association of School Psychologists on tips for teachers and other educators to counter coronavirus stigma and racism

[Mental Health Considerations during the COVID-19 Outbreak](#)

World Health Organization's mental health and psychosocial considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak

[Stress and Coping](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention resources on stress and coping during the outbreak of COVID-19

[Talking with Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers during Infectious Disease Outbreaks \(English\)](#)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's English version of tips for caregivers, parents, and teachers during infectious disease outbreaks for talking with children

[Talking with Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers during Infectious Disease Outbreaks \(Spanish\)](#)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Spanish version of tips for caregivers, parents, and teachers during infectious disease outbreaks for talking with children

[Coping with Stress during Infectious Disease Outbreaks](#)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's fact sheet providing tips for coping with stress during an infectious disease outbreak

[Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health during an Infectious Disease Outbreak \(English\)](#)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's English version fact sheet explaining social distancing, quarantine, and isolation in the event of an infectious disease outbreak

[Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health: Tips for Social Distancing, Quarantine, and Isolation during an Infectious Disease Outbreak \(Spanish\)](#)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Spanish version fact sheet explaining social distancing, quarantine, and isolation in the event of an infectious disease outbreak

[Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with the Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network's parent/caregiver guide for helping families cope with the COVID-19 outbreak

[National Association of Social Workers Coronavirus Practice](#)

Resources to support social workers in their role in preventing the spread of COVID-19 while ensuring access to services

[Considerations for School Nurses Regarding Care of Students and Staff that Become Ill at School or Arrive Sick](#)

When schools reopen, there are key activities that school nurses should be focused on related to COVID-19, specifically regarding the care of students and staff that become ill at school or arrive sick

[Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs](#)

This interim guidance is intended for administrators of public and private child care programs and K-12 schools and will help schools, child care programs and their partners understand how to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 within their communities and facilities

[American Academy of Pediatrics COVID-19](#)

The American Academy of Pediatrics members dedicate their efforts and resources to the health, safety and well-being of children, adolescents and young adults both at school and at home. Current information and resources on COVID-19 can be found here for all students and their families

[Handwashing and Hand Sanitizer Use at Home, at Play, and Out and About](#)

This CDC factsheet will help in knowing when to clean your hands and which method to use that will give the best chance at preventing illness

[Pandemic Flu Checklist: K-12 School Administrators](#)

The CDC recommends this resource, which is applicable to COVID-19, for school administrators. Consult with your school nurse regarding what is currently in the school's response plan and what recommendations they propose to include

[Teaching Children and Families Regarding COVID-19](#)

This document includes resources for ensuring students and families receive accurate information when explaining what COVID-19 is, how to prevent it and why communities had to close schools and businesses

Universal Resources:

- [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)
- [Tennessee Commission on Children & Youth Building Strong Brains](#)
- [National Association of School Psychologists](#)
- [National Center for School Crisis & Bereavement](#)
- [Thriving Schools](#)
- [TDOE Trauma Informed Discipline Best Practices](#)

Wellness & Self-Care Resources:

- [Pure Edge](#)
- [Happy Teacher Revolution](#)

- Sanford Harmony for Educators

Elementary Specific Resources Addressing Social/Emotional, College & Career Exploration, and Academic Supports:

[American School Counselor Association Elementary Counseling](#)

[Restorative Justice Partners \(Elementary Specific\) Strategies](#)

<https://www.sanfordharmony.org/>

[Second Step](#)

[Peardeck SEL Online Templates](#)

Middle & High School Specific Resources Addressing Social/Emotional, College & Career Exploration, and Academic Supports:

[American School Counselor Association Middle School Counseling](#)

[American School Counselor Association High School Counseling](#)

[Restorative Justice Partners Strategies for Middle & High School Students](#)

[Collaborative on Academic Social and Emotional Learning](#)