



## **Atwood Heights SD 125**

### **2021 – 22 Safe Return to School Plan**

*Updated August 6, 2021*

State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen I. Ayala issued the following declaration mandating in-person learning with limited exceptions:

“Beginning with the 2021-22 school year, all schools must resume fully in-person learning for all student attendance days, provided that, pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/10-30 and 105 ILCS 5/34-18.66, remote instruction be made available for students who have not received a COVID-19 vaccine or who are not eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine, only while they are under quarantine consistent with guidance or requirements from a local public health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health.”

Atwood Heights SD 125 also believes that the best way for children to learn is in person. This Safe Return to School Plan is designed to create the safest environment for our students and staff and keep our schools open to in-person learning. We believe this plan supports the needs of our students, staff, and families while acknowledging the current risk to the health and safety concerns within the community and the schools. Additionally, this plan meets all requirements of the American Rescue Plan.

Atwood Heights SD 125 will continuously review and update the 2021-22 Safe Return to School Plan throughout the school year as

new research emerges and more guidance is provided to our school district from the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH), Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and the U.S. Department of Education.

Any changes made to the plan and protocols will be communicated ahead of time through the AHSD website, email, and social media. During the 2021-22 school year, protocols and requirements may change for a specific school building, program, classroom, bus route, or a setting based on the number of positive cases, contact tracing, community test positivity rate, community conditions, and risk of spread.

Each school will monitor its internal factors (student & staff contact tracing data) and community factors to determine what safety measures need to be implemented.

The COVID Response Team will continue to monitor each school's status and determine what safety measures will be implemented based on the data collected. Appropriate measures will be communicated to students, staff, and parents in a timely manner. Safety measure considerations include face-covering requirements, discontinuing certain activities, classroom closures, school closures, and other precautionary measures as determined by the COVID Response Team.

*Mrs. Lisa Cole*  
Superintendent



## AHSD Safe Return to School Plan

(Adopted from the State of Illinois and CDC’s updated guidance regarding COVID-19 prevention in K-12 schools for all public and nonpublic schools in Illinois. The updated federal guidance is currently in effect as of August 4, 2021).

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## **CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools**

- Given new evidence on the B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant, CDC has updated the guidance for fully vaccinated people. CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. Children should return to full-time in-person learning in the fall with layered prevention strategies in place.
- Students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person instruction in the fall 2021 is a priority.
- Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting vaccination can help schools safely return to in-person learning as well as extracurricular activities and sports.
- Screening testing, ventilation, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important layers of prevention to keep schools safe.
- Students, teachers, and staff should stay home when they have signs of any infectious illness and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care.
- Many schools serve children under the age of 12 who are not eligible for vaccination at this time. Therefore, this guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (e.g., using multiple prevention strategies together consistently) to protect people who are not fully vaccinated, including students, teachers, staff, and other members of their households.
- COVID-19 prevention strategies remain critical to protect people, including students, teachers, and staff, who are not fully vaccinated.
- Localities should monitor community transmission, vaccination coverage, screening testing, and occurrence of outbreaks to guide decisions on the level of layered prevention strategies (e.g., physical distancing, screening testing).

## **Vaccination**

Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. People who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are at low risk of symptomatic or severe infection. The CDC and IDPH strongly encourage all individuals eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine to be vaccinated. Vaccination benefits not only the individual, but also schools and communities by reducing transmission. For example, fully vaccinated persons are not required to quarantine if exposed to a case as long as they remain asymptomatic and do not need to maintain physical distance. Fully vaccinated people who have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should be tested three to five days after exposure and should wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result. Schools may request proof of vaccination from parents for their children or from staff to determine vaccination status.



## **Masking**

On August 4, 2021, Governor Pritzker issued a mask mandate for all Pre-K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status, in an effort to curb the “fast-moving” Delta variant. IDPH and ISBE have also endorsed the CDC recommendation that all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools wear a mask while indoors, regardless of vaccination status. In addition, the CDC Order requires passengers and drivers to wear a mask on school buses. Exceptions for people who qualify under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq) should be brought to the attention of the Administration.

## **Physical Distancing**

CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms, combined with universal indoor

mask wearing, to reduce transmission risk. Because of the importance of in-person learning, schools where not everyone is fully vaccinated should implement physical distancing to the extent possible within their structures (in addition to masking and other prevention strategies), but should not exclude students from in-person learning to keep a minimum distance requirement. Schools should maximize physical distance as much as possible when students are moving through the food service line and while eating (especially indoors). Using additional spaces outside of the cafeteria for mealtime seating such as the gymnasium or outdoor seating can help facilitate distancing.

## **Testing**

Screening tests for SARS-CoV-2 can support in-person learning by identifying infected persons who are asymptomatic and without known or suspected exposure to SARS-CoV-2. Screening tests are performed to identify persons who may be contagious so that measures can be taken to prevent further transmission. Atwood Heights will offer the SHIELD Illinois saliva test and BinaxNOW rapid antigen testing to those interested, but this offer will require informed consent. Testing can be used to keep students in school when identified as a classroom close contact through the Test to Stay protocol. This allows students to avoid quarantine by testing on days one, three, five and seven after exposure as long as they continue to test negative.

To facilitate safe participation in sports, extracurricular activities, and other activities with elevated risk (such as activities that involve singing, shouting, band, and exercise that could lead to increased exhalation), CDC recommends schools implement screening testing for participants who are not fully vaccinated. Final recommendations from our South Suburban Junior High School Conference (SSJHSC) will be released soon.

## Contract Tracing and Quarantine

For teachers, staff and adults in the indoor K-12 classroom setting, CDC defines a close contact as an individual not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. According to the new CDC close contact definition, classroom students who were within 3 to 6 feet of the infected student are not treated as close contacts as long as both the infected student and exposed student were engaged in consistent and correct use of a well-fitting mask and other K-12 school prevention strategies (such as universal and correct mask use, physical distancing, increased ventilation) were in place in the K-12 setting. Local health departments are the final authority on identifying close contacts. The local health department will make the final determination on who is to be quarantined and for how long. Our administration will follow the recommendations of the Cook County Department of Public Health.

### QUARANTINE ALTERNATIVES + TEST TO STAY PROGRAM

If an individual is a close contact, these quarantine options are available:

#### Option 1

Individual quarantines for  
14-days (non-vaccinated  
individuals)

#### Option 2

If no symptoms are  
present, quarantine is  
reduced to  
10 days

#### Option 3

A negative PCR test taken  
on day 6 or after, post  
exposure, can reduce  
quarantine to  
7 days

#### Option 4: Test to Stay Program\*

- If an individual is a close contact and tests on days 1, 3, 5, 7 with an EUA authorized test (PCR or antigen) and results are negative, the individual is not required to quarantine.
  - If testing is not possible due to a weekend or a holiday, test as soon as possible.
  - School should notify LHD upon completion of Test to Stay program.
  - If close contact develops symptoms, they should immediately isolate.
- To participate in the Test to Stay Program, these steps must be followed:
  - School must require masks for all individuals regardless of vaccination status; and both the infected individual and the close contact must have been wearing masks at time of exposure.
  - Exception: Household exposures

\*SHIELD is only able to provide "Test to Stay" testing if school district is participating in weekly testing program.

## Remote Learning

A child qualifies for home or hospital/remote instruction if it is anticipated that, due to a medical condition, the child will be unable to attend school, and instead must be instructed at home or in the hospital, for a period of 2 or more consecutive weeks or if the child's medical condition is of such a nature or severity that it is anticipated that the child will be absent from school due to the medical condition for periods of at least 2 days at a time and multiple times during the school year totaling at least 10 days or more of absences. In order to establish eligibility for home or hospital/remote instruction, a student's parent or guardian must submit to the District a written statement from the student's health care provider stating the existence of the medical condition, the impact of the medical condition on the child's ability to participate in education, **and** the anticipated duration or nature of the child's absence from school.

For students who are unable to return to in-person instruction due to a medical condition as described above, please ask your child's/family's physician to complete the **DISTRICT 125 PHYSICIAN CERTIFICATION FOR HOME OR HOSPITAL/REMOTE INSTRUCTION** and return it to your building principal. A copy is provided on the District webpage.

Remote instruction will include a minimum of 5 hours per week of instructional time with a certified educator. Students will be provided with their weekly classwork / assignments. Your building principal will notify you of your child's specific learning plan. If you qualify for remote instruction, you will be required to provide a doctor's authorization if you want to return to in-person instruction.

## AHSD125 Prevention Strategies

- Promoting vaccination (AHSD 125 will host a vaccination clinic for our community members (ages 12 and up) with the **Illinois Emergency Management Agency on August 16<sup>th</sup> and September 8<sup>th</sup>. Walk-in appointments are available - no sign up necessary.**



- Consistent and correct mask use (mandated by Governor Pritzker on August 4, 2021). Extra masks are available at each school.
- Screening testing to promptly identify cases, clusters, and outbreaks (AHSD 125 is working with University of Illinois to provide SHIELD and BinaxNOW screening testing. This offer will require informed consent from our parents.)
- Ventilation (AHSD 125 continues to invest ESSER funds to make improvements across the District.)
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
- Touchless water bottle filling stations are available at each school or students may bring in their own clear water bottles.
- Hand sanitizers in every entrance, classroom and hallways
- Daily temperature checks at each school
- Staying home when sick and getting tested
- Contact tracing, in combination with isolation and quarantine (Per Cook County Department of Public Health.)
- Cleaning and disinfection
- Review data from the CDC and IDPH to closely monitor the level of transmission occurring in our communities (AHSD 125 is currently in a **low** transmission category as of August 4, 2021.)
- Passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses. There is no COVID-19-related capacity limit for passengers on school buses.

Any changes made to the **Safe Return to School Plan** will be communicated ahead of time through the AHSD website, email, and social media.

As was stated in our Smart Restart Plan in August, 2020 and it still remains paramount today, “The one guiding principle that has become our North Star as we plan for returning to school, is protecting the health, safety, and wellbeing of our students and staff.”

Sincerely,

*Mrs. Lisa Cole*, Superintendent