



# COVID-19 BACK-TO-SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS CHECKLIST



## REQUIREMENTS.

These items were identified as communications requirements in the executive orders of Governor Tim Walz or the guidance provided in the Stay Safe MN plans from the Minnesota Department of Health or the Minnesota Department of Education, effective July 30, 2020.

### THE LEARNING MODELS

- “The learning model must be reported to MDE before implementation.** The model and plan must be posted on the school district or charter school website, along with required contingency plans for the other learning model scenarios.”
- “School districts and charter schools must electronically post and communicate** their contingency in-person learning, hybrid learning, and distance learning plans to students and their families **no later than one week before the beginning of their respective 2020-21 school year. School districts and charter schools must make all attempts to provide such communications orally and written in languages spoken in their respective school district** or charter school. The contingency plans must address, but not be limited to, communication pathways with students and families, community input on student and family needs, and other outreach opportunities. This is in addition to addressing core instruction, supports for all student groups, nutrition, school-age care, technology needs, and effective delivery of educational models to students in a distance learning or hybrid model setting.”
- If the district chooses to change to a more restrictive learning model, “it must notify the education commissioner through the Learning Model Portal within 24 hours of beginning the new learning model.”*
- If the district chooses to change to a less restrictive learning model, “it must consult with local public health officials, MDH and MDE through the Regional Support Teams.”*
- “If the learning model changes, this must be updated on the school district or charter school website, along with contingency plans for the other learning model scenarios.”**

### STAFF LEADERSHIP

- “Identify a point of contact for each school building** in collaboration with building or district school nurses. This person will communicate concerns, challenges, and lessons learned related to COVID-19 preventive activities as needed with staff, students/families, school and district leadership, and local health officials.”
- “Designate a staff person who will be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns** (e.g., school nurse) and will help coordinate with local health authorities regarding positive COVID-19 cases. All school staff and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.”

### IN-SCHOOL SIGNAGE

- “Post signage at main entrance(s) requesting that people who have been symptomatic not enter the building.”**
- “Mark 6 feet of spacing to remind students and staff to always stay 6 feet apart in lines and other times they may congregate** (e.g. during lunch, arrival and dismissal, restrooms, locker rooms, etc.).”
- “Provide social distance floor/seating marking in waiting and reception areas.”**
- “Develop and implement policies for face coverings and ensure the policy is clearly posted and communicated to students, staff, families, and potential visitors to the school building.”**
- “Teach and reinforce the use of face coverings and/or face shields for students and staff throughout the school day, including on transportation vehicles, inside school buildings, and generally when on school grounds.”**
- “Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or the safe use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol by staff and older students.”**



# COVID-19 BACK-TO-SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS CHECKLIST



## REQUIREMENTS.

These items were identified as communications requirements in the executive orders of Governor Tim Walz or the guidance provided in the Stay Safe MN plans from the Minnesota Department of Health or the Minnesota Department of Education, effective July 30, 2020.

### SCREENING AND IDENTIFIED CASES

- “Educate staff, students and families about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and when they/their children should stay home and when they can return to school.”
- “Communicate expectations and processes for the symptom screening method(s) selected for staff, students, and families.”
- “Staff or students who develop symptoms during the school day must notify school health services or another identified point of contact in the school building immediately.”
- “In the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a school building...the first step in this process is for a superintendent or charter school leader to contact their assigned service cooperative lead. The lead will then contact MDH and/or local public health officials to begin the response process, who will notify the Regional Support Team regarding appropriate next steps.”
- “Notify MDH of confirmed COVID-19 cases among students and staff (as required by Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4605.7050). An MDH inbox has been established for school COVID case reporting: [health.schools.covid19@state.mn.us](mailto:health.schools.covid19@state.mn.us).”
- “Develop systems for notifying staff, families, and the public as needed if a person with COVID-19 was on the school premises while infectious. Do this in coordination with local health officials while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with FERPA and all other state and federal laws.”
- “In classrooms or programs with less than 50 close contacts (including children, students and staff) identified, the school community will notify families and they will seek out testing individually through an appointment with their clinic or access a testing site...The liaison with MDE and MDH will remain partners with you and want to be notified if these close contacts are not being tested.”

### SELF-IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES

- “Create a process for students/families and staff to self-identify as high risk for illness due to COVID-19. Have a plan in place to address requests for alternative learning arrangements or work reassignments.”
- “Put systems in place to allow staff and families to self-report to the school if they are their student have symptoms of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or had a close exposure to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days in a manner that is consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).”

*Note: Because of the different laws that govern self-identification, please check with your school district’s attorney with questions about how to proceed.*

### SUPPORT DISTANCE LEARNING STUDENTS

- “Develop strategies to maintain engagement and offer distance learning activities for students who cannot be physically present in the classroom due to illness or exposure.” (MDE and MDH will share protocol for home visits to support this requirement.)”

### WHOLE HEALTH CARE

- “Provide staff, families, and students (age-appropriate) with information on how to access resources for mental health and wellness.”

### CONTINUE COLLABORATIONS WITH INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

- “Consistent with Tribal considerations, guidance from MDE, and the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), all consultations, collaborations, and partnerships with Tribal Nations, American Indian Parent Committees, and Indigenous Education staff must continue.”



# COVID-19 BACK-TO-SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS CHECKLIST



## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS.

These items are based on recommended practices from MDH and MDE, as well as the experience of Rapp Strategies and ICS.

### FROM STATE OF MINNESOTA GUIDANCE

- “Any staff member using PPE should receive initial training with return demonstration and at least annually thereafter to ensure optimal benefit from the PPE use. School districts should consider having a designated staff member (such as the school nurse) who can help and assist staff as needed during the school day. Schools should consider placing signage as appropriate as a visual cue to guide staff on proper use and disposal of PPE.”
- “Share information with staff, students, and families on the proper use, wearing, removal, and cleaning of cloth face coverings and face shields.”
- “Teach and reinforce the use of face coverings and/or face shields for students and staff throughout the school day, including on transportation vehicles, inside school buildings, and generally when on school grounds.”
- “With older students, consider a student counterpart(s) to the COVID-19 program coordinator to reflect the student experience. This strategy can support student ownership and responsibility for creating a safe and healthy school environment.”
- “Provide frequent reminders for students and staff to stay at least 6 feet apart for one another when feasible.”
- “Use visual aids to illustrate appropriate spacing and traffic flow throughout the school building (i.e. designating hallways or entrances as one-way and posting directional reminders on the walls and/or floor).”
- “Use media, posters, and other tactics to promote health etiquette expectations in highly visible locations.”
- “If it is not feasible to conduct health screenings given the setting:
  - “Provide parent education about the importance of monitoring symptoms and staying home while ill through classroom applications and other district messaging.”
  - “Use existing outreach systems to provide text and email reminders to staff and families to check for symptoms of household members in the morning and evening.”
  - “Communicate expectations and processes for the symptom screening method(s) selected for staff, students, and families.”





# COVID-19 BACK-TO-SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS CHECKLIST



## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS.

These items are based on recommended practices from MDH and MDE, as well as the experience of Rapp Strategies and ICS.

### FROM RAPP STRATEGIES AND ICS

- Continue to engage with your staff, families and community in a transparent manner – it is critical that your stakeholders and your community are directly receiving their information from their school districts. Develop a schedule for internal and external communications to these audiences.
  - Whenever possible, document the results of this engagement.
- Provide answers quickly (within 24 hours) to all questions from your community. Remember – “I don’t know, but I can find out” is an excellent answer.
- Work closely with local public health officials during the development and implementation of COVID-19 practices. When possible, encourage your local health experts to speak out about the science-based reasons for decisions on learning plans and mitigation steps.
- In order to prevent community spread, frequently remind staff and students of the importance of using masks, proper hygiene protection and social distancing away from the school building.
- Build messaging around known data and facts. Be careful with speculation or predictions that may inadvertently lessen community-wide efforts to control the virus.
- Encourage your identified staff COVID-19 leaders, other staff members, parents and students the freedom to offer criticism and improvement of your plans.
- Post screening questions at all school entrances and implement processes to obtain answers to these questions.
- Work with local health professionals to identify appropriate communications regarding mental health risks and wellness opportunities.
- Prepare for difficult scenarios – significant outbreaks, serious illness or fatality, a new virus – before they occur.

School districts should continue to track new and amended guidance on the websites of the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Department of Health.

