

School Reopening FAQs

Based upon clarification from the Governor's Office regarding the intent of the NYSDOH Guidance released July 13, 2020 (DOH Guidance), we are providing the following clarifications regarding our guidance released July 16, 2020 (NYSED Guidance).

Social Distancing

1. Q. Do students and staff have to maintain a 6 foot distance from others at all times (NYSED Guidance p. 28)?
 - A. Schools must ensure that students and staff are protected by requiring at least one of the following:
Social distancing of Six Feet OR Barriers OR Face Masks/Coverings. Schools choosing to require face masks/coverings must allow them to be removed for meals and should allow students to take mask breaks as long as they maintain social distancing. Schools choosing to utilize social distancing or barriers are strongly recommended to also encourage the use of face coverings.
2. Q. What is an acceptable Barrier?
 - A. NYSDOH July 13, 2020 guidance provides:
use of appropriate physical barriers between individuals that do not adversely affect air flow, heating, cooling, or ventilation, or otherwise present a health or safety risk. If used, physical barriers must be put in place in accordance with United States Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) [guidelines](#), and may include strip curtains, cubicle walls, plexiglass or similar materials, or other impermeable divider or partition.

Student Cohorts

3. Q. Do student cohorts have to maintain a 6 foot distance from each other at all times (NYSED Guidance p. 29)?
 - A. No, please see response to Q. 1 regarding social distancing.

People at Increased Risk of Severe Illness

4. Q. Will the list of persons at increased risk of severe illness if contracting COVID-19 change (NYSED Guidance p.30)?
 - A. Since this is a new virus the information is still evolving. Therefore schools should check the CDC's [People Who Are at Increased Risk for Severe Illness](#) site frequently.

Face Masks/Coverings

5. Q. Are cloth face masks acceptable face coverings (NYSED Guidance p.36)?
 - A. Per the NYSDOH Guidance, p. 2, Acceptable face coverings include but are not limited to cloth-based face coverings (e.g. homemade sewn, quick cut, bandana) and surgical masks that cover both the mouth and nose.

Return to School After Illness

6. Q. What is required in order for students and staff who had symptoms of COVID-19 to return to school (NYSED Guidance p. 40)?
 - A. Schools must establish policies in consultation with the local health department(s) about the requirements for determining when individuals, particularly students, who screen positive for COVID-19 symptoms can return to the in-person learning environment. This returning to learning protocol must include at a minimum, documentation of evaluation by a healthcare provider (healthcare provider note clearing a person to return to school), negative COVID-19 testing, and symptom resolution, or if COVID -19 positive, release from isolation as required by DOH and NYSED Guidance p. 40.

Meals Consumed Onsite

7. Q. Are students required to be socially distant while consuming meals in the cafeteria or classroom (NYSED Guidance p. 58)?
 - A. Students must be 6 feet apart or be separated by a barrier while consuming meals.

Social Distancing and Mask Requirements on Bus

- A. Q. Are students required to wear masks and social distance on a school bus?
 - A. All students are required to wear a mask and should maintain appropriate social distancing. The only exception to the mask requirement is that students whose physical or mental health would be impaired by wearing a mask are not required to do so, but must maintain social distancing of 6 feet from other individuals on the bus. (See page 62 of NYSED Reopening Guidance).

Health Screening

- B. Q. Are parents required to ensure that their child or children do not show symptoms of COVID-19 or a fever before boarding a bus each day?
 - A. School districts are required to have a protocol in place to perform temperature and health screenings for COVID symptoms. Screenings by the parent/guardian prior to school are preferred. (See page 22 and 62 of NYSED Reopening Guidance).