

Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan Template

CSDE ARP ESSER



August 15, 2022

Introduction

Our Connecticut school communities — with students at the center — continue to be bold and innovative as they respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The United States Department of Education (USED) has recognized the importance of supporting these efforts, particularly with the infusion of resources to support education in Connecticut. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP ESSER) has granted the State of Connecticut an additional \$1,105,919,874, providing the opportunity to develop bold, high-impact plans to address the substantial disruptions to student learning, interpersonal interactions, and social-emotional well-being. While earlier sources of federal relief funding during the pandemic supported our ability to first survive, and then thrive, ARP ESSER is Connecticut's opportunity to transform our schools.

The federal government requires that each Local Education Agency (LEA) create a Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan (the Plan). This plan must be publicly available online by June 23, 2021 and submitted to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) as a part of the ARP ESSER application due mid-August 2021. To aid in the planning process, CSDE is providing this template to guide LEAs planning as well as serve as an opportunity to share the Plan with the public.

Due to the expansive efforts of the CSDE and the educational community, as of the week of May 3–7, 2021 no district in the state of Connecticut was fully remote. This was achieved through extensive planning by each LEA; therefore, this template should be seen as a means to support LEAs' efforts to date and can be used to expand upon or revisit previous Reopening School Plans.

There are five areas that LEAs must consider when developing the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan:

- I. Health and Safety Strategies
- II. Continuity of Services
- III. Public Comment
- IV. Periodic Review Process
- V. Understandable and Uniform Format

The CSDE has maintained consistently that in-person learning is the preferred opportunity for students and that schools should work to safely open their buildings for the 2020–21 school year. We are proud to have led the nation in safe return to in-person instruction — as of April 30, 2021 nearly 82.7% of Connecticut school districts were offering a predominately fully in-person learning. Thank you for your work and helping us continue to be an example of how we can best serve our children safely in school buildings.

I. Health and Safety Strategies

Describe how the LEA plan includes (or will be modified to include) the extent to which the LEA has adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the strategies listed in the table on page 2:

The Waterford Public Schools returned to five days a week full in-person learning PK-12 on April 19, 2021 and continued with full in-person learning for the entire 2021-2022 school year. We will continue to operate with full in-person learning for the 2022-2023 school year. We will adopt, adapt, and modify policies, protocol, and procedures, as well as best practices in mitigation strategies based on recommendations, guidance, and requirements as articulated by the CDC, CT DPH, CSDE, Governor's Executive Orders, our local health district and our district medical advisor. We will utilize the appropriate mitigation strategies to maintain a safe learning environment for all.

Please read Waterford Board of Education Policy 3255 C-19 regarding use of health and safety protocols in our schools. [Policy 3255 C-19](#)

Please complete the table below with the LEA's mitigation strategy for each category. In developing the LEA's response, please review and consider the [CDC guidance](#) and the [Connecticut DPH and CSDE guidance](#) for each category.

	Mitigation strategy	LEA response
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Universal and correct wearing of masks	<p>The Waterford Public Schools will follow the guidance, recommendation, and requirements of the CDC, CT DPH, CSDE, Governor's Executive Orders, our local health district and our district medical advisor in regards to mask-wearing in schools.</p> <p>Exceptions based on documented medical information will be considered in accordance with State of CT guidelines and after consultation with our medical advisor.</p> <p>As of February 28, 2022, masks have been recommended but not required inside school buildings. Even with this shift, masks have been and will still be required in certain settings such as school health rooms.</p> <p>Should there be an outbreak in a classroom, a grade level or team, one of our schools, or in the district, we will consult local and state health authorities in making any needed adjustments to our protocols, which could include temporary mandated mask-wearing. The school district will continue to publish weekly COVID numbers on Friday afternoons on the district COVID Dashboard.</p> <p>Parents who wish for their children to continue to wear masks or may wish them to return to mask wearing for any time period in the future, should communicate clearly to their children their expectations for mask-wearing. Teachers and administrators will not be responsible for monitoring student mask compliance. These individual decisions will be fully supported by school administration and staff, and students will be reminded to respect and not judge their peers and their decisions to wear a mask or not.</p> <p>The CDC, CT DPH, LLHD, and the American Academy of Pediatricians (AAP) all recommend/strongly encourage universal masking in schools.</p> <p>The District will follow CT DPH, CSDE and CIAC guidance in regards to masking for athletics.</p>

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)</p>	<p>The Waterford Public Schools will continue to employ physical distancing to the greatest extent possible and where feasible. Decisions will be based on the guidance, recommendation, and requirements of the CDC, CT DPH, CSDE, Governor's Executive Orders, our local health district and our district medical advisor. The district will strive to maximize the effective use of space. Alternative spaces may be used for instruction to maximize spacing.</p> <p>Strategic floor markings and signage will be used throughout buildings as guidance for movement and spacing.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Handwashing and respiratory etiquette</p>	<p>Our staff and students will continue effective mitigation strategies relative to hand-washing and respiratory etiquette. The district will maintain hand-washing stations and sanitizer stations for the 2022-2023 school year. Handwashing before and after meals and after outdoor activities will be emphasized.</p> <p>Lessons and review of hand-washing and respiratory etiquette will be consistently reinforced throughout the school year and through signage in an age-appropriate manner.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation</p>	<p>Cleaning practices will remain in alignment with the guidance, recommendation, and requirements of the CDC, CT DPH, CSDE, Governor's Executive Orders, our local health district and our district medical advisor. Waterford will continue to meet or exceed all guidance in this area. Buildings and buses will be cleaned on a daily basis. Restrooms will be cleaned and disinfected daily.</p> <p>Ventilation will meet or exceed building standards set by the CSDE and industry best practice. School ventilation will maximize the use of outdoor air as directed by the DPH guidance.</p>

Mitigation strategy	LEA response
<div data-bbox="142 432 188 478" style="float: left; margin-right: 10px;"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> </div> <p data-bbox="233 411 792 499">Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments</p>	<p data-bbox="841 279 1479 726">Comprehensive contact tracing is no longer recommended by the CT DPH and is not being conducted on individual cases. While individual contact tracing is no longer occurring, students, staff, and families may be notified of outbreaks occurring within their classroom, grade, or school level depending on the extent of transmission and structure of the school. The district will follow DPH guidance to refer to the CDC COVID-19 Community Levels to determine when to consider enhanced measures for the prevention of respiratory viral diseases. The school district will continue to publish COVID numbers on the district COVID Dashboard.</p> <p data-bbox="841 810 1458 1010">Our administrators and school nurses are trained and well-versed in our protocols which align to the guidance, recommendation, and requirements of the CDC, CT DPH, CSDE, Governor's Executive Orders, our local health district and our district medical advisor.</p> <p data-bbox="841 1056 1479 1398">We will follow DPH guidance regarding students, teachers, and staff who have symptoms of COVID-19. Students, teachers and staff who experience mild respiratory symptoms (infrequent cough, congestion, runny nose, sore throat, etc.), no fever, and no known COVID-19 case in their household should self-test at home for COVID-19 prior to leaving for school and can be allowed to attend in-person if their test result is negative. In this case students and staff are strongly encouraged to wear a mask indoors.</p> <p data-bbox="841 1430 1458 1598">Students, teachers and staff who have a fever ($\geq 100^{\circ}\text{F}$) should stay home and test for COVID-19. Anyone with a fever should not report to school until they are fever free for 24 hours without the use of medication.</p> <p data-bbox="841 1629 1487 1766">For students, teachers and staff who test positive for COVID-19, we will follow current guidance on Isolation & Quarantine according to the CDC Q/I Calculator, which stipulates continuing with 5 days of isolation.</p>

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Diagnostic screening and testing</p>	<p>The Waterford Public Schools will not offer diagnostic screening or testing for students or staff at this time.</p> <p>Any testing program implemented during the year in any WPS buildings will require parental consent.</p> <p>The district has received at-home test kits which are available for symptomatic staff and students; students and staff with a known direct exposure; and for staff and students where an outbreak may be occurring.</p> <p>The district will continue to make parents and families aware of testing options in the community.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible</p>	<p>The Waterford Public Schools will continue to publicize opportunities for vaccinations for staff and students in collaboration with our local health district and other partner agencies. We were able to offer an on-site vaccination clinic in the 2021-2022 school year in partnership with our UCFS School-Based Health Centers and will look to do so again in 2022-2023 if available. We will adhere to all federal and state laws regarding vaccinations for students and staff.</p> <p>The district will continue to make parents and families aware of vaccination options in the community.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies</p>	<p>Our reopening plan applies to all students in the Waterford Public Schools. We will adhere to any guidance, recommendation, and requirements of the CDC, CT DPH, CSDE, Governor's Executive Orders, our local health district and our district medical advisor as it pertains to appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities. We will follow all state and federal laws, including but not limited to IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation act.</p>

LEA must implement, to the greatest extent practicable, each element of the most up-to-date guidance listed in the table.

II. Continuity of Services

Describe how the LEA plan will ensure continuity of services including but not limited to services to address the students' academic needs, and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services:

Waterford Public Schools will continue with our goal of 100% in-person learning for the entire 2022-2023 school year.

We followed the guidance, recommendation, and requirements of the CDC, CT DPH, CSDE, Governor's Executive Orders, our local health district and our district medical advisor when making decisions on continuity of services in the 2021-2022 school year. All students, PK-12, returned to full in-person learning by April 19, 2021. Our priority and plans for the 2022-2023 school year include full in-person learning five days per week for all Waterford students. Through summer programming, wrap around instruction, additional acceleration and intervention services, additional SEL and mental/behavioral health supports, we will ensure high-quality access for all students. We will continue many of our services and practices from this school year moving forward to support the social, emotional, mental, physical, and academic needs of our students.

Visitor access to school buildings may remain limited during the course of the year due to varying public health conditions. We will continue to utilize drop boxes outside all schools.

Visitors, volunteers, and external groups or organizations who wish to access school facilities during the school day must comply with all district health and safety policies at all times, regardless of vaccination status.

III. Public Comment

Public comment is a key element of stakeholder engagement, and at times a stand-alone element which may include dedicating time to open forums at board of education meetings, conducting surveys, or soliciting written input from external residents not involved in the decision-making process. Describe how the LEA plans to provide the public the opportunity to provide input and for public comment in the development of the plan, a summary of the input (including any letters of support), and how the LEA took such input into account:

The Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan for 2022-2023 is in strict alignment with our Reopening Plan for the 2020-2021 school year. Wide public input and comment has been consistently gathered since July of 2020 including but not limited to: a dedicated reopening@waterfordschools.org email address; a dedicated web page to reopening; publication of the COVID Liaison with contact information; online forums and webinars; as well as the continued opportunity for submission of public comment at Board of Education meetings. This plan is not new content, but rather a continuation of our existing plan, hence wide public comment and input has already been gathered.

With that said, specific to this plan, the Waterford Public Schools will publicly post this plan on our website and notify all families via our mass notification system. We will utilize our existing reopening@waterfordschools.org email address to gather and consider public comment in the regular reviews of our plan.

IV. Periodic Review Process

LEAs are required to periodically review and, as appropriate, revise their Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan at least every six months through September 30, 2023. Each review must include seeking public comment on the plan and developing the plan after taking into account the public comment.

Below are the dates that LEAs must submit a refreshed or updated plan to CSDE via eGMS.

Review and Revision Dates:

- June 23, 2021
- August 13, 2021
- August 19, 2021
- December 23, 2021
- February 28, 2022
- August 15, 2022
- February 15, 2023
- June 23, 2023

V. Understandable and Uniform Format

Federal regulations require that this plan be in an understandable and uniform format, to the extent practicable; is written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable, orally translated; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability, provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent. Describe the unique needs of the LEA's audience and confirm the LEA's approach to ensuring the document is accessible:

Waterford Public Schools has no unique needs at the current time which would prevent an individual from accessing this plan. With that said, paper copies will be available in all schools as well as at Central Office. Should we become aware of any such need, we will respond in an expeditious manner to provide accommodations necessary for those individuals.