



MANDATORY DIRECTIVE:



Schools

Effective July 13, 2020

sccgov.org/coronavirus

County of Santa Clara
Public Health Department

Health Officer
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MANDATORY DIRECTIVE FOR SCHOOLS

Please confirm that your facility may open under the State Order. Where there is a difference between the local County Order and the State Order, the more restrictive order must be followed. The State also has specific guidance for certain facilities that must be followed in addition to this mandatory directive.

Information on the State’s Order and State guidance is available at covid19.ca.gov.

Issued: July 17, 2020; Revised September 8, 2020

On July 17, 2020, the State Health Officer ordered the closure of all in-person instruction at schools in counties on the State’s monitoring list (including Santa Clara County), except for elementary schools that obtain a waiver from the local health officer. On August 25, 2020, the State released additional guidance allowing schools to bring small cohorts of students on campus for supervision, limited instruction, targeted support services, and facilitation of distance learning. On August 28, 2020, the State released a new framework for restrictions on certain activities, including in-person operations at schools. See the State’s Blueprint for a Safer Economy at: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/COVID19CountyMonitoringOverview.aspx>. Under this new framework, schools in counties in Tier 1 remain closed, except for elementary schools that obtain a waiver from the local health officer. When a county enters Tier 2, all schools in that county may resume in-person instruction 14 days later.

This Directive supplements the State requirements for schools and describes the process for schools to resume in-person instruction in Santa Clara County.

“Schools” include all public, private, and charter schools for transitional kindergarten through grade 12. This Directive does not apply to community colleges, universities, childcare facilities, or preschools. Childcare, summer camps, preschools, and children’s activities are subject to a [separate directive](#). This Directive supplements and should be read in conjunction with the Health Officer’s requirements and recommendations for schools in [COVID-19 Prepared: Reopening of Santa Clara County K-12 Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year](#).

This Directive is mandatory, and failure to follow it is a violation of the Health Officer’s Order issued July 2, 2020 (“Order”). Schools must comply with the Order and all requirements

of this Directive.¹ In addition, schools must comply with the Health Officer’s requirements for schools set forth in [COVID-19 Prepared: Reopening of Santa Clara County K-12 Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year](#) except where superseded by this Directive and/or mandatory State guidance.

Resuming In-Person Instruction

Under the guidance of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), schools may not open for in-person instruction until Santa Clara County has been out of Tier 1 (Purple Tier) of the State’s “Blueprint” framework for 14 days. At that time, all schools can resume full in-person instruction, and when providing in-person instruction, they must do so consistent with the requirements issued by the Public Health Department: [COVID-19 Prepared: Reopening of Santa Clara County K-12 Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year](#) and all applicable State requirements.

Small Cohorts for Limited Instruction, Targeted Support Services, and Facilitation of Distance Learning For Schools That Have Not Yet Resumed Full In-Person Instruction

In counties in Tier 1 where schools remain closed, [CDPH guidance](#) allows schools (and other programs) to provide “limited instruction, targeted support services, and facilitation of distance learning in small group environments for a specified subset of children and youth.” Schools providing limited instruction, targeted support services, or facilitation of distance learning must comply with all of the requirements in [COVID-19 Prepared: Reopening of Santa Clara County K-12 Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year](#). Schools are also urged to adopt as many recommendations as they can implement from [COVID-19 Prepared: Reopening of Santa Clara County K-12 Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year](#).

The County Public Health Department strongly encourages schools to provide these services in small stable cohorts in accordance with the CDPH guidance and the requirements issued by the Public Health Department in [COVID-19 Prepared: Reopening of Santa Clara County K-12 Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year](#).

This recommendation is based on the needs of the student populations that are the focus of the CDPH guidance and the difficulty of adequately meeting these students’ educational, health, and other needs through distance learning. This population includes, for example, students with disabilities, English language learners, students without access to the Internet or devices for distance learning, students at higher risk of further learning loss or not participating in distance learning, students at risk of abuse or neglect, foster youth, and students experiencing homelessness. Such students are highly unlikely to be able to access the educational and other services that they need outside of a school setting and are at significantly higher risk of

¹ In addition to the provisions cited in the Order, this Directive applies to all public schools within Santa Clara County pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 120175.5(b).

educational, health, and other harms if they are not provided with in-person instruction, targeted support services, and/or facilitation of their distance learning at school.

Waivers for Elementary Schools

Notwithstanding the closure of schools in Tier 1 counties, [CDPH guidance](#) also provides a pathway for general, in-person instruction at elementary schools in counties that remain in Tier 1:

A waiver of this criteria [mandating distance learning] may be granted by the local health officer for elementary schools to open for in-person instruction. A waiver may only be granted if one is requested by the superintendent (or equivalent for charter or private schools), in consultation with labor, parent and community organizations. Local health officers must review local community epidemiological data, consider other public health interventions, and consult with CDPH when considering a waiver request.

While the County remains in Tier 1, the County Public Health Department strongly encourages elementary schools to follow this process so that they can safely resume in-person instruction this fall.

This recommendation is based on the current best available scientific evidence, including that COVID-related risks in schools serving elementary age students appear lower than and different from the risks to staff and students in schools serving older students. In particular, there appears to be lower risk of child-to-child or child-to-adult transmission in children under 12, and the risk of infection and serious illness in elementary school children is particularly low. By contrast, the health-related risks for elementary age children who are not provided in-person instruction are significant, including lower rates of immunizations, higher rates of undetected child abuse and neglect, and risk to social/emotional wellbeing.

Moreover, in-person instruction is academically and socially critical for younger students, in alignment with State standards. Students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds are particularly harmed by a lack of access to in-person instruction. Schools serving elementary school students are also in a better position to put into place effective risk-reduction strategies to protect both teachers and students, including creation of small, stable classroom cohorts. Further, elementary school students without access to in-person school are far more likely than older students to require alternative group childcare arrangements when schools are closed, and as such, closure of elementary schools is less likely to significantly reduce transmission.

Accordingly, superintendents and their equivalents for private schools and charter schools are encouraged to request a waiver from Public Health for fulltime or hybrid in-person instruction at the elementary level as follows:

1. Contact the Schools Unit at the County Emergency Operations Center at schools@eoc.sccgov.org requesting initiation of the waiver process.
2. Your district/school will be assigned a liaison to review your reopening plans, including for consistency with the prior requirements from Public Health issued in [COVID-19 Prepared: Reopening of Santa Clara County K-12 Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year](#) and information regarding consultation with relevant stakeholders, including labor and parent and community organizations.
3. A waiver allowing in-person instruction will be granted by letter after review by Public Health, including review of local community epidemiological data, consideration of other public health interventions, and consultation with CDPH.

Stay Informed

For answers to frequently asked questions about this industry and other topics, please see the [FAQ page](#). **Please note that this Directive may be updated.** For up-to-date information on the Health Officer Order, visit the County Public Health Department's website at www.sccgov.org/coronavirus.

Please send specific questions related to school operations to schools@eoc.sccgov.org.

Additional Resources

For additional information and resources for schools, please see:

- [COVID-19 Prepared: Reopening of Santa Clara County K-12 Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year](#) (Santa Clara County Public Health Department)
- [Stronger Together: Recovery and Reopening Santa Clara County Schools](#) (Santa Clara County Office of Education)
- [COVID-19 and Reopening In-Person Learning Framework for K-12 Schools in California, 2020-2021 School Year](#) (California Department of Public Health)
- [COVID-19 Industry Guidance: Schools and School-Based Programs](#) (California Department of Public Health)
- [Guidance for Small Cohorts/Groups of Children and Youth](#) (California Department of Public Health)
- [Providing Targeted, Specialized Support and Services at School](#) (California Department of Public Health)
- [COVID-19 and Reopening In-Person Learning Elementary Education Waiver Process](#) (California Department of Public Health)
- [Schools Guidance FAQs](#) (California Department of Public Health)