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

On July 17, 2020, the State Health Officer ordered the closure of all in-person operations 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. See the Statewide Public Health Officer Guidance at: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Schools%20Reopening%20Recommendations.pdf.

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

“Schools” include all public, private, and charter schools from grades pre-K through 12. This Directive does not apply to community colleges, universities, childcare facilities, or preschools. Childcare, summer camps, and children’s activities are subject to a separate directive. This Directive supplements and should be read in conjunction with the Health Officer’s June 30, 2020 requirements 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”). You must comply with the Order and all requirements of this Directive. In addition, schools must comply with the Health Officer’s June 30, 2020 requirements in COVID-19 Prepared: Reopening of Santa Clara County K-12 Schools for the

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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).
2020-2021 School Year except where superseded by this Directive and/or mandatory State guidance.

**General Closure of In-Person Operations and Activities**

Consistent with the guidance of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), schools may not open for any in-person instruction, athletic or extracurricular activities, or other related functions, including hybrid learning models at this time.

Once Santa Clara County has been off of the State’s monitoring list for 14 days, schools should resume in-person instruction and activities consistent with the prior requirements issued by the Public Health Department: [COVID-19 Prepared: Reopening of Santa Clara County K-12 Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year](#).

Because we will continue to take aggressive steps to ensure the rate of COVID transmission in our community is reduced, schools should be planning to be able to resume in-person instruction later in the fall.

**Waivers for Elementary Schools**

Notwithstanding the closure in monitoring counties, the CDPH guidance specifically provides a pathway for in-person instruction at elementary schools:

> 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.

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 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)