Santa Clara County, CA – The County of Santa Clara Public Health Department today issued detailed guidance for school administrators to help them prepare to welcome students back to school campuses for the 2020-2021 school year, with the protocols and policies in place to protect students and staff from COVID-19.

The guidance, which was developed in partnership with the County Office of Education, provides detailed direction for schools on issues such as safe practices for in-class instruction, school arrival and departure, bus transportation, use of face coverings, handwashing, school cleaning, food service, extracurricular activities, and other topics. For use by school administrators, the document explains specific actions schools should take to prevent COVID-19 transmission and to respond to possible cases in the school setting.

“We need everyone in the community to strictly follow social distancing now so that children and teachers can safely return to school in the fall,” said County of Santa Clara Health Officer Dr. Sara Cody. “Schools and other institutions in our community can operate safely if they carefully follow all recommended public health practices, and they must move forward with their preparations now to ensure they have all the measures in place.”

Whether schools can move forward with reopening for in-person instruction in the fall will depend on the containment of COVID-19 in the weeks ahead.

“From the first shelter-in-place order which resulted in school closures that lasted through the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, SCCOE, districts, schools and staff worked earnestly together to support students and families. Informed by safety guidance from the Public Health Department, meaningful educational experiences and essential services were provided while weathering unforeseen and unprecedented challenges presented by this pandemic,” said Dr. Mary Ann Dewan, Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools. “We continue to learn a lot from this experience. This fall, while there is no doubt learning environments at schools will look different, our determination to provide students with quality education

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remains steadfast. Adhering to the guidance provided by the Public Health Department, we will work with districts and schools to implement reopening and recovery plans that continue to reflect our commitment to prioritize safety for students.”

“We must all work together to make sure it is safe and healthy for our children to return to school in grades K-12 this Fall. That’s why it’s imperative for all our residents to continue wearing masks and social distancing when they leave home. Also please get tested,” said Cindy Chavez, president of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors.

Required and recommended prevention measures vary by age group. For example, elementary schools can limit risk by making sure students only have contact with their own teacher and other students in their class, while high schools can expect students to follow more stringent mask-wearing and social distancing expectations.

Prevention measures focus on the following key strategies:
1. Minimizing the number of people who come into contact with each other.
2. Maximizing the physical distance between people.
3. Reducing the time that people spend in close proximity to others.
4. Measures to minimize dispersion of droplets and aerosols.

The full guidance and additional information for schools is available at sccgov.org/cv19schools.