



LOURDES A. LEON GUERRERO  
GOVERNOR, MAGA'ĦĀGA'

JOSHUA F. TENORIO  
LT. GOVERNOR, SIGUNDO MAGA'LĀHI

GOVERNMENT OF GUAM

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES**  
**DIPATTAMENTON SALUT PUPBLEKO YAN SETBISION SUSIAT**



ARTHUR U. SAN AGUSTIN, MHR  
DIRECTOR

LAURENT SF DUENAS, MPH, BSN  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

TERRY G. AGUON  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

September 19, 2021

**DPHSS Guidance Memorandum 2021-23**

**RE: School Resumption of In-Person Learning for Pre-K to 12 Relative to Executive Order 2021-23**

The Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS) recognizes that the safe return to in-person learning is critical for students from an academic, social, and emotional perspective. In order to facilitate in-person learning, DPHSS continues to endorse layered mitigation strategies to prevent the transmission of COVID-19.

It is issued in furtherance of DPHSS's authority as provided in the *Island Guåhan* Emergency Health Powers Act, in particular, 10 GCA § 19601, which provides that DPHSS shall use every available means to prevent the transmission of infectious disease and to ensure that all cases of contagious disease are subject to proper control and treatment.

The purpose of this guidance document (the "Guidance") is to provide clarification for schools that are prepared to resume in-person learning for pre-kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in accordance with Executive Order No. 2021-23. This Guidance rescinds DPHSS Guidance Memorandum 2021-09 (Revision 2), and supersedes all previous DPHSS guidance documents that are in effect, in whole or in part, including DPHSS Guidance Memorandum 2021-21, which contradict or conflict with Executive Order 2021-23 and this Guidance.

The DPHSS guidance for schools is intentionally layered and flexible. Each school is different, and not every mitigation strategy outlined in this guidance can be practically implemented at every school. Thus, layered mitigation strategies must be implemented, which include promoting COVID-19 vaccination among all staff and eligible students 12 years of age and older, directing staff and students to stay home when sick, correct and consistent use of face masks while indoors and outdoors, proper hand hygiene, designated cohorts, improved ventilation, physical distancing, screening testing, and cleaning and disinfection. Physical distancing may not be practical in all school settings. Therefore, using multiple mitigation strategies consistently and in combination gives schools the flexibility to achieve safe learning environments even when not every mitigation strategy can be applied.

All schools must email their In-Class School Operation Plans (the "Plan") to the Division of Environmental Health (DEH) no later than October 1, 2021. The submitted Plans must indicate if the school is unable to meet the specific provisions in the guidance. The schools must address these challenges by incorporating additional layered mitigation strategies that will meet the intent of this guidance to prevent transmission of COVID-19. The Plans are subject to review and

approval by DEH, and must be submitted and approved no later than October 31, 2021; otherwise, the non-compliant school must cease operation immediately and/or a penalty may be imposed to the school pursuant to *DPHSS Regulations Governing the Enforcement of Public Health Memoranda and Directives During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency*.

Schools shall adhere to the following provisions and include them in their Plans:

**A. Universal and Correct Use of Face Masks**

1. Core principle for face masks:
  - a. Require consistent and correct use of well-fitting face masks that must cover both the nose and mouth at the same time with proper filtration by all students, visitors, teachers, and staff to prevent COVID-19 transmission through respiratory droplets.
  - b. Face masks should be worn at all times, by all individuals in school facilities, with certain exceptions for specific individuals, settings or activities, such as while eating or drinking.
  - c. Face masks should be required in all classroom and non-classroom settings, including hallways, school offices, restrooms, gyms, auditoriums, etc.
2. Mask policies for all students, visitors, teachers, and staff set the expectation that individuals will use face masks throughout the school.
3. Face shields may be used in addition to, but never in lieu of, a face mask.
  - a. If individuals choose to wear a face shield, ensure they fit properly and can be cleaned and disinfected according to the manufacturer's directions.
4. School staff are to provide a face mask to any student who does not have one or who arrives to the school without one.
5. The most effective fabrics for cloth face masks are tightly woven, such as cotton and cotton blends, breathable, and have two or three fabric layers.
6. Face masks with exhalation valves or vents, those that use loosely woven fabrics, and those that do not fit properly are prohibited.
7. Schools will adopt U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for face coverings for certain populations and situations, including those with certain medical conditions, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or asthma (e.g., "Who Should Not Wear a Cloth Face Covering" and "Feasibility and Adaptations"). The wearing of face shields may be one alternative for these individuals, as provided in applicable CDC guidelines.
  - a. Most students, including those with disabilities, can tolerate and safely wear a face mask. However, a narrow subset of students with disabilities might not be able to wear a mask or cannot safely wear a face mask.
  - b. Those who cannot safely wear a face mask for example, a person with a disability who, for reasons related to the disability, would be physically unable to remove a mask without assistance if breathing becomes obstructed—should not be required to wear one.
  - c. For the remaining portion of the subset, schools should make individualized determinations as required by Federal disability laws in order to determine if an exception to the face mask requirement is necessary and appropriate for a particular student.
  - d. If a child with a disability cannot wear a face mask, maintain physical distance, or adhere to other public health requirements, the student is still entitled to an



appropriate education, which in some circumstances may need to be provided virtually.

8. If visitors are permitted in schools, they are required to wear face masks at all times and should maintain a minimum of 6 feet physical distance from others.
9. Schools should encourage modeling of correct and consistent face mask use by school leaders, local leaders, and others respected in the community.

## **B. Physical Distancing**

1. Core principle for physical distancing:
  - a. Schools in which not everyone is fully vaccinated should implement physical distancing to the extent possible within their structures, but should not exclude students from in-person learning in order to keep a minimum distance requirement.
2. Between students in classrooms:
  - a. Students should be at least three (3) feet apart.
  - b. When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, it is important to continue to use the mitigation strategies, such as indoor use of face masks, screening testing, grouping students such that they stay together for all courses and activities (e.g., lunch, recess) and avoid interacting with other groups, also referred to as “*cohorting*,” improved ventilation, handwashing and covering coughs and sneezes, staying home when sick with symptoms of infectious illness including COVID-19, and regular cleaning and disinfecting to help reduce transmission risk.
3. Maximize distance in these settings:
  - a. Between adults (teachers and staff), and between adults and students, within the school building, especially if not fully vaccinated.
  - b. When face masks cannot be worn, such as eating or drinking.
  - c. During activities when increased exhalation occurs, such as singing, shouting, band, or sports and exercise. Move these activities outdoors or to large, well-ventilated space, if possible.
  - d. In common areas such as school lobbies or auditorium.
4. Use cohorting, and maintain 6 feet of distance between cohorts. To limit contact between cohorts, schools may adjust their schedules in order to accommodate physical distancing requirements and facilitate contact tracing.
5. Remove nonessential furniture and make other changes to classroom layouts to maximize distance between students.
6. Face desks in the same direction.
7. Eliminate or decrease nonessential in-person interactions among teachers and staff during meetings, lunches, and other situations that could lead to adult-to-adult transmission.
8. While congregating is strongly discouraged, it may be necessary for groups of students to gather, such as when awaiting transportation upon dismissal. Schools are directed to develop strategies to reasonably maintain distancing during such periods.
9. Visitors:
  - a. Limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as much as possible.
  - b. Require all visitors to wear masks and maintain six (6) feet distance from others.

### **C. Cleaning and Disinfection**

1. All schools must:
  - a. Conduct daily cleaning and disinfection of facilities.
  - b. Clean and disinfect surfaces in the classroom or workspace of a sick student or employee.
  - c. Focus on high touch areas (e.g., door handles, tables, counters, desktops, keyboards, toilets, telephones, etc.).
  - d. Use a checklist (e.g., date, time, and name of individual) to document thorough cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces, equipment, and common areas of the facility.
  - e. Provide and maintain adequate materials and supplies to help prevent transmission, such as well-stocked handwashing stations.
  - f. Ensure that toilet facilities and handwashing sinks are thoroughly and frequently cleaned and disinfected.
  - g. Use commercial-grade, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered household disinfectant. If unavailable, a home-made disinfectant may be used by mixing 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) of bleach (5% - 6% hypochlorite concentration) per 1 gallon of water, or 4 teaspoons of bleach per quart of water.

### **D. Ventilation**

1. Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, such as by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety or health risk (e.g., allowing pollens in or exacerbating asthma symptoms) to individuals occupying the facility.
2. Consider using portable high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan or similar filtration systems to enhance air cleaning.
3. Take steps to minimize air from blowing from one person directly to another individual if fans and other mechanical ventilation systems are used.

### **E. Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette**

1. School building occupants should practice handwashing and respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes) to keep from getting and spreading infectious illnesses (e.g., COVID-19). Schools should monitor and reinforce these behaviors and provide adequate handwashing supplies.
2. School staff should teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
3. Remind everyone in the school facility to wash hands frequently and assist young children with handwashing.
4. If handwashing is not possible, use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (for teachers, staff, and older students who can safely use hand sanitizer). Hand sanitizers should be stored up, away, and out of sight of young children and should be used only with adult supervision for children under 6 years of age.

### **F. Food Service and School Meals**

1. Use additional spaces for meal time when cafeteria space is insufficient to maintain a minimum of six (6) feet physical distance between cohorts. Student meals could be delivered and consumed in the classrooms, gymnasium, or outdoor seating, while ensuring that six (6) feet physical distance is maintained in all areas between cohorts.



2. Implement three (3) feet physical distance between students when moving through the food service line and while eating and drinking (especially indoors).
3. If school is unable to meet physical distancing requirements mentioned above, physical barriers may be used, provided that the height of the barrier is no less than the tallest student (standing) occupying the adjacent seat.
4. Schools are not limited to utilizing single use items and packaged meals given the very low risk of transmission from surfaces and shared objects.
5. Frequently clean high touch surfaces. Surfaces that come in contact with food should be washed, rinsed, and sanitized before and after meals.
6. For school staff and employees, promote hand washing before, after, and during shifts, before and after eating, after using the toilet, and after handling garbage, dirty dishes, or removing gloves.
7. Improve ventilation in food preparation, service, and seating areas.

#### **G. Sports and Extracurricular Activities**

Interscholastic sports are authorized to resume training and competition, and spectators are authorized to attend school sporting events, provided the following requirements are met:

1. Spectators shall be limited to no more than four (4) per athlete (referenced as a "spectator pod").
2. Mask Requirements:
  - a. All athletes must wear a face mask that covers the nose and mouth when not actively participating in an athletic activity.
  - b. Non-participants, such as coaches, officials, instructors, employees, and parents must wear face masks at all times.
  - c. Spectators shall be required to wear face masks at all times, but may remove their face masks when actively eating or drinking, provided they remain in their respective spectator pod.
  - d. Unless indicated in Section A.7, the use of a face shield or goggle as a substitute for a face mask is prohibited; however, the items may be worn for eye protection with the face mask.
3. Physical Distance Requirements:
  - a. Post signs at the entrance and throughout the facility that promote behaviors that prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, which must be communicated through images and pictures for coaches, athletes, officials, spectators, and other persons to observe.
  - b. Provide physical guides, such as tape in the dugouts, benches, restrooms, concession areas, or other shared or athlete staging areas, and signage, to ensure that individuals remain at least six (6) feet apart.
  - c. All persons are prohibited from congregating in the parking lot or near the field, gym, or sports complex/facility before and after games.
  - d. Athletes must maintain 6 feet of separation from others when not on the field of play or when engaged in play/activity, whenever possible.
  - e. Coaches, officials, and individuals who are not from the same household must maintain at least six (6) feet social distancing from other individuals.
  - f. Each spectator pod must be seated at least six (6) feet from the next spectator pod, and members of separate pods shall remain distanced from members of other pods for the duration of the activity.
  - g. Distance between spectator pods is measured between outermost individuals of each pod.

- h. Athletes and coaches should avoid unnecessary physical contact, such as high-fives, handshakes, fist-bumps, and hugs.
- 4. Vaccination and Testing Requirements:
  - a. School sports and competitions must require all coaches and participants sixteen (16) years plus one (1) month of age or older to show acceptable proof that they have received at least one shot of a recommended series of vaccination pursuant to applicable DPHSS Guidance Memorandum 2021-24.
  - b. In the event a coach or participant described in G(4)(a) declines to receive a COVID-19 vaccination or fails to provide proof of such vaccination, they will be required to undergo and submit proof of a negative COVID-19 test once weekly. The school must maintain records of such test results for a period of not less than 60 days.

#### **H. Screening Testing**

- 1. Screening testing is part of a layered prevention strategy that will identify persons who are infected but without symptoms. It will also lead to early detection and intervention of COVID-19 cases. DPHSS will develop a guidance document for screening testing, which schools must follow.
- 2. Schools must work with parent(s)/legal guardian(s) in obtaining consent for minors for the screening testing program.
- 3. School students, teachers, and staff identified during screening testing as positive for COVID-19 will be reported to DPHSS.
- 4. The school contact tracing team will support DPHSS in case investigations.
- 5. DPHSS will provide guidance to schools on mitigation strategies and testing protocols in response to positive cases identified during screening testing.

#### **I. Staying Home When Sick and Getting Tested**

- 1. If you are sick, you should:
  - a. Stay home, except to seek medical care. Call ahead before visiting the clinic/doctor.
  - b. Monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 including fever, cough, and shortness of breath, fatigue, body aches, headaches, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, nausea and/or diarrhea.
  - c. Get tested if you have symptoms of COVID-19. While waiting for test results, you should stay away from others, including staying apart from those living in your household.
  - d. Look for emergency warning signs for COVID-19 and seek emergency medical care immediately or call 911 if you are experiencing any of the following warning signs of COVID-19:
    - i. Trouble breathing;
    - ii. Persistent pain or pressure in the chest;
    - iii. New confusion;
    - iv. Inability to wake or stay awake; or,
    - v. Pale, gray, or blue-colored skin, lips, or nail beds, depending on skin tone.
- 2. If a student or employee is identified in the school facility with symptoms consistent with COVID-19, the following steps should be taken:
  - a. The K-12 parent(s)/legal guardian(s) should be informed, the student isolated, and picked up by parent(s)/legal guardian(s) within the hour. Individual should be



advised to seek medical evaluation as appropriate and notify the school of test result if tested for COVID-19.

- b. Staff should go home and be advised to seek medical evaluation as appropriate, and notify the school of their test result if tested for COVID-19.

**J. Relative To the Implementation Of COVID-19 Testing, Case Investigation And Contact Tracing, Isolation, Quarantine And Monitoring Of Positive Covid-19 Individuals And Contacts In Schools - DPHSS will issue a guidance memorandum to schools for COVID-19 testing, case investigation, contact tracing, isolation, quarantine, and monitoring of positive individuals and contacts in schools.**

**K. Transportation**

1. In collaboration with DPHSS, the Department of Public Works (DPW) will develop a guidance document specific to school bus transportation.
2. Schools must ensure that all students released at the end of the school day for bus transport are wearing masks and have washed their hands, or provided hand sanitizer.
3. Gathering of students at bus stops, who are waiting to be picked up by DPW, is not affected by the congregation restrictions (i.e., numbers permitted); however, they all must abide by other mitigation measures, such as social distancing and wearing of face masks.

**L. Promoting COVID-19 Vaccination Among Eligible Individuals in the Schools**

1. Core principles:
  - a. Increasing COVID-19 vaccination rates leads to fewer COVID-19 illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths.
  - b. More individuals will get vaccinated when they have strong confidence in the COVID-19 vaccine within their communities.
2. Schools should encourage their eligible students, teachers, coaches, advisors, volunteers, and staff to receive the COVID-19 vaccine to help slow the spread of COVID-19 and prevent interruptions to in-person learning and participation in sports and extracurricular activities.
3. COVID-19 vaccine information should be shared to promote vaccine trust and confidence among their eligible students, teachers, and staff.
  - a. Consider using current/former students, student leaders, local leaders, and others respected in the community as messengers for promoting COVID-19 vaccination within the schools.
  - b. Ask students, teachers, and staff to promote vaccination efforts within their social groups and/or within their communities.
4. Schools should support policies that promote convenience and access to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

All In-Class Operating Plans for Schools must be emailed to [dphss-deh@dphss.guam.gov](mailto:dphss-deh@dphss.guam.gov). For additional questions, please contact the DPHSS at (671) 300-9579 or (671) 922-2562; 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

  
**ARTHUR U. SAN AGUSTIN, MHR**  
Director