

# Safe Return to In-person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan Addendum Guidance 2023

LEAs are required to update the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan every six months through **Sept. 30, 2023**. Each time, local education agencies (LEAs) must seek public input on the plan and any revisions and must take such input into account. The purpose of the plan is to keep stakeholders informed.

Every LEA should complete the addendum and upload it to ePlan in the LEA document library and post it to the LEA's website (**March 1 and Sept. 15**). Like the development of the plan, all revisions must be informed by community input and reviewed and approved by the governing body prior to posting on the LEA's publicly available website.

Please consider the following when completing the addendum:

- Ensure the LEA used multiple models of engagement offered to stakeholders. Examples may include surveys, in-person or virtual committee meetings, town hall meetings, or other inclusive engagement opportunities.
- LEAs should engage all applicable groups noted in meaningful consultation during the crafting of the plan and when making any significant revisions or updates to the plan.
- The number of stakeholders engaged should represent the composition of students. For example, if students with disabilities make up 15 percent of students, then 10-20 percent of respondents should represent this subgroup.
- Ensure the stakeholder engagement happened prior to the development/revision of the plan.
- The LEA must engage the health department in the development and revision of the plan. This is different from providing the health department with COVID-19 numbers.
- Plans must explicitly address every bullet point in Question 3 regarding district policies and strategies.
- Plans require local board approval and public posting.
- LEAs must update the *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* at least every six months through Sept. 30, 2023, seek public input on the plan and any revisions, and take such input into account. All revisions must include an explanation and rationale of why the revisions were made.
- All revisions must include an explanation and rationale, with meaningful public consultation and in an understandable format. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires LEAs to post their Health and Safety Plans online in a language that parents/caregivers can understand, or, if it is not practicable to provide written translations to an individual with limited English proficiency, be orally translated. The plan also must be provided in an alternative format accessible, upon request, by a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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

The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief 3.0 (ESSER 3.0) Fund under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021, Public Law 117-2, was enacted on March 11, 2021. Funding provided to states and local educational agencies (LEAs) helps safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the nation's students.

In the fall of 2021, LEAs developed and made publicly available a Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan. All plans were developed with meaningful public consultation with stakeholder groups. LEAs are required to update the plan every six months through Sept. 30, 2023, and must seek public input on the plan and any revisions and must take such input into account. LEAs also must review and update their plans and ensure they align with any significant changes to CDC recommendations for K-12 schools. Like the development of the plan, all revisions must be informed by community input and reviewed and approved by the governing body prior to posting on the LEA's publicly available website.

The following information is intended to update stakeholders and address the requirement.

LEA Name: **Bristol Tennessee City Schools**

Date: August 29, 2023

### **1. Describe how the LEA has continued to engage in meaningful consultation with stakeholders in the development of the revised plan.**

Bristol City Schools welcomes input from all stakeholders on COVID-19 operating procedures. The district invited stakeholders to review our ESSER planning documents and provide feedback on COVID-19 protocols and ESSER funding through a survey. The survey was posted on the BTCS website, and the link was shared on several social media platforms. Procedures are discussed in principal, district leadership, and teacher advisory committee meetings. Students, parents, and PTA boards are encouraged to share ideas and concerns regarding procedures with principals or contact the Student Services department directly. Feedback is solicited in district communication on each protocol, and students, staff, and parents can email suggestions to [studentservices@btcs.org](mailto:studentservices@btcs.org). Discussions regarding COVID protocols are included in our school board work sessions. In addition, the student services team reviews the plans with principals, district leaders, and our health services team while sharing the most recent guidance from the CDC and TDOH to ensure we are making decisions based on current recommendations to best meet the needs of our students in our local community.

**2. Describe how the LEA engaged the health department in the development of the revised plan.**

The Health Services Coordinator meets monthly with the Health Department but keeps open lines of communication open via text, phone and email regarding any concerns. The Supervisor of Student Services also met with the Health Department when an outbreak was peaking. In addition to numbers, the Health Department also sends 7-day wastewater treatment surveillance numbers that also indicate how widespread COVID is in our county. Dr. May at the Sullivan County Health Department reviews protocols and gives guidance for student and staff safety.

**3. Provide the extent to which the LEA has updated adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the following health and safety strategies.**

*Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies*

*Understandably, a key concern is whether certain populations of students, teachers, and other school-based employees may be at increased risk of infection and severe disease by attending school in-person. According to the Centers for Disease Control, some people are more likely than others to become severely ill should they contract COVID-19: risk for severe illness increases with age; and/or people of all ages with certain underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled. Parents should consult medical professionals about the risk associated with their child's underlying conditions. Parents with medically vulnerable students may elect to register for our Tennessee Online Public School (TOPS) supported by BTCS. For questions or concerns regarding medically fragile students, students with IEPs, and schooling options, parents should contact BTCS Student Services at 423-652-9233. Individual decisions to attend school in-person or register for the Tennessee Online Public School will be left to parents.*

*Physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding)*

*Students are cohorted in grade levels for classrooms and in green spaces on playgrounds in grades K-8. In middle school, each grade level has its own floor of the building with altered schedules to prevent the mixing of students from other grade levels. Students eat lunch in K-8 in their grade level teams. The flow of foot traffic in K-12 is staggered wherever possible.*

*Hand washing and respiratory etiquette*

*Students and staff should wash with soap and water or use hand sanitizer when practical. Students and staff should regularly wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before every meal. Staff should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before every meal.*

*Teachers will train/reinforce respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes) to prevent the spread of illness and COVID-19. Frequently touched surfaces will undergo cleaning often and no less than daily. Staff will perform additional disinfecting of more frequently touched surfaces and equipment throughout the day if possible.*

*Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities including improving ventilation*

*BTCS has taken numerous measures to ensure the air quality in buildings exceeds standards while reducing the spread of COVID-19 particles. Prior to the pandemic, BTCS exceeded the American Society of Heating and Refrigeration Engineers (ASHRAE) standards and building codes regarding introducing fresh air into our schools. During the pandemic, BTCS met or exceeded ASHREA and CDC recommendations for ventilation. Filters are changed more frequently than pre-pandemic. Special attention is given to filters in areas of suspected COVID-19 exposures. The filters in the HVAC units have the highest MERV rating possible before causing operational issues with the HVAC unit to maximize filtration.*

*Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine*

*The district continues to use the TDOH Isolation/Quarantine guidelines for COVID-19 protocols and added the school district illness guidelines to give parents more flexibility in determining when students should return to school. School nurses share the TDOH guidelines for isolation/quarantine and the district illness policy to help parents make informed decisions about when a student should return and recommend timelines to do so.*

- *The district policy for illness states students may elect to return when they are fever free for 24 hours with improving symptoms.*
- *Quarantine is not recommended for all regardless of vaccination status or past infection.*

*Diagnostic and screening testing*

*Bristol Tennessee City Schools continues to use guidance from the CDC, Tennessee Department of Health, and the Sullivan County Regional Health Department. The district is not currently testing for COVID-19, but has plans to coordinate this service with the telehealth line and Ballad Health.*

*Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible*

*In the first year of COVID, our district held two vaccination clinics and included students, staff, and community members. The Sullivan County Regional Health Department continues to share information with our local community on vaccination opportunities.*

*Universal and correct wearing of masks*

*The district shares information from the CDC and the TDOH regarding recommendations for mask wear; however, students are not required to wear masks based on legislation passed in 2021. Information shared with the school community includes:*

- *The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) states that wearing a well-fitted mask consistently and correctly reduces the risk of spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Students and staff may elect to wear a mask during school hours or on school transportation, but it is not required.*

- *Face masks are recommended, but not required for all individuals inside school buildings or on transportation when community spread is at high levels.*

**4. Provide a current description as to how the LEA is ensuring continuity of services including but not limited to services that address students' academic needs and students' and staff's social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services.**

**Additional Support Added:**

The district received a Stronger Connections Grant for 1.1 million dollars over three years to maintain and expand mental health services. We kicked off the school year with a district-wide Whole Child In-service Day. Professional development geared to support adverse childhood experiences will be provided to staff across the district. Carryover money from the Resilient Schools Grant will also be utilized for professional development and to provide books and resources to support Trauma Informed Schools.

**Learning Loss & Acceleration**

- A Director of Accelerated Learning and Data Analysis was hired to support students to organize and design programs targeting specific areas of need.
- Academic Tutors will serve 1st-8th grade students to provide low ratio/high dosage tutoring for students who score below proficiency.
- LEAPS after-school program, flexible student learning days, and intersessions specifically target learning loss for students.
- Summer School will be held according to state mandates to support learning gaps.

**Mental Health**

- Therapist and a case manager were hired by grant funding to provide mental health and behavior support across the district. The additional staff member will continue to support students again this year.
- School Mental Health Liaisons provide services on campus and connect students and families to additional community support systems, including crisis support.
- Our Director of Schools sends out Friday Inspiration emails that include topics of celebrations and self-care.
- Teachers are encouraged to use mental health support phone lines and visit our in-house service providers.
- The Mental Health Association of East Tennessee provides guest speakers in our high school wellness classes to support mental health.
- This year our district will implement Communities in Schools with a staff member at each school to support Tier I family engagement and work with a caseload of 60 students.

**Physical Health**

- Nurses shifted from part-time to full-time to provide services for the entire school day.
- School nutrition provides meals for after-school programming, flexible learning days intersession, and summer school.
- Parents should consult medical professionals regarding the risk associated with any underlying conditions of their child. Parents with medically vulnerable students may elect to register for Tennessee Online Public School (TOPS), a fully virtually K-12 option for BTCS students. For questions or concerns

regarding medically-fragile students, students with IEPs, and schooling options, please contact BTCS Student Services at (423) 652-9233. Ultimately, individual decisions to attend school in-person or register for TOPS are left to parents.

- Medically Vulnerable Staff: If they choose to do so, staff may self-identify as having a high-risk medical condition to the Human Resources department. Human Resources will work with staff on potential options.

### **Nutrition Services**

- The school nutrition department launched a campaign to notify parents that they may need to sign up for the free and reduced meal program. Both paper and digital sign-up formats will be utilized for registration.
- Students participating in our after-school program are provided meals.
- Students participating in off-site after-school programs at the YWCA, YMCA, and Boys and Girls Club are provided free meals.
- Meals are provided during the summer for students at the following locations: summer school, YWCA, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, and at four neighborhoods with lower socio-economic housing.