

New COVID-19 Guidance for K-12 Schools

Today, the California Department of Education has issued COVID-19 Guidance based on the governor's executive order to assist schools facing physical closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Guidance focuses on school meals, care and supervision, and distance learning. Furthermore, this Guidance reassures Local Education Agencies that they will continue to receive state funding without specifically imposing additional mandates to receive funding.

The COVID-19 Guidance is intended to aid LEAs as they think through ways to provide the key services to their communities.

From ACSA's perspective, the question for school leaders is not what we are required to do, but what we can and should do for our students and families. Although the Guidance creates many ambiguities, the governor's administration continues to emphasize that the executive order and COVID-19 Guidance are not new mandates. This Guidance inserts "should" language to encourage and help districts during these challenging times.

We anticipate the COVID-19 Guidance issued today is just the beginning of regular communication between the state and LEAs. We recognize a variety of topics are not addressed in these documents. With thanks to ACSA members, we can share your questions directly with the governor's administration and CDE.

Please know ACSA stands ready to be of assistance to you now and in the days and weeks ahead.

School Meal Guidance

- Schools that are approved to operate National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option or Summer Food Service Program can continue to serve meals during COVID-19 at school sites that are closed, and offer shelf-stable meals for multiple days by submitting a request to SNPINFO@cde.cde.ca.gov. The request will require specific information; please see the Guidance.
- To be eligible for federal reimbursement, meals can be served to all children where 50 percent or more of the children are eligible for free and reduced-price meals. In communities with less than 50 percent free or reduced-priced meals, meal service must be focused on children who qualify.
- Schools do not need to distribute meals on-site and can distribute them at another site that is accessible and convenient to the community. It is also recommended that meals are consumed offsite, but may be consumed onsite if social distancing and sanitation guidelines are followed.
- To ensure families are aware of the availability of meals, a wide range of communication in multiple languages should be considered, such as public announcements on radio or television.

Care and Supervision Guidance

- LEAs that have physically closed should develop a plan to ensure students are supervised during school hours. Options include (1) using school sites as a pop-up childcare program (please work with the California Department of Social Services' Community Care Licensing Division regarding this option) or (2) partnering with local resource and referral agencies to connect families with care, and providing families with a list of programs that remain open.

Distance Learning Guidance

The guidance is meant to assist LEAs in creating high-quality distance learning during the pandemic. The ability of LEAs to create these programs will be challenged by the present circumstances. However, to the extent the district can create these programs, a careful review of this section will help assist in this process. Highlights include:

- A curated list of resources that will support educators and students with an online educational platform.
- Strategies to help teachers keep students engaged while learning remotely. This includes: being present as an instructor, encouraging group learning, and avoiding assigning long text passages or videos.
- It provides best practices to ensure resources are accessible for all students, specifically our students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged pupils.

To review the Guidance documents, visit <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/coronavirus.asp>