



# Reopening Florida's Nonpublic Schools

Creating Safe Spaces for Learning  
How to navigate CARES Act  
Funding



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF  
**EDUCATION**  
fldoe.org





*“Throughout this, two constants remain – keeping our education community safe and ensuring our students receive a first class education in Florida. And our default is to always show compassion and grace.”*

*– Commissioner Richard Corcoran*

## Introduction

# Indicators of Success

1. Keep Florida's entire education family safe and healthy.
2. Instill confidence in Floridians to return to school campuses safely and ready to succeed.
3. Focus on student-centered outcomes.
4. Elevate educators and equip them for success.
5. Enable parents of school-aged children to return to the workforce.
6. Increase Floridians' economic mobility and agility.
7. In all situations, show compassion and grace in decision-making.

## Reading Proficiency Impacts Already Vulnerable Students

When controlling for poverty, racial and ethnic graduation gaps disappear when students master reading by the end of third grade.

- ❑ Every student who does not complete high school costs our society an estimated \$260,000 in lost earnings, taxes, and productivity.
- ❑ Nearly 90% of students who failed to earn a high school diploma were struggling readers in third grade.
- ❑ Black and Hispanic students not reading proficiently in third grade are six times more likely to drop out or fail to graduate from high school.
- ❑ Low-income minority students not reading proficiently in third grade are eight times more likely to drop out or fail to graduate from high school.



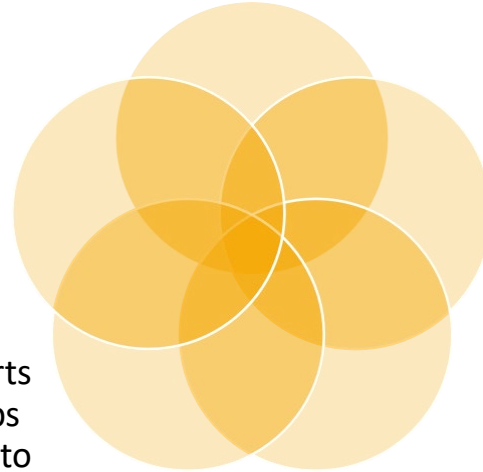
Reopening is a  
Locally Driven  
Decision

Dimmer Switch  
(Step-by-Step)  
Approach

Create a Local  
Safe Schools Plan  
to Maintain In-  
Person Learning

Establish Supports  
and Partnerships  
in Communities to  
Make Local  
Decisions

Create a  
Framework for  
Local Planning by  
Creating a Crisis  
Response Team



## Guidance for Reopening Healthy Learning Environments

## The Reality: Education Programs are Inherently Designed for Social Interaction, Not Social Distancing

For all educational programs, [cleaning, disinfecting and social distancing are essential](#). However thorough, collaborative and multifaceted reopening and risk mitigation strategies are needed to implement healthy campuses and programs, while earning public confidence.

- ❑ K-12 schools, college campuses and child care programs are inherently [high-contact settings](#), not built conveniently for social distancing.
  - ❑ Schools are designed to bring people together, creating shared learning spaces, enabling teachers to connect with students in-person, empowering students to collaborate and maximizing the value of a shared educational journey.
  - ❑ While educational programs should maintain maximum distance between students' desks, this distance may often not reach 6 feet.
- ❑ **Therefore, reopening will require locally driven strategies with guidance from FDOE, FDOH, FDCF, FDEM and local health officials.**



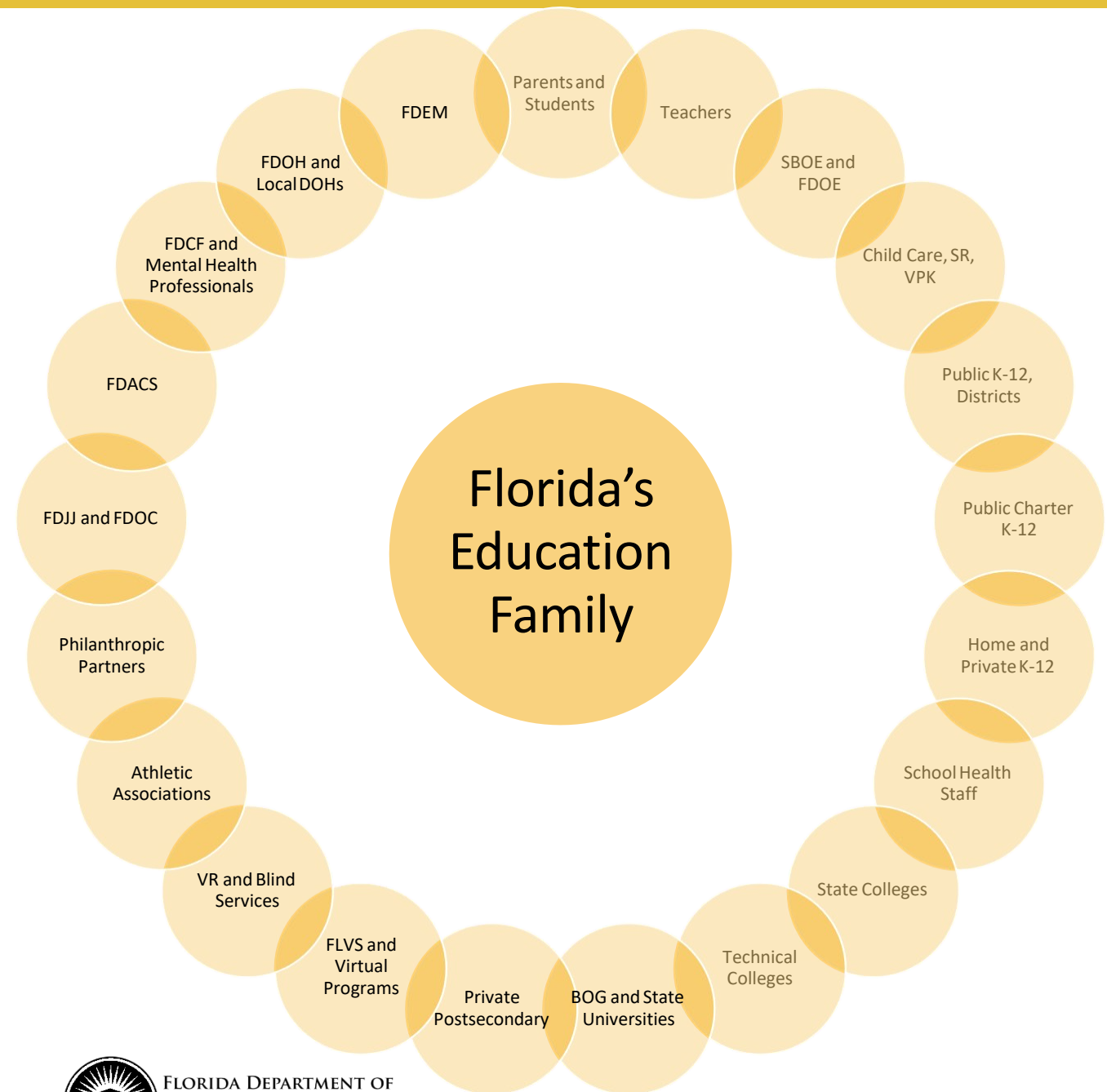
## Reopening is a Locally Driven Decision

- ❑ Reopening ultimately must be driven by local data and the goal of restoring optimal conditions for learning.

❑ This document is NOT a set of mandates or final set of considerations

## Establish Supports and Partnerships in Communities to Make Local Decisions

Districts, schools and educational programs should connect to the entire education family in their community. Health risk mitigation and concerns at one school can impact the community's collective confidence and decision-making should seldom be done in [isolation. Refer to page 7 of the Safe. Smart. Step-by-Step. Plan For Florida's Recovery.](#)





## Planning Resources: Adhere to Guidelines From CDC, State and Local Departments of Health

As our collective understanding of COVID-19 has evolved, our national and state experts continually update their guidance. A great risk mitigation strategy is not a static document, and should be continually revisited and revised.

- Governor DeSantis' [Florida COVID-19 Resource Center](#) is a one-stop gateway to Florida's experts in recovery and reopening:
  - [Safe. Smart. Step-by-Step. Plan For Florida's Recovery](#) Task Force report.
  - [Florida Department of Health's \(FDOH\) COVID-19 resource page.](#)
  - [FDOH's guidance for schools and child care and Florida Department of Children and Families \(FDCF\) Child Care Services guidance.](#)
- The benchmarks for reopening in the [Safe. Smart. Step-by-Step. Plan utilized the White House and CDC Guidelines for Opening America Again as a baseline.](#)
- Local county health departments are a great partner for all educational programs.

## Dimmer Switch Approach: K-12 Campus Reopening Steps 1-2-3

With the majority of child care programs already open, it is recommended K-12 campuses also begin to reopen in June, through a three step approach modeled here.

Step 1 – June – open up campuses for youth activities and summer camps.

Step 2 – July – expand campus capacities further for summer recovery instruction.

Step 3 – August – open up campuses at full capacity for traditional start of the academic year.

While there may be challenges regionally, Florida's workforce and students with the greatest needs are counting on schools to fight to stay open.

May 22, 2020, Governor DeSantis signed [EO 20-131](#), allowing youth activities, summer camps and youth recreation camps to operate. [FDOH also release a frequently asked questions document with guidance for organized youth activities.](#)

## Promote Risk Reduction Through a Great Culture of Teaching

All types of educational programs have a trusted and persisting role in educating and guiding how millions of Floridians, young and old, embrace their personal efforts to reduce risks for all Floridians.

**At Home** – Schools and educational programs are a trusted source of information in most households, meaning schools have perhaps the greatest ability to teach parents and students the value of good hygiene and screening for symptoms at home.

**At School** – The responsibility cannot be delegated to a few, meaning every employee should be trained in recognizing symptoms, screening students and staff and responding to concerns.

**In the Classroom** – Current health and other related content instruction presents a unique opportunity to incorporate lessons of healthy preventative hygiene and self-screening practices.

## Create Visible Safe Learning Zones

Minimizing spontaneity, uncertainty and ultimately risk on any educational campus is aided by visibly showing everyone what safety looks like, creating a visible feeling of health and safety, so that students and staff can settle into learning rather than wondering.

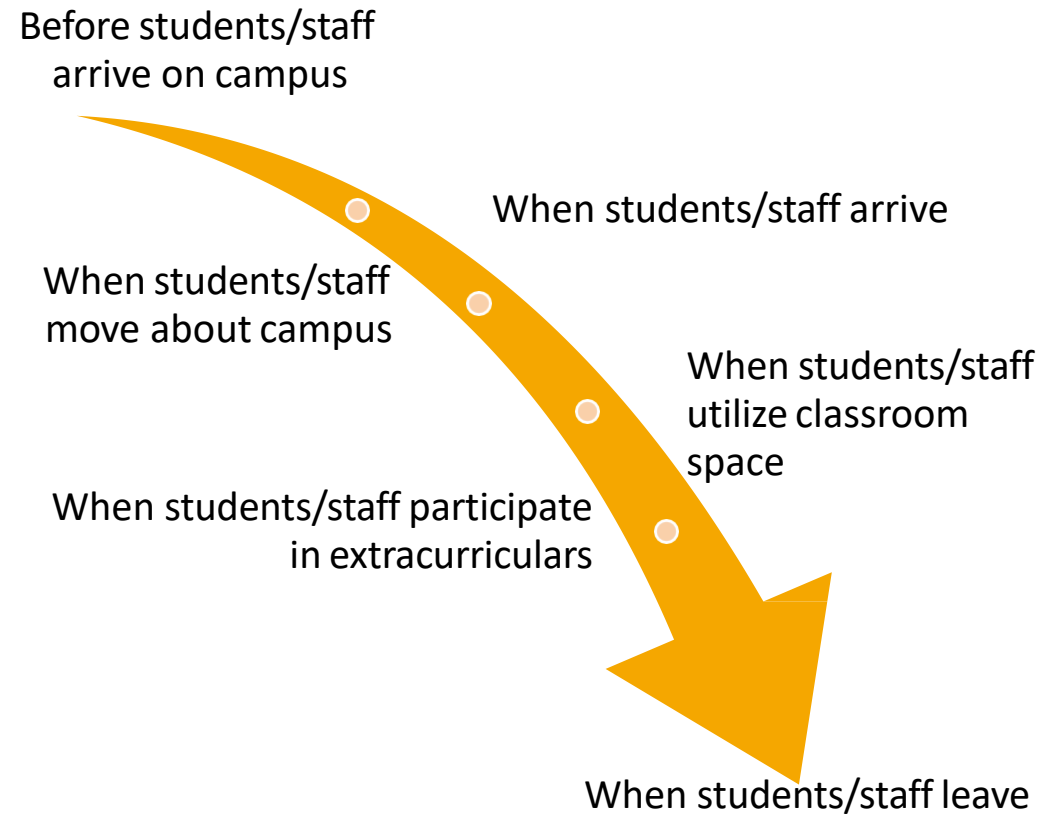
Encourage visible signals of health and safety from the moment students, parents and staff arrive on campus, or at a program, with physical guides, barriers and alerts that help everyone learn and know how to act safely.

Encourage the use of outside and unconventional spaces with significant options for social distancing for learning and extracurricular activities.

When on campus, to the extent possible, consider moving large staff meetings and student assemblies to more open spaces or utilize virtual tools. The first priority should always be facilitating in-person course needs, so extra convenings should leverage alternative means to convene.

## Win the 6 Key Stages of the Day

For all educational programs, a risk mitigation strategy could be to take steps to reduce risks at six key stages throughout the day. A benefit of this approach is this helps reduce risk cumulatively throughout the day, so that when children and adults are involved in close contact activities for school-related extracurriculars, there's a much lower risk of virus transmission.



## Protect Students, Staff and Families with Medical Vulnerabilities

All schools and educational programs [should encourage medically vulnerable students, staff and those who live with medically vulnerable Floridians consult with their family doctor and develop a plan for their safe participation in schooling. Refer to page 7 of the Safe, Smart, Step-by-Step, Plan For Florida's Recovery.](#)

Medically vulnerable students should develop a plan for returning to school with their family doctor.

- For medically vulnerable students who come to school, school health staff should develop school health comprehensive care plans in consultation with the county health department. Schools could consider accommodations on a case-by-case basis, and consider clustering these students away from other students, in smaller settings, with a teacher who is wearing a cloth face covering.

Medically vulnerable staff should also work with their doctors to create a return to work plan.

- Whenever feasible for medically vulnerable staff, steps should be taken to minimize the number of people they interact with, and districts and institutions should consider flexible leave policies.

The same guidelines apply for students and staff who live with medically vulnerable family members.

- Parents, grandparents, caregivers, etc.

## General Mitigation Strategies: Employers (Schools, Programs)

Employers are encouraged to prepare their workplaces and consider how to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and lower the impact in their workplace. [Refer to pages 12-13 of the Safe. Smart. Step-by-Step. Plan For Florida's Recovery.](#)

The following general guidance is recommended for all employers throughout each phase of re-opening:

- [Practice social distancing](#), whenever feasible, as the virus is most transmissible indoors under close, sustained contact.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch, high-traffic surface areas.
- Develop and implement policies and procedures to train employees on personal hygiene expectations, including increased frequency of hand washing, the use of hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol and, clear instruction to avoid touching hands to face.
- Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar disinfectant readily available to employees, students and visitors.
- [Encourage employees and students who feel sick to stay home.](#)
- [Monitor employees and students for COVID-19 symptoms.](#)
- Do not allow symptomatic people to physically return until they meet CDC criteria to do so or are cleared by a medical provider.
- Consult with the county health department regarding procedures for workforce tracing following a positive COVID-19 test by an employee, student or those who have come into contact with an individual testing positive for COVID-19.

## Recommendations to Reduce Risks at the Front Door

Educational programs are encouraged to take a front door approach, establishing protocols to massively reduce risk at entry points to campuses, programs and individual classrooms. **Albeit, this strategy needs to be implemented without inadvertently creating “choke points” of congestion.** This can be accomplished by creating multiple check points for entry to a campus or using classrooms, which can be a screening point.

- ✓ Create a crisis response team at the district, school or program level, as applicable.
- ✓ Post a crisis plan and response check list where they are easily accessible.
- ✓ Consider screening students, employees and visitors through visual signage, verbal questions or visual assessments.
- ✓ As feasible and while maintaining the goal of getting students on campus every day, explore staggered schedules, start and end times to limit crowds.
- ✓ Monitor student and employee absenteeism closely, as absenteeism may be an early warning system of larger health concerns.
- ✓ Regularly update employees, parents and students with emails on best practices for at-home preventative care.
- ✓ Locally determine what constitutes an adequate prevention inventory that includes extra supplies of PPE, cloth face coverings, gloves, sanitizer, soap, etc.
- ✓ Consider creating a protocol for incoming and outgoing mail and deliveries, and consider creating a “timeout” or cleansing room.
- ✓ Post signage about hygiene and social distancing in many very accessible areas.
- ✓ Conduct employee trainings for all of the above and regular employee meetings on COVID-19 updates.



## Recommendations to Redesign the School Day to Reduce Risks

While most educational programs are not designed for social distancing, schools are encouraged to explore creative redesigns of how a campus or program is utilized and how students move about can dramatically reduce risks and simplify, when necessary, contact tracing.

- ✓ As feasible, keep groups of students together throughout the day to minimize the number of people in close contact with each person.
- ✓ As feasible, convert cafeterias, libraries, gymnasiums, auditoriums, outdoor areas into classroom space.
- ✓ Explore allowing students to eat meals in traditional classroom space or outdoors.
- ✓ Move nonessential furniture and equipment out of classrooms to increase distance between students and turn desks the same direction.
- ✓ Maintain a maximum distance between desks as possible, even if not able to achieve 6 feet, and avoid sharing of textbooks, supplies and toys.
- ✓ Consider setting up a secondary clinic in schools, exclusively for students showing symptoms of COVID-19.
- ✓ Establish procedures in consultation with school health staff to quickly separate students and staff who become sick from others.
- ✓ Create a disinfection protocol for cleaning door knobs, counters and other surfaces throughout the day.
- ✓ Consider limiting nonessential visitors to campuses and programs.
- ✓ Consider alternative meeting options for nonessential volunteer activities, clubs and other elective meetings that require in-person contact.
- ✓ Explore limiting nonessential mass gatherings or reschedule as virtual gatherings.

## Recommendations to Communicate Transparently and Frequently

Reopening with public confidence can be optimized with regular communications. Health and safety issues should be [communicated transparently, while still protecting the privacy of students and families. Refer to page 7 of the Safe. Smart. Step-by-Step. Plan For Florida's Recovery.](#)

- ✓ Communicate to the entire education family of stakeholders in the community.
- ✓ Regularly update families and staff on policies for conduct while on campus, drop-off and pick-up.
- ✓ Use multiple means to communicate: e-blasts, websites, text, social media, classroom lessons, community meetings, one-on-one outreach, etc.
- ✓ Communicate the actions taken, in each step, by a school to reopen.
- ✓ Consider having parents complete an affirmation that they will not send their children to school with symptoms.
- ✓ Communicate the economic importance of supporting parents' return to a normal workday.
- ✓ Reinforce topics like good hygiene, social distancing, identifying symptoms and staying home when feeling sick.
- ✓ Illustrate steps taken to keep school clean and extracurriculars safe.
- ✓ Show compassion for families and staff, as they will be cautious.
- ✓ Express a willingness to always evaluate, improve and reevaluate as necessary.
- ✓ Regularly solicit feedback from parents, students, staff and the community.

## Recommendations to Plan for Graduations, Sports, Band, Arts, Other Extracurriculars and Co-curriculars

Florida's K-12 schools should proactively plan to safely conduct extracurriculars and co-curriculars, including graduations, sports, and [other close contact events and gatherings](#).

- ✓ Consult with the local department of health and the crisis response team.
- ✓ At events, consider non-contact temperature testing of adults who will be direct participants and have close contact with students.
- ✓ Monitor students who participate in extracurriculars for symptoms throughout the day.
- ✓ All equipment, instruments, uniforms, etc. should be washed or wiped down after each use.
- ✓ Explore an increased presence of law enforcement or staff at events to maintain adherence to social distancing.
- ✓ Consider limited seating at events while allowing families to sit together and marking off seating for social distancing.
- ✓ Consider having attendees arrive at events earlier, stagger exits and allow for multiple entry and exit points.
- ✓ Explore options to maintain social distancing at event facilities: public restrooms, concessions, etc.
- ✓ Consider ways to limit close contact between participants and attendees until an event concludes.
- ✓ Identify a space that can be used to isolate staff or participants if one becomes ill at an event.
- ✓ Determine what are adequate prevention supplies to have at an event for participants and attendees, including hand sanitizing stations.

## Cloth Face Coverings (Face Masks)

- ❑ While cloth face coverings are not mandated, schools should explore strategies to utilize them, to the extent feasible.
  - ❑ At a minimum, **schools should be supportive of students, teachers and staff who voluntarily wear cloth face coverings.**
- ❑ [The CDC provides comprehensive recommendations for the use of cloth face coverings to help slow the spread of COVID-19.](#)
  - ❑ As feasible, cloth face coverings can be an important mitigation tool for individuals and families when not able to maintain social distancing for activities such as:
    - ❑ Busing and transportation;
    - ❑ Events and meetings;
    - ❑ Courses that necessitate close proximity;
    - ❑ Educating medically vulnerable students;
    - ❑ Supporting medically vulnerable staff; and
    - ❑ Protecting schools' health care workers and crisis responders.
  - ❑ [CDC: "The cloth face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance."](#)
  - ❑ [FDOH: "Don't place a cloth face cover on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is unable to remove the mask without assistance."](#)
  - ❑ Educational programs should be mindful that young children may initially fear individuals wearing a face covering, and therefore should consider ways to gently introduce the idea.

## Recommendations for Student Drop-Off and Pick-Up

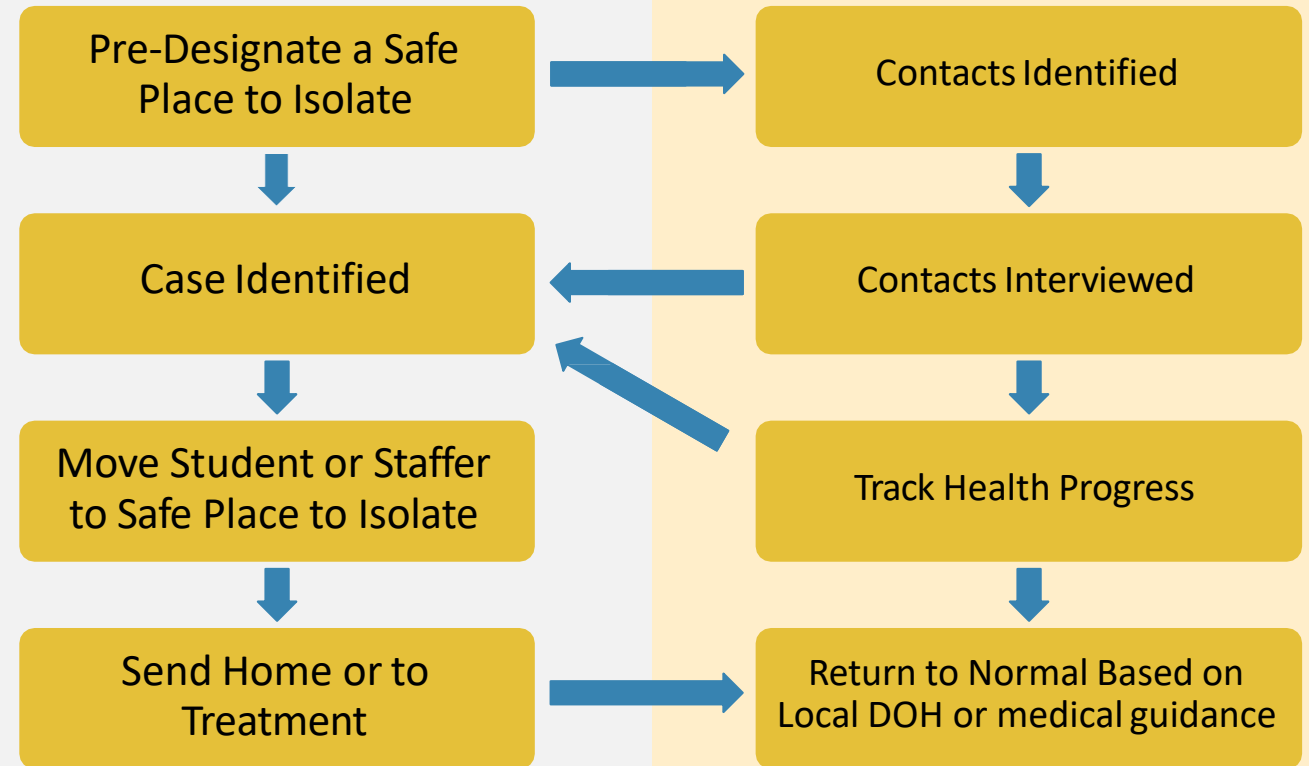
Student [drop-off and pick-up](#) are the two most vulnerable times each day for any school or program, from child care through high school, because the largest number of people are on campus in a potentially short window of time.

- Consider having hand hygiene stations set up at or near the entrances and egress of the facility.
- Arrange parent sign-in sheets, either by a sink with soap and water, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol or outside the building, and provide sanitary wipes for cleaning pens.
- Use both entrance and egress to avoid clustering at single points of entry.
- Consider staggering arrival and drop off times and plan to limit direct contact.
- For child care programs, infants should be transported in their car seats and store car seats out of children's reach.
- To the extent possible for families, the same person should drop off and pick up the child every day.
- To the extent possible for families, older Floridians such as grandparents or those with serious underlying medical conditions should not pick up children, because they are more at risk.

## Consider a Contact Tracing Protocol

Districts and schools are encouraged to have communications and protocols in place to work with local health officials to implement [contact tracing](#). **Local health departments have comprehensive contact tracing programs and can coordinate with health staff at schools.** The CDC also [offers guidance on the importance of maintaining the privacy of those impacted](#).

For Purposes of Example ONLY



Throughout, Follow Guidance of Local DOH, Doctors or School Health Staff

## Responding to a Confirmed Case

Schools are best prepared if they are ready to respond to a confirmed case. To help prepare, FDOH is collaborating with FDOE on guidance for contact tracing, testing, verbal screening, preparing school clinics, PPE and more.

- If a confirmed case has entered a school, regardless of community transmission, any school in any community might need to implement short-term closure procedures regardless of community spread if an infected person has been in a school building. If this happens, CDC recommends the following procedures regardless of the level of community spread:
  - Coordinate with district, if applicable, and local health officials.** Once learning of a confirmed COVID-19 case for a student or staffer, **the school's health official(s) should immediately contact the county health department.**
  - The district, school or program should also notify FDOE of the initial confirmed case.
- The decision to open or close a school or program should ultimately rest with the local leadership of that school or program** (i.e., the superintendent or board for traditional public schools; a charter's board; a private school's board; the president or board of a state college; director of a technical college; etc.).

# Responding to a Confirmed Case

- ❑ **Clean and disinfect thoroughly**. Coordinate with local health officials to determine next steps to mitigate the outbreak.
  - ❑ Close off areas used by the individuals with COVID-19 and wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets. Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area. If possible, wait up to 24 hours before beginning cleaning and disinfection.
  - ❑ Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas (e.g., offices, bathrooms and common areas) used by the ill persons, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.
  - ❑ If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
  - ❑ For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.
  - ❑ Additional information on cleaning and disinfection of community facilities such as schools can be found on CDC's website.



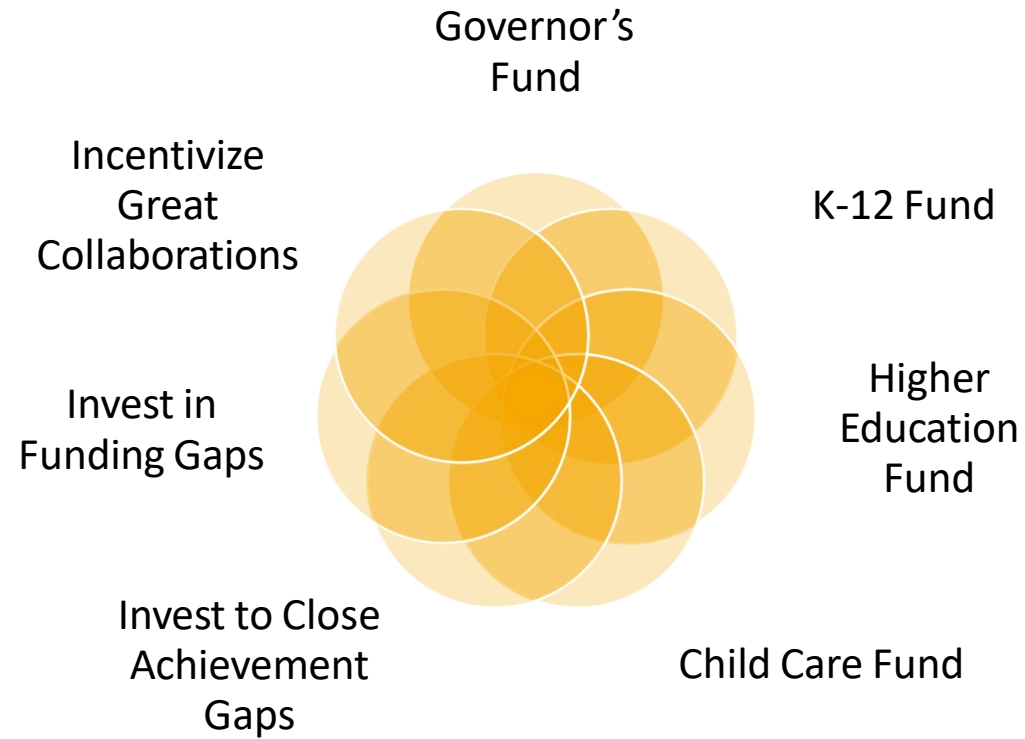
# Non-PPE Reimbursement

- ❑ The link below takes you to the online application and management of the Public Assistance (PA) grant. Non-profit private K-12 schools are eligible for 75% reimbursement for non-PPE items.
  - ❑ Institutions should utilize: <https://floridapa.org/> for additional information.

## **Distance Learning Plans (also referred to as Instructional Continuity Plans)**

With no guarantees that education will go uninterrupted in the 2020-2021 academic year, K-12 nonpublic schools should assume that they will need to be vigilant in keeping their plans up to date.

[Instructional Continuity Plan Template](#)



## Part 3: The CARES Act

## Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (K-12 Fund)

\$770,247,851

- FDOE must submit the application for these funds.
- The Act allows the FDOE to reserve up to 10% for state-level activities and costs of administration.**
- The remainder, at least 90%, is guaranteed to LEAs** (including Florida Virtual School, the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind and the state's lab schools) in the proportion to which they received Title I, Part A funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).
- State must return funds not awarded within one year of receiving.
- LEAs are permitted to use the funds for a wide range of 12 specified activities.

## LEA's 90% of the K-12 Fund

**Per the CARES Act, at least 90% (\$693,223,066) of the K-12 Fund is guaranteed to LEAs** in the proportion to which they received Title I, Part A funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

- ❑ A local educational agency that receives funds under this Act may use the funds for any of 12 purposes:
  1. Any activity authorized by the ESEA of 1965, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 or Subtitle VII-B of The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
  2. Coordination of preparedness and response efforts of local educational agencies with state, local, tribal, and territorial public health departments and other relevant agencies, to improve coordinated responses among such entities to prevent, prepare for and respond to coronavirus.
  3. Providing principals and others school leaders with the resources necessary to address the needs of their individual schools.
  4. Activities to address the unique needs of low-income children or students, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness and foster care youth, including how outreach and service delivery will meet the needs of each population.

## LEA's 90% of the K-12 Fund *Continued...*

- ❑ A local educational agency that receives funds under this Act may use the funds for any of 12 purposes:
  5. Developing and implementing procedures and systems to improve the preparedness and response efforts of local educational agencies.
  6. Training and professional development for staff of the local educational agency on sanitation and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases.
  7. Purchasing supplies to sanitize and clean the facilities of a local educational agency, including buildings operated by such agency.
  8. Planning for and coordinating during long-term closures, including how to provide meals to eligible students, how to provide technology for online learning to all students, how to provide guidance for carrying out requirements under IDEA and how to ensure other educational services can continue to be provided consistent with all federal, state, and local requirements.

## LEA's 90% of the K-12 Fund *Continued...*

The Education Stabilization Fund requires that **LEAs receiving either Governor's Fund or K-12 Fund provide equitable services to private schools, after consultation**, in the same manner as provided for Title I, Part A.

- ❑ A local educational agency that receives funds under this Act may use the funds for any of 12 purposes:
  9. Purchasing educational technology (including hardware, software and connectivity) for students who are served by the local educational agency that aids in regular and substantive educational interaction between students and their classroom instructors, including low-income students and students with disabilities, which may include assistive technology or adaptive equipment.
  10. [Providing mental health services and supports.](#)
  11. Planning and implementing activities related to summer learning and supplemental after school programs, including providing classroom instruction or online learning during the summer months and addressing the needs of low-income students, students with disabilities, English learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness and children in foster care.
  12. Other activities that are necessary to maintain the operation and continuity of services in local educational agencies and continuing to employ existing staff of the local educational agency.

# Ensure Scholarships for Low-Income Students Up to \$30 Million (from Governor's Fund)

- ❑ Annually, Florida's Tax Credit Scholarship Program provides more than 100,000 low-income students with scholarships that are funded privately through contributions from corporate donors to non-profit scholarship funding organizations.
- ❑ Economic uncertainty has slowed commitments for contribution renewals, creating doubt about supports for these 100% low-income and 73% minority students.
- ❑ Up to \$30 million will be reserved, if necessary, to ensure these life-altering scholarships are protected for those students who are seeking to renew their existing scholarships.
- ❑ Any unused funds would first supplement the Private School Stabilization Fund before being considered for reallocation elsewhere.



# Scholarships for Low Income and Private School Stabilization Grant Funds

**\$15 Million** (from Governor's Fund)

- ❑ Recent surveys indicate nearly 73% of scholarship participating private schools are seeing declines in re-enrollment compared to 2019; and
- ❑ A nearly identical percentage of private schools have heard from parents who may not be able to pay tuition for the 2020-2021 school year.
- ❑ During the Great Recession, 2008-2009 was a peak in difficulty for private schools, when a net of 121 closed that year due to financial constraints of tuition paying families.
- ❑ In order to avoid such an immediate pressure on schools, this plan would allocate at least \$15 million in reserve for grant funding that private schools which serve student populations of 50% or more state scholarship students can apply for.

# Funding Equity

- ❑ The Education Stabilization Fund requires that LEAs receiving either the Governor's Fund or K-12 Fund provide equitable services to private schools, after consultation, in the same manner as provided for Title I, Part A.
  - ❑ Under Title I, Part A, the LEAs are not allowed to reimburse private schools for expenditures (such as salaries), but must provide services on behalf of the private schools.
  - ❑ Requires that the control of funds and title to property, materials and equipment purchased remains with the LEA.

# Contact Information

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