

Alief ISD 2021 – 2022 School Year Safe Return to School Plan



The safety of students, teachers and staff is the District's foremost priority. Alief ISD is committed to working with local health departments and physicians to receive information and implement safety protocols to slow the spread of diseases and support and protect students and staff. The 2021 – 2022 Health & Safety Protocols include daily hygiene, *optional* face coverings, reducing surface contact, responsive communication and ongoing efforts to provide vaccines to the community.

The health and safety protocols defined within this document are put into place to support students and staff as they report to work and/or engage in a face-to-face learning and working environment. These protocols were developed in partnership with input from the local health authorities, recommendations from the CDC, and internal and external data related to COVID-19. Depending on the virus and the spread of the virus, some or all of these steps may be expanded, modified, or eliminated. The district superintendent, or his delegated representative, will work directly with state and local health authorities, Texas Education Agency (TEA) and Texas Department of Health & Human Services (TDHHS), authorities to implement appropriate actions based on the public health hazard. These guidelines are also adapted to be specific to the current COVID-19 pandemic and may change in accordance with on-going public health state orders and guidance.

HYGIENE

Regular hand washing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of germs to others. The District will expect staff, students, and visitors to frequently and consistently practice safety protocols by washing their hands as often as possible using the following handwashing protocol:

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and rinse with clean water.
- If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with a clean paper towel or use an air dryer.
- Hand washing and/or sanitizing is required before, during, and after group activities, before and after eating, nose blowing, coughing, or touching any common items.

Hand sanitizer will be available for staff and student use. Students will be reminded to hand sanitize after all common contacts (eat, touch points) and will receive continuous reinforcement on hygiene ownership as part of the safe practices educational campaign. Washing and sanitizing hands often, especially before eating, after using the restroom, after blowing your nose, after coughing or sneezing, and after coming in to contact with highly touched objects such as door knobs, handrails, etc. can help reduce the spread of illness.

If you are wearing a mask:

- You can cough or sneeze into your mask. Put on a new, clean mask as soon as possible and wash your hands.

If you are not wearing a mask:

- Always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of

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your elbow and do not spit.

- Throw used tissues in the trash.
- Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with hand sanitizer.

FACE COVERING

Facial Coverings will be optional for all staff and students (grades PK-12) to wear at their personal discretion and preference. Personal choice about mask wearing is always to be respected by all staff, students, parents, and visitors. Face coverings protect not only the wearer, but also significantly reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.

- Alief ISD will continue to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) for all employees and students.
- Campus clinics will have facial coverings and other PPE items available for any employee or student upon request.

Current CDC guidance recommends the wearing of facial coverings for vaccinated and unvaccinated persons when indoors and in confined spaces. Additionally, Governor Abbott's Executive Order 38 effective as of July 29, 2021, states that no governmental entity including public school districts may mandate the wearing of facial coverings.

SELF - PRESCREENING

The best way to prevent the spread of illness in our schools is to stay home when ill. Students should not attend school if they have a fever of 100.0 F or higher or new onset of any of the following symptoms of illness that may include:

- Loss of taste or smell
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Headache
- Chills
- Sore Throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Exaggerated shivering
- Significant muscle pain or ache
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or Vomiting

Health and Safety PROTOCOLS

Cleaning Protocols:

Cleaning and disinfecting are part of a broad approach to preventing infectious diseases in schools. Following CDC, TEA, OSHA, and other public health guidelines, Alief ISD has established protocols to keep buildings safe and clean. When a situation warrants, the district will close all or part of a building for disinfection, notifying the occupants of that building in advance, as appropriate. Alief ISD will align cleaning protocols with guidance from national, state, and local authorities to help ensure students and staff are provided safe and healthy learning and working environments. Alief ISD's approach to providing a safe learning environment for all students and staff involves frequent and ongoing cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting of campuses and support facilities. Cleaning and disinfecting are part of a broad approach to preventing the exposure and spread of infectious diseases in schools. The process of cleaning combined with disinfecting effectively work to minimize the spread of infection.

AISD will adjust cleaning protocols as needed. Disinfectants used by the custodial staff are on the Environmental Protection Agency's list of Disinfectants for Use against SARSCoV-2 (COVID) and the standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting will be followed. This will include the frequent cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects that are touched often throughout the school day. Staff and Students will have access to sanitizing wipes that will be safe for the student to clean electronic devices, any shared supplies, as well as their own desks and chairs.

Safety Protocols:

Alief ISD recognizes the continued impact of COVID-19 on our students, staff, and community. The district will therefore continue to update the Health and Safety protocols to protect students, staff, and families during this time. Alief ISD will continue monitoring the situation and will provide future communication as needed. Please note this guidance is subject to change based on issues such as, guidance from the TEA, the Governor's Executive Order, Court Rulings, and other issues that impact decision making. The following protocols are in place at all campuses and support facilities:

- Strongly encouraged and highly recommend the wearing of face masks for all students and staff members
- Allow staff to wear any PPE that is acceptable in the workplace
- Continue to provide certain PPE on all campuses, including hand sanitizer and face coverings
- Continue cleaning protocols from the 2020-21 school year including a focus on high-touch areas
- Allow additional outdoor eating, learning, and play areas to maximize fresh air and sunlight

Additional Safety Protocols for K-6 Campuses

As the number of COVID cases continues to rise around the city, state, and nation, and given the fact children under the age of 12 are not eligible for a vaccine, elementary and intermediate campus leaders will take the following action steps to the greatest extent possible and where practicable.

- Separate student desks in classrooms and student learning spaces, when and where possible
- Leverage classrooms and/or other campus space during lunch to alleviate overcrowded cafeteria

- Eliminate shared use of school/classroom supplies
- Utilize Zoom and virtual format options for student and staff group meetings
- Postpone all large group student and family gatherings and events
- Shift September Parent Night and Open House events from an in-person to a virtual format
- Pause on field trips
- Continue encouraging the wearing of masks for the entire day
- a steady supply of masks and sanitizer for students, staff, and visitors

COMMON AREAS

By implementing proactive measures to minimize the contact with surfaces in high traffic areas and frequently visited common areas, we can further reduce the spread of germs and other pathogens. High traffic common areas including restrooms, gyms, locker rooms, cafeterias, and teacher workrooms, will also be cleaned and disinfected daily. AISD recommends and encourages students to bring their own school supplies when possible if they do not feel comfortable sharing materials. Students are encouraged to bring refillable water bottles to school, if possible. In accordance with the CDC's Guidance for Administrators in Parks and Recreational Facilities, playground structures and other outdoor areas do not require disinfection. Spraying disinfectant on sidewalks and in parks is not an efficient use of disinfectant supplies and has not been proven to reduce the risk of COVID to the public.

AISD's Playgrounds

Playground structures are open for student use during the school day. Students are expected to wash or sanitize their hands before and after playing on playgrounds structures. If soap and water are not available, hand sanitizer can be used.

High Touch Surfaces

Custodial teams will continue ongoing cleaning of high touch surfaces during the instructional day. Classrooms will be equipped with supplies such as cleaning sprays and wipes for cleaning between scheduled transitions and changing of student groups. Appropriate safety products will be provided near high touch surfaces in offices and throughout building to ensure health and safety protocols are met.

Water Fountains

Water fountains will be open for filling of water bottles or jugs. Students and staff are encouraged to bring a refillable water bottle to fill at fountains. As well, we want to ensure students and staff remain hydrated and have access to water throughout the day.

The Alief Health and Safety committee will continue to monitor all guidelines and recommendations to ensure the safest and most current practices for the cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing campuses and district buildings are implemented. The district is utilizing the best practice sanitization methods when and where possible, like those used by hospital systems to further provide for the safety of our staff and students.

CAMPUS RESPONSE PROTOCOLS

Campuses and support facilities must have clear and defined response protocols for individuals who test positive for COVID-19, for reports of a positive COVID cases, when students and staff members become ill during the school/workday or when individuals come in close contact with alab confirmed positive COVID case.

Individuals who test positive for COVID-19:

Alief ISD is required to report positive cases to the respective County Public Health Office and the Texas Education Agency. Staff member's positive for COVID-19 should report their positive case using this link: <https://form.jotform.com/203146315747050> . Students should report positive cases to their campus and/or student services. In addition, staff should notify their supervisor/principal of work absences and parents notify their child's campus attendance office. Both students and employees should isolate for ten days after the date of symptom onset or test date if asymptomatic as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Control (CDC). Individuals must be fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications before returning to school or work. District administrators will continue monitoring the situation along with any updates in requirements for exclusion from the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Persons that have tested positive for COVID, must meet the following criteria to return to campus:

- At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared; AND,
- At least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication; AND,
- Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving. **Loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation

Identifying Possible COVID Cases on Campus:

- Schools must immediately separate anyone who shows COVID-19 symptoms while at school until they can be picked up by a parent or guardian or get home safely. The person who is suspected of having symptoms should wear a mask.
- Schools should clean the areas used by the individual who showed COVID symptoms while at school (student, teacher, or staff) as soon as is feasible.
- Persons who report feeling feverish should be given an immediate temperature check to determine if they are symptomatic for COVID. The following link provides source information for the latest updates on this topic. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/end-home-isolation.html>
- Employees are expected to stay home when ill and notify their supervisor. Students should not be sent to school when ill. The school nurse will assess students who become ill during the school day and parents/guardians will be contacted as needed. Visitors should not enter district facilities if they are ill.

The Health and Safety Committee along with the Health Specialists will work with the Campus COVID Response Team, which will minimally include the nurse, campus administrator, counseling staff, and attendance related staff, to identify when students and staff are cleared to return to campus. This partnership supports communication and accurate data sharing of confirmed positive COVID cases. In close collaboration with Harris County, all positive staff COVID cases receive final clearance by Risk Management to return to a campus or District facility.

COVID-19 Positive Case Notifications:

Alief ISD will notify the respective County Public Health Agency and the Texas Education Agency of any test-confirmed COVID-19 positive as required. Alief ISD will utilize the district's COVID-19 Dashboard as notification to employees, students, and others of COVID-19 positive cases in district facilities.

Individuals who Test-Confirmed Positive while at School

(<https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid/SY-20-21-Public-Health-Guidance.pdf>)

Consistent with school notification requirements for other communicable diseases, and consistent with legal confidentiality requirements, schools must notify all teachers, staff, and families of all students in a classroom or extracurricular or after-school program cohort if a test-confirmed COVID-19 case is identified among students, teachers or staff who participated in those classrooms or cohorts.

Required Actions:

- K-12 must re-activate campus COVID Response Teams to conduct contact tracing to identify individuals that were in close contact with the confirmed positive person
 - Close contact is defined as someone who was within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (when symptoms began, or when the person was tested), regardless of whether the contact was wearing a mask. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/appendix.html#contact>)
- A communication must be sent to ALL teachers, staff, and parents.
 - Notifications will be sent at the end of the day to prevent multiple communications being sent in one day.
 - The administrators at each campus will determine the mode of communication to deliver the message (formal letter sent home, email, text message blast, phone call, etc.).
- A separate communication will need to be sent to those individuals determined as close contacts of a confirmed positive person.
 - Close contact communication may be determined as entire classrooms, block classrooms, athletic/fine art groups.
 - Middle/High school levels will potentially have to contact trace for each class that a student attends, or in the case of a positive staff member, it can be all students that attended that staff member's class.

- Individuals identified as close contacts do not necessarily have to quarantine. Individuals will be asked to monitor their symptoms and get tested. Although it is not required, parents may choose to quarantine their students.

Staff Who Have COVID-19 or Who are Close Contacts

(<https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid/SY-20-21-Public-Health-Guidance.pdf>)

Schools must exclude staff from attending school in person who are actively sick with COVID-19, who are suspected of being actively sick with COVID-19, or who have received a positive test result for COVID-19. Staff may return when the re-entry conditions have been met, as described in the DSHS rule used for students. For staff who are not fully vaccinated who meet the close contact threshold with a COVID-19 positive individual, it is *recommended* that the staff remain off campus during the stay-at-home period. For staff who meet the close contact threshold with a COVID-19 positive individual, if these staff continue to work on campus, rapid testing must be performed *periodically* for 10 days post-exposure.

Required Actions:

- Regardless of vaccination status, we will now test those individuals determined to be close contacts periodically. “Periodically” is now defined as testing two times during the 10-day post exposure. The first test will be administered between the first 24-48 hours and the second test will be administered on or between the 5 and 6 days. In those cases where a staff member has recently been tested, they will now test on the next scheduled day. For specific scenarios, your nurse will make the recommendation and/or decision on when the next test will be administered.
- Employees should test at the beginning of the day in the nurse’s office on campus, if possible. Onsite testing at the campus should be the first option, if campus testing is not available then the employee would have their testing done at Crump Stadium.
- Campus nurses (or delegated person on the COVID Response Team) will document and track the negative test results of exposed staff members during the 10-day period.
 - Individuals identified as close contacts do not necessarily have to quarantine. Individuals will be asked to monitor their symptoms and get tested. Staff members in close contact will be required to test, but not quarantine. If a staff member chooses to quarantine, they will use their personal days, the district does not cover those absences.
 - Individuals who reside with someone who test positive is not required to quarantine. It is recommended that the individual get tested for COVID-19. If you test negative, you may return to work/school and continue to monitor yourself for symptoms.

District Communications during COVID-19 Pandemic:

In coordination with the local health departments, Alief ISD shall coordinate and disseminate all communications related to the specific infectious disease.

- General communications from the school district will include –
 - information about the disease in general

- information about the disease impact within the school district
- actions of the school district
- Targeted communications to affected or vulnerable populations within the school district, as needed
- Specific information regarding the prevention of the spread of the disease
- Alief ISD posts this document and all COVID-19 response information on its main webpage as a reference for guidance and provide answers to many questions.

VACCINATIONS AND VACCINATION EFFORTS

Vaccination Efforts:

Alief ISD has partnered with local health authorities and medical partners to provide vaccination clinics at various campuses throughout the district. We will continue working with local partners in an effort to provide vaccination availability in the Alief area.

Vaccinated Definition:

People are considered fully vaccinated:

- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson’s Janssen vaccine
- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines

Any individual who is “fully vaccinated” does not need to quarantine due to international travel. If a staff member travels internationally, they should complete the travel form on the Risk Management website. The Risk Management Team, who will ensure the staff member meets the definition of “fully vaccinated” and will then clear them to return to work. If a student travels internationally, they contact Student Services Team, who will ensure the student meets the definition of “fully vaccinated” and will then clear them to return to campus.

TRANSPORTATION

The Transportation Department will monitor and adjust bus seating protocols as COVID cases fluctuate in the community as needed. Students receiving special education services whose ARD indicates special education transportation eligibility and students eligible for the McKinney-Vento program will be transported. All buses will be equipped with hand sanitizer for use by students and staff. All bus drivers will be required to use District sanctioned CDC approved cleaning agents when cleaning buses. Transportation will ensure all staff are trained on the appropriate use of cleaning agents prior to the start of the 2021 – 2022 school year. The following safety protocols will be in place to prevent any outbreak while in the bus:

- All students will be required to follow the campus requirements and expectations while aboard buses.
- Bus drivers and monitors will sanitize buses between morning and afternoon routes to prevent cross-contamination.
- All transportation vehicles will be fogged to improve sanitation and germ removal if a positive person has been identified to have been transported on a bus.

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HUMAN RESOURCES & RISK MANAGEMENT

The safety, security and well-being of all students, staff and visitors are the top priority for AISD. In alignment with local, state, and federal agencies, the District has implemented new protocols and expectations to ensure all employees and visitors are safe and secure.

Personal Protective Equipment and Reducing the Spread of COVID:

To assist with decreasing the spread of COVID, AISD will require all employees and visitors follow proper safety and hygiene protocols per CDC guidance while in District buildings, campuses, and other facilities. Upon request disposable facial coverings for visitors will be provided.

Contingency Plan

To ensure the safety and security of employees working in District facilities, the following contingency measures will be implemented:

- When an employee who has tested positive for COVID-19 is cleared to return to work, the Risk Management Team will notify the staff member via an email and will copy to the employee's supervisor on the communication.

Staff Return to Work Guidelines

Alief ISD will follow CDC guidelines regarding when a staff member tests positive for COVID, has come in close contact with a lab confirmed COVID case, or has symptoms that could be COVID-19 can return to work (see guideline above).

- Staff members must complete and submit all required return to work to the Risk Management department. The Risk Management Team will notify department leadership regarding when staff members are cleared to return to campus.

Addressing Employee Concerns and Back to Work Conversations:

- If an employee has concerns regarding returning to their physical work location, he or she should inform their supervisor and work with Risk Management to determine next steps.
- Human Resources and Risk Management will provide resources to assist leaders in conducting back to work conversations.
- Employees with questions about FMLA medical leave should contact Risk Management Leave Specialist.