



2021-2022

South Texas ISD

Back to School

Project
Safe Return
2021



STISD Project Safe Return - Fall 2021

As our region, state and nation continue to move forward with reopening facilities and reestablishing a sense of normalcy, we at South Texas ISD look forward to welcoming our students back to our campuses this fall. According to guidance from the state, all STISD schools with the exception of our new STISD Virtual Academy will return to 100 percent in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 school year.

As we enter this next phase in our re-opening, we will continue doing all that we can as a district to support a safe and healthy environment, and we ask that all members of our district community assist with these efforts.

STISD continues to prioritize the health, safety and well-being of students, staff and all members of the district community, and has instituted the below practices and recommendations.

Masks

- During a Special Called Board Meeting on Thursday, Aug. 19, the Board voted to accept and approve both local health orders and mandate facial coverings in all STISD facilities. **Effective immediately following that meeting, STISD began requiring the use of masks, district wide, and for all persons (staff, students and visitors) while indoors.**
 - **Effective immediately, STISD will rescind our local policy requiring masks in public schools or, alternatively, not enforce it pending the Texas Supreme Court's disposition of the cases before it involving this issue.**
 - **STISD continues to highly encourage the use of masks within district facilities.**
- ~~— From TEA's Public Health Guidance dated Aug. 19, 2021: Please note, mask provisions of GA-38 are not being enforced as the result of ongoing litigation. Further guidance will be made available after the court issues are resolved.~~
- From TEA's Public Health Guidance dated Sept. 17, 2021: Masks (restatement of pre-August 19th guidance document)
 - Per GA-38, school systems cannot require students or staff to wear a mask. GA-38 addresses government-mandated face coverings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Other authority to require protective equipment, including masks, in an employment setting is not necessarily affected by GA-38.
 - School systems must allow individuals to wear a mask if they choose to do so.
- CDC recommendations:
 - Masks must be worn at all times by students, staff, and visitors while inside any STISD facility, regardless of vaccination status.
 - Masks must cover the nose and mouth.

- A preferred mask is one that has multiple layers, nose wire, and is well-fitted on the face.
- Gaiters and other makeshift masks are not permissible.

Optional COVID-19 Testing for Students

Effective Monday, Sept. 27, STISD will offer optional COVID-19 student testing onsite at campuses. The testing is strictly optional, and it will occur on an as-needed basis, if the student's parent/guardian suggests the test or requests the test due to the student displaying symptoms. A test may not be administered to a student without a consent form on file with the student's campus. To allow for a child to be tested, parents/guardians must complete the STISD COVID-19 Optional Student Testing Consent Form, available through the COVID-19 section of the district website, and submit it to the school nurse.

Vaccinations & Other Precautions

- The district encourages faculty, staff and students to get vaccinated against COVID-19. The district has already provided vaccination drives for the district community. Plans to continue these efforts for the larger community are in place.
- STISD will continue to encourage social distancing to the extent possible.
- Employees and students are required to continue daily self-screenings, and should not report to school or the office, if experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.
- Students, faculty, staff and visitors are highly encouraged to continue with frequent washing of hands or using hand sanitizer, and sanitization stations will continue to be available for use throughout district facilities and buses.
- The district will continue with more frequent cleaning and sanitation of campuses.
- Desk shields will be made available for optional student use within the classroom and cafeteria.
- The district will continue to provide appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies.

Required Actions if Individuals with Test-Confirmed Cases Have Been in a School

1. If an individual who has been in a school is test-confirmed to have COVID-19, the school must notify its local health department, in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations, including confidentiality requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
2. Upon receipt of information that any teacher, staff member, student, or visitor at a school is test-confirmed to have COVID-19, the school must submit a report to the Texas Department of State Health Services via an online form. The report must be submitted each Monday for the prior seven days (Monday-Sunday).
3. 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 for Individuals who are test-confirmed to have COVID-19 or are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19:

- Any individuals who themselves either: (a) are test-confirmed to have COVID-19; or (b) experience the symptoms of COVID-19 must stay at home throughout the infection period, and cannot return to campus until the school system screens the individual to determine that the conditions for campus re-entry have been met
 - In the case of an individual who is symptomatic and is diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return to school when all three of the following criteria are met:
 - i. at least one day (24 hours) has passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications);
 - ii. the individual has improvement in symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and
 - iii. at least ten days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
 - In the case of an individual that is asymptomatic but has received a positive COVID-19 test result, the individual may not return to the campus until ten days have passed since a positive test.
 - In the case of an individual who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and who is not evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, such individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to the campus until the individual has completed the same three-step set of criteria listed above.
 - If the individual has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to school before completing the above stay at home period, the individual must either (a) obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis, though for health privacy reasons the note does not need to indicate what the alternative diagnosis is, or (b) obtain an acute infection test (at a physician's office, approved testing location, or other site) that comes back negative for COVID-19.
 - If the individual has tested positive for COVID-19 and believes the test was a false positive, and wants to return to school before completing the above stay at home period, the individual must either (a) obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis, though for health privacy reasons the note does not need to indicate what the alternative diagnosis is, or (b) obtain two PCR acute infection tests (at a physician's office, approved testing location, or other site) at least 24 hours apart that come back negative for COVID-19.

Required Actions for Individuals with close contact exposure:

Stay-at-home periods for those individuals who are identified as close contacts:
- 10 days after the last close contact, so long as they continue to monitor themselves daily for symptoms and take appropriate precautions through day 14.

- 7 days after the last close contact, after receiving a negative test result (administered at least 5 days after the last close contact), so long as they continue to monitor themselves daily for symptoms and take appropriate precautions through day 14.
- For staff who are necessary to preserve school operations, school systems can choose not to require any stay-at-home period, so long as the affected staff continue to monitor themselves daily for symptoms and take appropriate precautions through day 14
- 14 days after the last close contact

CDC updated guidance on March 8, 2021, to indicate that:

- A vaccinated individual does not need to stay at home following close contact exposure to a test-confirmed individual if the following conditions are true:
 - The exposed individual is fully vaccinated (at least two weeks have passed since receiving the second dose of a two-dose vaccine or the first dose of a single-dose vaccine)
 - Have not experienced any COVID-19 symptoms following close contact exposure to a test-confirmed individual.
- Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months and recovered do not have to stay at home or get tested again, as long as they do not develop new symptoms.

Remote Conferencing for Students Out Due to COVID-19

For students who have to remain off campus due to COVID-19 illness or exposure (close contact with someone test-confirmed with COVID-19), STISD will offer Remote Conferencing instruction for those students, if the parent chooses this option for their child. Remote conferencing will be set up following the guidelines from TEA, and will include four hours of direct monitoring per day for the student. The main concern is certainly each child's health and wellbeing, and students are not required to participate in this instruction while they are out. Regardless of whether or not they participate in Remote Conferencing while out, campus administration and teachers will work with all students to ensure they get caught up with their school work once they return to campus after their exclusion period. The campus will reach out to families about the opportunity for Remote Conferencing, in the event that a student qualifies for this method of instruction due to the need to remain off-campus.

Social and Emotional Resources

The level of uncertainty inherent in the COVID-19 pandemic has been anxiety-provoking. Most people are experiencing some degree of re-entry anxiety when returning to work or school. STISD is prepared to provide STISD families needed mental health supports, as we are staffed with School Counselors, Social Workers, Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC), and a Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP). Due to current circumstances, service may be provided by means of Telemental health. Telemental health involves the use of available technology resources, such as telephone or video conferencing. Should you feel the need to receive these services, please contact your school's counseling center. A form to

request a telemental health session is available along with resources on the district website: www.stisd.net/parents/health-and-wellness.

Our counselors throughout the district have created resources that address topics important to our students and families, including dealing with anxiety, mental health, tips for adjusting to change, and staying safe. These resources and more are available through the district website at <https://www.stisd.net/parents/health-and-wellness>. Parent/student wellness meetings are also held periodically.

Food Services

- STISD has been approved through a waiver from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to offer free healthy meals to all STISD students at all campuses during the 2021-2022 school year, regardless of household income. For this school year, STISD is able to offer meals at no cost to our students through June 30, 2022.
- STISD will continue to encourage the use of student ID cards for facilitating the serving of meals to limit the use of hands touching the keypads.
- STISD will also continue using disposable plates and utensils for the serving of meals.

Review and Updating of Plan

This plan is a living document, and the district will continue to review it weekly and make any necessary modifications based upon the most recent conditions and guidance. The most up-to-date plan will always be posted on the district website within the COVID-19 section.