

Norton City Schools
Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

Updated 11/8/21

Updated 1/21/22

Updated 3/31/22

Updated 10/24/22

Section 1: Introduction

The purpose of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III Fund is to help safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the impacts of COVID-19 on the nation's students by addressing students' **academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs**. This plan describes how *Norton City Schools* will continue to maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and division staff during and following the return to full in-person instruction. Questions about this plan should be directed to *Dr. Gina Wohlford, Superintendent of Schools, at 205 Virginia Avenue NW, Norton, VA 24273, info@nortoncityschools.org or 276-679-2330.*

Norton City Schools has worked collaboratively with the Virginia Department of Health and the Virginia Department of Education, as well as local entities such as Health Connects of America and Family Preservation Services to address academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of our students. Norton City Schools employs two full time nurses and will continue to collaborate with the Leadership Team, Planning Team, and Advisory Committees and will stay informed of CDC and VDH guidelines for developing mitigation strategies for the safe reopening and operation of our schools during the 2022-23 school year.

Section 2: Maintaining Health and Safety

Norton City Schools has taken and will continue to take actions to ensure the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and division staff during and following the return to full in-person instruction. A description of actions already taken which will be reviewed and revised as needed for the 2022-23 school year can be found at: <http://www.nortoncityschools.org>

In addition, Norton City Schools has adopted practices and procedures in line with policies on each of the following safety recommendations established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and will continue to review them as a resource during the 2022-2023 school year as we continue to return in the fall of 2022.

The full intention of the 2022-23 Return to In-Person Instruction will be to revisit the guidance as provided by the VDH, CDC and the Virginia Department of Education in the following areas:

- Please see Governor Youngkin's Executive Order for the most current update on masking in schools.

<https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/governor-of-virginia/pdf/eo/EO-2-School-Mask-Mandate-Executive-Order-Exception.pdf>

As of **March 23, 2022**, DOLI released the following:

"As the population of vaccinated and natural immunity increase, the level of transmission and health risks in our community is reduced. This increased level of community immunity is an important step on Virginia's path to normalcy. During this transition period of near normalcy, the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Department of Labor and Industry support and respect the rights of individuals to choose whether to wear masks or to not wear masks in non-federally mandated environments, unless required by law or as medically appropriate in cases of acute illness or in certain healthcare environments."

As of March 23, 2022 masks are optional for Norton City School employees and students.

- Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding) to the greatest extent possible, IF DEEMED NECESSARY. .
- **Handwashing and respiratory etiquette will be strongly encouraged and signage with appropriate techniques will be posted in schools.**
- **Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation will remain a priority for the 2022-23 school year.**
- Efforts to make available vaccinations to school communities in coordination with the Wise County and City of Norton Health Department.
- Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies as defined by Virginia Department of Education and Local School Board Policy.
- Coordination with state and local health officials by attending scheduled meetings and on an “as needed” basis.

Section 3: Continuity of Services

Norton City Schools has taken and will continue to take actions to ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students’ academic needs and students’ and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs.

Norton City Schools will ensure continuity of services for the needs of students academically, socially, emotionally, and provide mental health resources by developing partnerships with Family Preservation Services, Health Connect of America, Communities in Schools and Children’s Inc.

Professional development will be provided to staff at both schools using trauma informed training.

Full-time school nurses are in both schools and work with health organizations, Ballad Health and local doctor offices to address student health needs.

Federal Food Service requirements are met and Norton City Schools offers a summer feeding program.

The Virginia Department of Education will guide Norton City School decisions related to the needs of all of the students.

Section 4: Opportunity for Public Comment

In developing the ARP ESSER Plan, *Norton City Schools* sought public input and took such input into account as described below.

Planning Committee Meetings
Leadership Meetings
Board Meetings
Parent/Community Surveys
Advisory Committee Meetings

Meetings and surveys were conducted during the summer of 2020-2021 and committees continue to meet on a regular basis. Revisions of the Reopening/Return to In-Person Instruction plan are considered as deemed appropriate.

There is a division email account, info@nortoncityschools.org, that is accessible to community members, stakeholders, and families for input on division plans. This is monitored by the Superintendent and the designee for information that needs to be considered by the committees and shared at Board meetings.

Monthly School Board meetings are held and public comment is an agenda item at each Board meeting.

- November 2022- Board Meeting- Six Month Review of Plan and plan available for Public Comment on website and at the Board meeting
- April 2023 - Board Meeting- Agenda item to review the revised plan.
- August 2023- Board Meeting- Agenda item to review the revised plan.

Section 5: Periodic Review and Revision of Plan

During the period of the ARP ESSER award (until September 2023), *Norton City Schools* will periodically review and, as needed, revise its plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services. The plan will be reviewed at least every six months, and *Norton City Schools* will seek and take into account public input during the review process. Plan revisions will address updated CDC guidance on safely reopening schools, if any are issued.

Section 6: Making the Plan Available to the Public

Norton City Schools has taken the following steps to make this plan available to the public:

- The plan is posted at <http://www.nortoncitalschools.org>;
- The plan is available in multiple languages: the website has translation for 108 languages;
- The plan may be orally translated for parents. Contact Becke Elkins, Norton City School Board, 276-679-2330, to request translation; and
- Upon request, a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA may be provided with the plan in an alternative format accessible by contacting Becke Elkins, Norton City School Board Office: 276-679-2330.