



LEA Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service Pursuant to the Federal American Rescue Plan Act, Section 2001(i)

Introduction and Background

As announced in the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE)'s [April 28, 2021 broadcast](#), in March 2021 President Biden signed the Federal [American Rescue Plan \(ARP\) Act](#), Public Law 117-2, into law. The ARP Act provides an additional \$122 billion in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) to States and school districts to help safely reopen, sustain the safe operation of schools, and address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the nation's students. As with the previous ESSER funds available under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), the purpose of the additional funding is to support local educational agencies (LEAs) in preparing for and responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on educators, students, and families. Additional information on ARP ESSER may be found in the NJDOE's [funding comparison fact sheet](#).

Section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP Act requires each LEA that receives ARP ESSER funds to develop and make publicly available on the LEA's website, no later than 30 days after receiving ARP ESSER funds, a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services for all schools (Safe Return Plan) A Safe Return Plan is required of all fund recipients, including those that have already returned to in-person instruction. Section 2001(i)(2) of the ARP Act further requires that the LEA seek public comment on the Safe Return Plan and take those comments into account in finalization of the Safe Return Plan. Under the interim final requirements published in [Volume 86, No. 76 of the Federal Register](#) by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), an LEA must periodically, but no less frequently than every six months through September 30, 2023, review and, as appropriate, revise its Safe Return Plan.

Pursuant to those requirements, **LEAs must submit to the NJDOE and post on their website their Safe Return Plans by June 24, 2021.** The NJDOE intends to make LEA ARP ESSER Fund applications available in EWEG on May 24, 2021 and LEAs will submit their Safe Return Plans to the NJDOE via EWEG. To assist LEAs with the development of their Safe Return Plans, the NJDOE is providing the following template.

This template incorporates the federally-required components of the Safe Return Plan. The questions in the template below will be included in the LEA ARP ESSER Fund application in EWEG. LEAs will submit responses to the questions within the LEA ARP ESSER Fund application in EWEG by June 24, 2021. The NJDOE hopes that this template will allow LEAs to effectively plan for that submission and to easily post the information to their websites as required by the ARP Act.

Note that on May 17, 2021, Governor Murphy [announced](#) that upon the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year, portions of Executive Order 175 allowing remote learning will be rescinded, meaning that schools will be required to provide full-day, in-person instruction, as they were prior to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The NJDOE and New Jersey Department of Health will share additional information regarding State requirements or guidance for health and safety protocols for the 2021-2022 school year as it becomes available.

ESCNJ Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction & Continuity of Services (revised)

LEA Name: Educational Services Commission of New Jersey (ESCNJ), 23-3145

Date: 06/21/2021

Date Revised: 9/29/2023

1. Maintaining Health & Safety

For each mitigation strategy listed below (A – H), please describe how the LEA will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff and the extent to which it has adopted policies, and a description of any such policies, on each of the following safety recommendations established by the CDC.

A. Universal/Correct Wearing of Masks

ESCNJ will follow the prevailing face covering/mask requirements established by the NJDOH and NJDOE and adjust accordingly.

B. Physical Distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)

ESCNJ will follow the prevailing social distancing requirements established by the NJDOH and NJDOE and adjust accordingly going forward.

C. Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette

Prepare/maintain hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizer (min 60% alc):

- In each classroom

- At entrances/exits of buildings

- Near lunchrooms and toilets

- All students should be supervised when using sanitizer

Classrooms that have handwashing stations, prepare stations with soap, water, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers (min 60% alc).

Students should wash hands for 20 seconds at regular intervals, including before eating, after using the bathroom, and after blowing their nose/coughing/sneezing.

Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if washing with soap and water is not possible.

Students are encouraged to cover coughs/sneezes with a tissue when not wearing a mask, immediately wash their hands after blowing nose, coughing, or sneezing. ESCNJ serves students with disabilities, who need various levels of assistance with handwashing and respiratory etiquette.

D. Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities, Including Improving Ventilation

Custodians adhere to required facilities cleaning practices/procedures, and new requirements of the health department. Buildings have specialized air filters to reduce the presence of coronavirus in the air. Classroom bathrooms are thoroughly cleaned/disinfected at the end of each day. Staff clean/disinfect the classroom bathroom after each use. Classrooms without sinks have hand sanitizer dispensers installed. Shared hallway bathrooms are thoroughly cleaned/disinfected each day. Shared hallway bathrooms are checked every 30–45 minutes when the building is occupied. Surfaces/objects that are frequently touched are routinely cleaned/disinfected. Hallway floors are cleaned using “Enviro Solutions 364 Disinfectant” in auto-scrubber each morning before students arrive. NJDOH recommendations for cleaning, disinfecting, and airflow will be implemented.

E. Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine, in Collaboration with the State, Local, Territorial, or Tribal Health Departments

- ESCNJ will follow isolation and quarantine requirements established by the NJDOH and NJDOE and adjust accordingly going forward.
- When an employee or student reports/displays COVID Compatible Symptoms and tests positive for COVID-19, or simply tests positive, those individuals will be isolated according to NJDOH guidelines.
- If warranted, classrooms or an entire school will be closed in consultation with MCOHS.

F. Diagnostic & Screening Testing

- ESCNJ will refer all faculty, staff, and students to their local health care professional for COVID testing/screening when deemed appropriate and as per NJDOH and NJDOE guidance.

G. Efforts to Provide Vaccinations to Educators, Other Staff, and Students, if Eligible

- COVID vaccine resources are sent home to families when available.
- ESCNJ faculty/staff are available to assist families obtain a COVID vaccine for their child and family.
- ESCNJ will continue to educate, encourage, and assist in the provision of COVID vaccines for all faculty, staff, and students/families.

H. Appropriate Accommodations for Children with Disabilities with Respect to Health and Safety Policies

- Students will be provided instruction during the school day on appropriate hygiene practices that reduce the spread of COVID-19. Instruction will be based on individual student needs.
 - Students' disabilities are taken into consideration when enforcing the use of face coverings. Accommodations for students who are unable to wear a face covering are made in accordance with all applicable laws, regulations, and the IEP.
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2. Ensuring Continuity of Services

A. Describe how the LEA will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff's social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services. (1000 character limit)

ESCNJ is a public receiving school district serving students with disabilities ages 3-21 in all the special education categories. Students will receive in-person instruction following the schedule set by ESCNJ. The vast majority of students have social, emotional, and behavioral goals included in their IEP. Students available for counseling will receive SEL support from clinicians. Administrators examine student behavioral data and parent input to identify trends to implement clinical/instructional interventions.

3. Public Comment

A. Describe how the LEA sought public comment on its plan, and how it took those public comment into account in the development of its plan. Note, the ARP requires that LEAs seek public comment for each 60-day revision to the plan. (1000 character limit)

ESCNJ is a public receiving school district serving students with disabilities ages 3-21 in all the special education categories from Middlesex County and the surrounding region. The ESCNJ Board consists of 30 members from the LEAs of the County and region. Each Board member receives a copy of the Safe Return Plan. The Safe Return Plan was reviewed by the ESCNJ Recovery & Reopening Committee as well as school-base Recovery & Reopening committees consisting of administrators, faculty, staff, and parent representative. The Safe Return Plan is to be reviewed on a regular basis by the committees listed above. The Safe Return Plan is posted to the ESCNJ website and public comment has been solicited. The Safe Return Plan will be agendaized for Board review and public comment, and subsequently posted to the ESCNJ website.

B. Describe how the LEA ensured that the plan is in an understandable and uniform format; is to the extent practicable written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable to provide written translations to a parent with limited English proficiency, will be orally

translated for such a parent; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA, will be provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent.

The ESCNJ Safe Return Plan has been posted to the ADA compliant ESCNJ website in English & Spanish. Translation services are available to students' parents through their respective school offices. Parents may also reach out to their sending district CST case manager and/or their ESCNJ case manager. Text Telephone Relay or Telecommunications Relay Service (TTY/TRS) services are available by calling (800) 877-8339 TTY/ASCII (American Standard Code Information Interchange), which allows users to type a conversation. Additional TTY/TRS may be found at <https://www.federalrelay.us/tty/>

New Question:

Briefly describe any guidance professional learning and technical assistance opportunities the LEA will make available to its schools. (0 of 1000 maximum characters used)

ESCNJ continues to follow the district professional development plan to review the implementation of remote instruction and best practices thereof. ESCNJ routinely reviews COVID mitigation procedures with all faculty and staff.