



ARP ESSER Health and Safety Plan Guidance & Template

Section 2001(i)(1) of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act requires each local education agency (LEA) that receives funding under the ARP Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund to develop and make publicly available on the LEA's website a *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan*, hereinafter referred to as a *Health and Safety Plan*.

Based on ARP requirements, 90 percent of ARP ESSER funds will be distributed to school districts and charter schools based on their relative share of Title I-A funding in FY 2020-2021.

Given Federally required timelines, LEAs eligible to apply for and receive this portion of the ARP ESSER funding must submit a Health and Safety Plan that meets ARP Act requirements to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) by Friday, July 30, 2021, regardless of when the LEA submits its ARP ESSER application.

Each LEA must create a Health and Safety Plan that addresses how it will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff, and which will serve as local guidelines for all instructional and non-instructional school activities during the period of the LEA's ARP ESSER grant. The Health and Safety Plan should be tailored to the unique needs of each LEA and its schools and must take into account public comment related to the development of, and subsequent revisions to, the Health and Safety Plan.

The ARP Act and U.S. Department of Education rules require Health and Safety plans include the following components:

1. How the LEA will, to the greatest extent practicable, implement prevention and mitigation policies in line with the most up-to-date guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the reopening and operation of school facilities in order to continuously and safely open and operate schools for in-person learning;
2. How the LEA will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address the students' academic needs, and students' and staff members' social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services;
3. 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 policy on each of the following safety recommendations established by the CDC:

- a. Universal and correct wearing of [masks](#);
- b. Modifying facilities to allow for [physical distancing](#) (e.g., use of cohorts/podding);
- c. [Handwashing and respiratory etiquette](#);
- d. [Cleaning](#) and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving [ventilation](#);
- e. [Contact tracing](#) in combination with [isolation](#) and [quarantine](#), in collaboration with State and local health departments;
- f. [Diagnostic](#) and screening testing;
- g. Efforts to provide COVID-19 [vaccinations to school communities](#);
- h. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies; and
- i. Coordination with state and local health officials.

The LEA's Health and Safety Plan must be approved by its governing body and posted on the LEA's publicly available website by July 30, 2021.* The ARP Act requires LEAs to post their Health and Safety Plans online in a language that parents/caregivers can understand, or, if it is not practicable to provide written translations to an individual with limited English proficiency, be orally translated. The plan also must be provided in an alternative format accessible, upon request, by a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Each LEA will upload in the eGrants system its updated Health and Safety Plan and webpage URL where the plan is located on the LEA's publicly available website.

The ARP Act requires LEAs to review their Health and Safety Plans at least every six months during the period of the LEA's ARP ESSER grant. LEAs also must review and update their plans whenever there are significant changes to the CDC recommendations for K-12 schools. Like the development of the plan, all revisions must be informed by community input and reviewed and approved by the governing body prior to posting on the LEA's publicly available website.

LEAs may use the template to revise their current Health and Safety Plans to meet ARP requirements and ensure all stakeholders are fully informed of the LEA's plan to safely resume instructional and non-instructional school activities, including in-person learning, for the current school year. An LEA may use a different plan template or format provided it includes all the elements required by the ARP Act, as listed above.

* The July 30 deadline applies only to school districts and charter schools that received federal Title I-A funds in FY 2020-2021 and intend to apply for and receive ARP ESSER funding.

Additional Resources

LEAs are advised to review the following resources when developing their Health and Safety Plans:

- [CDC K-12 School Operational Strategy](#)
- [PDE Resources for School Communities During COVID-19](#)
- [PDE Roadmap for Education Leaders](#)
- [PDE Accelerated Learning Through an Integrated System of Support](#)
- [PA Department of Health - COVID-19 in Pennsylvania](#)

Health and Safety Plan Summary: Mercer Area School District

Initial Effective Date: July 19, 2021

Date of Last Review: January 22, 2024

Date of Last Revision: January 22, 2024

1. How will the LEA, to the greatest extent practicable, support prevention and mitigation policies in line with the most up-to-date guidance from the CDC for the reopening and operation of school facilities in order to continuously and safely open and operate schools for in-person learning?

In the 2020-2021 school year, the district created a Phased School Reopening Health and Safety Plan that implemented protocols and procedures to, fully, return to in-person instruction for the 2020-2021 school year. To that end, the Mercer Area School District returned to 5-days a week, in-person instruction throughout the 2020-2021 school year, except for 18 days at the secondary level and 13 days at the elementary level. Therefore, to the greatest extent practicable, the District will continue to implement proven prevention and mitigation procedures that were shown as successful in prior school years, while adjusting procedures to ensure they are in line with up-to-date guidance from the CDC for reopening and operating school facilities for in-person instruction.

2. How will the LEA ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address the students' academic needs, and students' and staff members' social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services?

The District has hired an additional guidance counselor to support student and staff social, emotional, and mental health needs. Additionally, the District has provided meals, free of charge, to students since March 2020 and will continue to do so through the last day of school in the 2024-2025 school year.

3. Use the table below to explain 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 policy on each of the following safety recommendations established by the CDC.

ARP ESSER Requirement	Strategies, Policies, and Procedures
a. Universal and correct wearing of masks ;	<p>The District will comply with all orders issued by the Secretary of the PA Department of Health, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and/or apply, to the extent feasible, guidance from the CDC for the reopening and operation of school facilities in the 2024-2025 school year.</p> <p>In the absence of a state or federal mandate, the Mercer Area School District will operate as a mask optional school district for students and adults.</p>
b. Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding);	<p>The District will comply with all orders issued by the Secretary of the PA Department of Health, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and/or apply, to the extent feasible, guidance from the CDC for the reopening and operation of school facilities in the 2024-2025 school year.</p>
c. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette ;	<p>The District will comply with all orders issued by the Secretary of the PA Department of Health, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and/or apply, to the extent feasible, guidance from the CDC for the reopening and operation of school facilities in the 2024-2025 school year.</p> <p>The District has created hand-washing protocols and procedures that will be continued into the 2024-2025 school year. Hand-washing will be encouraged throughout the day for both students and staff. Hand sanitizer stations/dispensers will be available in high traffic hallways and building entrance/exit areas. Additionally, each classroom will provide hand-sanitizer for student/staff use as they enter and exit each classroom.</p> <p>All school buildings will have posted signage in high visibility locations that will promote hand-washing, cover your cough, etc.</p>

ARP ESSER Requirement	Strategies, Policies, and Procedures
<p>d. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation;</p>	<p>The District will follow recommended procedures and protocols from the CDC for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting. All custodians have received training on how to perform a compliant cleaning procedure, i.e. regular disinfection of high touch surfaces daily, including door handles, light switches, student desks.</p> <p>Faculty and administration will be provided disinfection supplies to be used in classrooms and offices during the school day and have been trained on proper procedures prior to student arrival for the school year.</p> <p>The District has undergone a HVAC assessment and preformed recommended actions to increase outside air ventilation.</p>
<p>e. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State and local health departments;</p>	<p>The District will comply with all orders issued by the Secretary of the PA Department of Health, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and/or apply, to the extend feasible, guidance from the CDC for the reopening and operation of school facilities in the 2024-2025 school year.</p> <p>Having provided in-person instruction since the 2020-2021 school year, the District has established effective and efficient protocols, procedures, and designated responsible persons for contract tracing and isolation/quarantine monitoring per State and CDC guidance.</p>
<p>f. Diagnostic and screening testing;</p>	<p>The District will comply with all orders issued by the Secretary of the PA Department of Health, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and/or apply, to the extend feasible, guidance from the CDC for the reopening and operation of school facilities in the 2024-2025 school year.</p> <p>All district employees will be responsible for performing daily self-health checks</p>

ARP ESSER Requirement	Strategies, Policies, and Procedures
	<p>prior to coming/entering a school building. Any employee registering a temperature at or above 100.4 should not report to work.</p> <p>All parents will be asked to health check their child(ren) prior to coming to school or utilizing school transportation. The district encourages parents to keep sick children at home.</p>
<p>g. Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities;</p>	<p>The District will comply with all orders issued by the Secretary of the PA Department of Health, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and/or apply, to the extent feasible, guidance from the CDC for the reopening and operation of school facilities in the 2024-2025 school year.</p> <p>The District has provided an opportunity within the 2020-2021 school year for all staff and associated school employees; i.e. coaches, vendor-contracted drivers, to receive vaccination for the COVID-19 virus. The District will continue to provide information on vaccination sites to the school community as opportunities become available.</p>
<p>h. Appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies; and</p>	<p>The District will comply with all orders issued by the Secretary of the PA Department of Health, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and/or apply, to the extent feasible, guidance from the CDC for the reopening and operation of school facilities in the 2024-2025 school year.</p> <p>The district will establish and maintain communication with employees and parents of student who are, or are thought to be, in need of unique safety protocols due to complex needs.</p> <p>School district teams will work with parents and other members of IEP teams, or 504 teams, to create a plan that allows</p>

ARP ESSER Requirement	Strategies, Policies, and Procedures
	<p>students access to a Free and Appropriate Public Education.</p> <p>The district will work with employees at high risk for severe illness and will accommodate, to the extent feasible, those employees needs to return to in-person instruction.</p>
<p>i. Coordination with state and local health officials.</p>	<p>The District will comply with all orders issued by the Secretary of the PA Department of Health, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and/or apply, to the extend feasible, guidance from the CDC for the reopening and operation of school facilities in the 2024-2025 school year.</p> <p>Having provided in-person instruction since the 2020-2021 school year, the District has established effective and efficient health official contacts at both the state and local levels. The District will build on existing relationships to comply with all orders issued by the Secretary of the PA Department of Health and Governor of Pennsylvania.</p>

Health and Safety Plan Governing Body Affirmation Statement

The Board of Directors/Trustees for **Mercer Area School District** reviewed and approved the Health and Safety Plan on **July 15, 2024**.

The plan was approved by a vote of:

7 Yes

1 No

Affirmed on: **July 15, 2024**

By:

David R. Lengel

(Signature* of Board President)

David R. Lengel

(Print Name of Board President)